

CONGRATULATIONS on choosing a Great Dane as a member of your family. The Great Dane Club of America, as the guardian of our breed, would like to offer you some basic information which we believe will help you in the developing relationship with your puppy.



As early as 3000 BC carvings of dogs on Egyptian tombs depict the Great Dane. Archeological evidence exists of a Dane-type dog used for hunting and to fight bears and bulls. However, the Great Dane as we know it today was developed in Europe during the 1800's and declared the national breed of Germany in 1876. As a boarhound, the Dane of yesterday was very different both in structure and temperament from the Dane of today. When no longer used for hunting, the breed changed to one of a companion and estate guard dog.

Today correctly bred Great Danes have a gentle and loving disposition that makes them a wonderful family companion. Their primary asset in training is their desire to please. It is imperative that your puppy be well socialized from the time you bring it

home; kindergarten puppy classes, for puppies three to six months old, are strongly recommended. These classes should be followed with a basic obedience class. Your puppy will grow as much his first year as a child grows in fourteen years. It is vital that you provide it with the basic structure and consistent training that every puppy needs to make it a happy and well-adjusted member of your family.

Great Danes should be raised in the house as a family member; they do not do well as yard dogs, although they do need a fenced yard for exercise and playtime. Just as you would not leave older siblings alone with a baby, young children should never be left unattended with your puppy or dog. Because a puppy is not a toy, children must be taught the correct way to interact with a puppy; fair play and respect are a must.

Puppies often think of toddlers as other puppies since they are close to the same size and make similar sounds. As the parent you must teach and monitor correct behavior on the part of the child and the puppy. Puppies chew on each other, wrestle, and growl to determine their pack structure. With correct and consistent training your puppy will learn that your children are not puppies but small humans. Quick movements and high-pitched squealing will excite a puppy or dog while loud, harsh corrections will confuse and intimidate it. Dogs learn through consistency and repetition, with love and positive reinforcement. The adults in your household must assume the role of pack leader in order for your puppy to grow up secure and self-confident.

We also strongly recommend crate training your puppy. The crate, when placed in the living area of your home, will become your puppy's "den." Keep soft, washable bedding and toys in the crate; newspapers just inside the crate door can help with baby accidents. The crate door should be left open while you are at home with the puppy so that it can go to the den at will. Children should be taught that they are never to bother the puppy when it is in its den--this is its safe place. The puppy should also sleep in its crate at night until it is old enough to sleep through the night without accidents. If you do not have room for a crate in your bedroom, be sure to leave soft music and a large stuffed toy for it at night so that it does not feel completely alone. You should also use a crate or seatbelt harness in your vehicle for the same reasons that your child rides in a car seat.

As you have probably come to realize, prior to approximately four months of age puppies eat, sleep, and potty a lot! The initial 3 - 4 meals each day can be reduced to 2 meals per day by 6 - 9 months of age. The last meal and water should be approximately two hours before bedtime with one last play period and potty break just before going to bed. While still a puppy it will need to potty immediately after a nap, upon coming out of its crate, after eating, and after (if not during) a good round of play. Accidents in the house are not the fault of the puppy. If you take the puppy out often, stay with it, and give soft praise, it will soon be housebroken. Your Dane should continue to eat twice each day its entire life. Follow your breeder's advice on feeding and nutritional supplements.

Great Danes are predisposed to a number of health problems. An ethical private breeder will screen his breeding stock for specific diseases and make clearance certificates available to prospective puppy parents. The GDCA Code of Ethics addresses the specific problems that we feel should be considered in evaluating breeding stock.

The primary purpose of dog shows is to evaluate potential breeding stock. Along with this evaluation goes many years of education in order to make qualified decisions about breeding. For these reasons the ethical private breeder will usually require that any puppy going to a companion home be neutered; this is the only way we have of protecting the future of our breed.

We recommend that you have your puppy spayed or neutered before puberty. Many behavior problems are hormone related. By making the responsible decision to spay or neuter, you will make your pet much easier to train and protect it from mammary or prostate cancer. You will also not produce unplanned puppies and set a very good example for your neighbors and friends.

If you are interested in becoming involved in our sport and educated in our breed, your breeder should have all of the information you could want and be willing to guide you. The GDCA Web Page also contains a great deal of information that can help. Most of us started with a companion dog that was not of breeding quality. We neutered our pet and got involved in obedience, agility, therapy work, etc. Our first pet was our

introduction to the breed, while training and enjoying our first Dane, we studied and learned in preparation for acquiring our next puppy, which we decided to show. It is a process that is well worth the effort.

The Great Dane Club of America Web Page <[www.gdca.org](http://www.gdca.org)> contains a great deal of useful information. We also recommend the following books:

*The Great Dane: Dogdom's Apollo* by Nancy Carol Draper (no longer in print--check the library)

*Mother Knows Best: The Natural Way to Train Your Dog and Surviving Your Dog's Adolescence* by Carol Lea Benjamin (Howell)

*Super Puppy: How To Raise the Best Dog You'll Ever Have* (Super Puppy Press)

*The New Complete Great Dane* by noted authorities (Howell)