

A Thumbnail Sketch of The Great Dane



The breed as we see it today was developed primarily in Germany and England out of mastiff-type and Greyhound stock. The principal purpose of the breed in early years was to be an estate, or guard dog; and to hunt wild boar. Some Danes still retain their hunting instincts, especially around pigs! At that time, ear cropping was performed to prevent the boar's long, sharp tusks from shredding the Dane's ear during the hunt. Today's ear crop is much longer and elegant.

Great Danes currently rank about 35th in popularity of purebred dogs, so they can be considered a fairly common breed. As a giant breed they are not the dog for every household.

In Dane Outreach's experience, most of the Danes coming into shelters are unclaimed strays; or dogs that have been owner released due to moving, divorce, lack of time, lack of training, or lack of breed education and understanding before purchase. Any person considering adding a Dane to their household would be well advised to first research the breed.



Danes come in six "recognized" (colors that can be shown) colors; fawn (tan with black mask), brindle (tiger striped), black (a solid black), blue (a steel blue), Mantle (marked like a Boston Terrier) and Harlequin (a white base coat with evenly distributed torn black patches). However, besides these colors there are numerous others that show up and are termed as mismarks. These can include merle, white, and black with white markings; which all come from the Harlequin color family. White Danes can often be deaf. Other colors, such as a white dog with fawn or brindle patches or a "blue brindle" are dogs that have come out of mixed color breeding. Mixed color breeding is considered unacceptable by the Great Dane Club of America. Irregardless, once spayed or neutered, all can make fine family pets. It should also be noted, that while hearing whites and Mantles are used in an established breeding program, it is never acceptable to breed white dogs with fawn spots, etc.



Ears can be cropped or uncropped. If uncropped, the ears have a houndy appearance and have a slight rise at the ear where it meets the base of the skull. Ear cropping should always be done by a qualified vet familiar with the breed.

Males are about 33" to 36" at the shoulder and weigh about 140

to 175 pounds. Bitches are smaller; with height about 31" to 33" and weight at about 110 to 140 pounds. Danes should never be rib thin. Full height is not usually reached until 12 to 15 months of age.

Diet is very important with young and growing Danes. A diet too high in protein can and will cause growing (bone) problems. Established breeders usually have a set feeding program for puppies they sale.

There can be great variation in breed type, but most Danes usually are big boned, should have long tails (although sometimes docked due to injury), a relatively long neck and a head with a longish muzzle, definite flews (lips), and a defined stop. Most Dane books found will have several good examples of different breed type in them. The body should be squarish. A Dane should never resemble a mastiff (be too coarse) or look "greyhoundy" (be too whippetty).

Most Danes are very friendly, but can be reserved or frightened in an unfamiliar kennel or shelter situation. Aggressive, excessively shy, or vicious Danes should not be placed into homes, and certainly never bred. When viewing puppies in a litter they should be happy and outgoing. Avoid purchasing shy or standoffish puppies.



The breed as a whole is a wonderful family pet for a household who wants a large, indoor, affectionate short-haired breed who will offer a measure of protection. They are a very people oriented breed and need to be a part of the family. They are loving, good with kids, clean, easy to housebreak as puppies, simple to groom, and of average intelligence. They are versatile and can participate in a number of canine sports such as agility, obedience competition, and flyball. While puppies can be quite active, adults do not require a lot of exercise; many adults have to be encouraged off the couch to go for a romp!

The negative aspect of the breed includes a short life span of 7 to 10 years; and predisposition to certain health problems such as bloat, certain types of cancer, and heart problems and wobblers. Puppies and young adults can be prone to certain growing, or bone problems, which usually are attributed to a improper diet; customarily one that is too high in protein/fat/calories or has been supplemented. Occasionally some Danes can be dog aggressive and others do not tolerate livestock-especially pigs-or small animals well. Older unaltered adult males can be prone to prostate infections; and unaltered adult bitches to false pregnancies. Spaying or neutering pets is a good

idea for the health of the dog. Breeding should be left to those who have a complete understanding of the breed and its unique needs.



The household considering a Dane should have a well built large kennel run or a fenced yard. Most Danes are not jumpers and a six foot fence is sufficient. However, nothing can contain a jumper if you should get one! Do not expect your yard to remain beautifully landscaped if you put a young Dane in it; they have their own agenda when it comes to pruning and replanting! If a nice yard is a priority for you, don't get a

Dane! They will dig and chew! Chaining, staking out, tying, or allowing to roam free are all highly unacceptable for obvious reasons.

Time and commitment are crucial factors in ownership of this breed as they do not do well as an outside dog. They need and crave human companionship. Also, their coat is not sufficient enough to keep them warm in the winter. The young puppy will benefit greatly from a set of properly taught puppy kindergarten classes-it should be considered mandatory; and the adopted adult will benefit from a set or two of obedience classes. These classes help the owner to learn how to properly trained their dog, and will also assist with the bonding process.

Households with children who are considering an adult should only consider a Dane whose history with kids is known. Although most Danes are very good and gentle with kids, one unfamiliar with them can accidentally knock them over.

Expense should also be a consideration as this is a pricey breed to take care of. Quality food, supplies, training classes, properly fenced yard, and vet expenses can quickly add up. Everything is "more" with a Dane because of the size!

The proper use of a crate as a training tool will help assist in housebreaking with a young puppy; and prevent major destruction from a chewing adolescent. To prevent problems, young Danes should not be allowed free roam of the house until they have proved themselves to be trustworthy. A Dane on a chewing spree can destroy a house!

Danes should *never* be encouraged to be over-protective or aggressive. Their large size is sufficient to scare off most intruders. Their natural tendency is to protect if needed; always using good judgment. It is the responsibility of the Dane owner to properly socialize and train their Dane so he can learn good judgment.



Owners of Great Danes should recognize that some people are very frightened of large dogs and should always act in a responsible manner; keeping their Dane leashed and under control when in public places and in their fenced yard when at home.

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