

Senior Dogs are Something Special

Why adopting an older dog may be the right choice for you.

In greyhound rescue, it's typical for most of the dogs up for adoption to be between two and five years old. While not exclusively the case, this is because retirement age from the track is five years old or younger. In my own decade-plus experience with a non-profit greyhound rescue group, dogs that came to the organization older than five usually were relinquished by adopters or had been used for breeding and then were released for adoption. These "seniors" were some of the most special dogs to meet. Whether a greyhound or other breed, older dogs provide many benefits as a member of your family.

Here are just a few reasons why you should consider adopting an older dog from a shelter or rescue organization:

- 1) Older dogs typically have outgrown many unwanted puppy-like behaviors such as chewing, having accidents in the house or excessive energy levels. Mature dogs are often just that – mature. Many have previously been in homes and “know the ropes.”
- 2) “Old” is relative. I always found it amazing when potential greyhound adopters considered five years old to be “too old” for them. At that age, a greyhound could live another six to eight years, more for a smaller breed of dog. Plus, sentiments about being “young at heart” or “only as young as you feel” apply to dogs as well as people. Many older dogs have a lot of spirit and spunk.
- 3) An older dog may be a better lifestyle fit for you. Do you need a pet who will jog five miles with you, or is a nice walking companion a better choice? Are you away at work for long hours and not able to supervise and provide the added activity, training and interaction a puppy needs? Do you live in an apartment or senior community where a calmer dog will make your neighbors happier?
- 4) You may literally be saving a life when you adopt an older dog from a shelter. Older dogs often take longer to be adopted and may have medical issues that place them at higher risk for euthanasia at some shelters. In addition, especially if they had previously been in a home, they have a harder time adjusting to shelter life.
- 5) Adopting a senior dog can be one of the most satisfying things you will do. Providing a home to a senior who may not have as much time left as a young dog, but truly deserves to have some “golden years,” is a selfless act for which you are likely to be rewarded with devotion, loyalty and companionship.