

Wolf-dog Hybrids

The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly

(Including information most breeders would prefer kept quiet)



The Wolf IS At The Door, Inc.

*Wolf-dog Hybrids -
The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*

Brought to you by

The Wolf Is At the Door, Inc.

An Oklahoma Non-profit Educational Organization

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The mission of The Wolf is at the Door, Inc is to provide education to the public regarding the responsibilities of owning captive bred and privately owned wolves and wolf-dog hybrids. WATD hopes to insure that prospective owners of these animals are informed of all aspects of their care prior to purchase or adoption.

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Preface

The majority of exotics end up dead before their third birthdays, mostly because people have no idea what is involved in caring for an animal that has not been domesticated for 10,000 years. Wolf-dog hybrids are, at best, tamed and socialized exotic canines. At their worst, they are dangerous to each other and those humans around them.

Consumers need to be informed before they purchase that fluffy little wolf or wolf-dog hybrid pup on impulse! Most exotics breeders choose not to reveal all the facts about the animals they sell. The Wolf IS At The Door, Inc., is a non-profit organization, whose mission is to educate people before they make the mistake of thinking a wolf or wolf-dog hybrid can be trained, contained, and otherwise cared for like any other canine pet. This booklet is a part of that mission.

These animals are illegal to own in many places, and there is no USDA approved rabies vaccine for them. Yet breeders continue to produce far more than can be placed in competent homes. The Centers for Disease Control reports wolf-dog hybrids as being sixth on the list of canines responsible for 'dog-bite' fatalities.

Our hope is that you, as a potential buyer, will read this booklet and think long and hard before purchasing a wolf-dog hybrid pup. And if you as an informed consumer decide to make such a purchase, that you are willing to dedicate up to 18 years of your life to the animal's care, no matter how difficult it might be. The decision to buy a wolf-dog hybrid pup should be made with as much careful consideration as would the decision to adopt a child.

Dedication

This booklet is dedicated, with love, to the multitude of captive wolves and wolf-dog hybrids who weren't fortunate enough to find a lifetime loving home. To those slightly luckier ones that ended up in well run rescue facilities. And to those who died when their purchasers decided they had made a big mistake. Without them, there would be no need for this booklet, or for the massive wolf-dog hybrid rescue efforts in this country today.

Further it is dedicated to those selfless rescuers who took in the animals who were no longer wanted, rehabilitated them, and re-homed them. And if rehabilitation was unsuccessful, walked the last mile with them.

Thank you!

Notice

Following the procedures outlined in this booklet will not make you an instant success as a wolf-dog hybrid owner. If the ideas are absorbed and used in conjunction with years of experience with canines, a love of animals, and a practical mindset, they can help you formulate a plan of action. That plan of action may be to get a domesticated canine as your companion, instead of one that can only be tamed and socialized.

Approximately 5 million canines are killed in shelters every year, for no other crime than being unwanted. Wolf-dog hybrids are among those who take the long final journey, alone and frightened, often without the comfort of a compassionate person by their side as they leave this world. Hopefully you will choose well for the animal and your family.

While The Wolf Is At The Door, Inc. consistently uses the term “wolf-dog hybrid” in materials written for the organization, the words “wolfdog” and “wolf hybrid” refer to the same type of animal. Any of the above terms may appear in pieces written by others who allow us to use their work for the benefit of the organization and wolf-dog hybrids everywhere.

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Wolf-dog Hybrids

What exactly is a wolf-dog hybrid? Simply put it is a cross between a captive wolf and a domestic dog. The term 'hybrid' is an old-fashioned term, used less today than in the past, especially on the Internet and in some wolf-dog hybrid circles. The current preferred wording is 'wolfdog' because a number of scientists have hypothesized that the wolf and dog belong to the same species. We have chosen to use wolf-dog hybrid, so there is no mistaking what type of animal we are referring to. Though wolf and dog are not the same SUBspecies many choose to use a narrow definition of hybrid, i.e., a cross between two different species with resultant infertile offspring. Using "wolfdog" is one more way for wolf-dog hybrid breeders to make their product more acceptable to the public by implying that "it's just an exotic looking dog!" It can be a dangerous term for breeders to use because most people don't realize exactly what they are buying.

Wolf-dog hybrids can be a cross between any existing subspecies of wolf, and any breed of dog. They can also be a cross between two wolf-dog hybrids with many generations of hybridization in their backgrounds. Without an accurate pedigree there is no way of knowing how far removed from pure wolf the animal truly is, or if wolf was even a part of the mixture more recently than 10,000 years ago.

Many wolf-dog hybrid breeders have no idea what subspecies of wolf is in their line. We have seen some imaginative creations, such as Black Russian Wolf, Louisiana Swamp Wolf, etc. Some just say Gray Wolf, which encompasses all North American wolves except Red Wolves. Those breeders, who claim the wolf part of the concoction is either an extinct or extremely rare subspecies, are for the most part trying to make their animals more exotic and appealing to the consumer, thereby exacting a higher price for the pups. If a breeder claims to have Mexican Wolf, Red Wolf, Arctic Wolf, or Buffalo Wolf in the line, it is extremely doubtful; those subspecies are endangered or extinct in the wild.

The most common subspecies of wolf in wolf-dog hybrids are:

British Columbian *Canis lupus columbianus*
Eastern timber wolf *Canis lupus lycaon*
Mackenzie Valley Wolf *Canis lupus occidentalis*
Interior Alaskan Wolf *Canis lupus pambasileus*
Alaska Tundra Wolf *Canis lupus tundrarum*

The breeds of dog most often used when creating wolf-dog hybrids are Malamute, Siberian Husky, Samoyed, and German Shepherd. Many breeders believe that these dogs complement wolves in both conformation and behavior. Some breeders are using breeds of dogs that have a proclivity towards aggressiveness, including Chow-Chows, aggressive lines of German Shepherds, even Pit Bulls and Rottweillers. Wolves are shy animals and it is counterproductive to combine aggressive dog breeds with wolf. When you cross a wolf with a dog breed that has aggressive tendencies you typically end up with an animal that is mentally unstable and often dangerous. Any animal with recent

wolf heritage does not make a reliable watch or guard dog, so there is no responsible rationale behind crossing such aggressive breeds with wolf.

Wolf-dog hybrids are illegal to own in many jurisdictions. As a result, breeders have become creative, fabricating a number of names to disguise the fact that the animal actually has wolf in the mix. On observing the animal, it is often laughable that even a novice would think there was no wolf inheritance. A few of those euphemisms are Esquimaux dog, Native American Indian Dog, NADA dog, Chukchi sleddog, etc. This practice can be extremely dangerous, as wolf-dog hybrids are very different from domestic dogs.

There are two recognized breeds of wolf-dog hybrid in Europe: the Czechoslovakian Wolfdog, and the Saarloos Wolfhond. Both have very low content of wolf, and are crosses between German Shepherd and European or North American wolf. They are unavailable or extremely rare in the US.

There is no official standard for wolf-dog hybrids in the US; there are no reliable Kennel Clubs trying to create such standards. They are whatever dog breeds/subspecies of wolf the breeder decides to combine. A few registry organizations have written breed standards for wolf-dog hybrids, but they are really little more than a comprehensive description of a wolf.

Often, multiple subspecies of wolf and many breeds of dog are found in the “pedigrees” offered by breeders. Registries are only as accurate as their breeders are truthful. Many lineages cannot be traced and without formal verification there is no proof that there is any wolf in the mix. Neither is there any reason to believe so from the physical or behavioral attributes of many of the animals. Many Northern Breed dogs have coloration that closely resembles that of the wolf; and many a Northern Breed mix, with absolutely no wolf heritage at all, has been sold for top dollar to unsuspecting prospective wolf-dog hybrid purchasers.

The watchword when looking to purchase a wolf-dog hybrid pup is “Buyer Beware”. You must know what questions to ask the breeder, and moreover you must know what constitutes a reasonable answer to those questions. In order to determine if the breeder is actually selling a wolf-dog hybrid, and not a northern breed domestic cross, you must know what wolves look and act like, what northern breed dogs look and act like, and be able to tell the difference.

Though many breeders will tell you that these canines are domestic animals, this is far from the truth, unless they are actually selling you a domestic dog and calling it a wolf-dog hybrid. Wolves in the wild are wild. Wolves in captivity may be either wild or tamed. Wolfdog hybrids can be, at best, socialized tamed animals.

Percentage VS content

Most wolf-dog hybrid pedigrees list the supposed percent of wolf in the animal, if they offer ANY kind of background verification. Sometimes the pedigree lists the subspecies of wolf and breeds of dog used in the formula. Adding the percents of the two parents together and dividing by two calculates the wolf percent of the offspring. Such as:

Mom 79% wolf
Dad 84% wolf
Offspring $163/2 = 81.5\%$ wolf

This makes a great math problem for the kids, but it in no way defines the actual amount of wolf genetic material in any given animal. Genes combine in a random manner, and each pup in the litter will have a different actual percentage of wolf genes in its genetic make-up. We've seen pedigrees that list the wolf-dog hybrid at such refined percentages as 62.925% wolf. Laughter is the best response to such a ridiculous claim.

The number of generations since a pure wolf was added to the mix may or may not have a significant effect on how 'wolfy' the animal looks and acts. This is known as the filial number or f-number. Often, the more generations away from pure, the doggier looking and acting the offspring will be. This may be due to a choice of breeding stock with a particular look or behavior. Choices could also tip the scales in the opposite direction, but that normally happens only with higher content animals.

Now we have 'content' to deal with. Content is subjective; all it means is how 'wolf-like' the animal looks, moves, and behaves.

Thoroughly confused yet? Most people are. Here are a few things that can give you a basic idea of the approximate content of wolf in the animal. Some animals that look low content will exhibit higher content behaviors. Nothing is set in stone with these exotic canines.

Low/no content:

Normally looks fairly dog like
Usually good in the house
Comes when called, most of the time
Fairly easy to housebreak, with few/no marking behaviors
Normally friendly to everyone, even most strangers
Often good with smaller animals and children with supervision
Enjoys family outings to new places without experiencing severe stress
May or may not be highly destructive

Mid content:

Often looks are about midway between wolf and dog.
May or may not be good in the house. Supervision necessary
Probably won't come when called on a consistent basis
May or may not be easy to housebreak. May revert to prior un-housebroken behavior under stress. May mark territory
May be friendly to known non-family members, or may be strictly pack oriented
Will probably exhibit more intense behaviors than a domestic dog or low content
May or may not be good with children and small pets even when supervised
May become carsick and stressed when transported for even short distances
May or may not be highly destructive, but more apt to be so than a dog or low content

High content:

Looks mostly like a wolf, acts mostly like a wolf
Needs constant supervision when in the house. Expect them to be highly destructive of everything in their environment
Prefers to spend the majority or all of their time outdoors

High content cont.

Not easily housebroken, probably will exhibit marking behavior no matter what the training

Shy, often fearful of strangers, especially men

Never recommended around children and small pets even with intense supervision

INTENSE in all behaviors

Often cannot be transported without tranquilizer

Because wolf-dog hybrids can be a combination of many subspecies of wolf, and many breeds of dog, the truth of the matter is that they are all mongrels, often very beautiful, very expensive mongrels, but mongrels nonetheless. Because there is no way to determine which genes an animal will inherit, there is no way to predict the basic personality, conformation, or gait any given animal will inherit. Littermates will not necessarily act alike, look alike, or respond similarly. Whether the pup comes from a backyard breeder who bred Fluffy and Timber because they were soooo pretty, or from a wolf-dog hybrid breeder who has a long history with the animals, no one can tell you with certainty how any given mongrel pup will mature.

Expect the worst, hope for the best.

Let's discuss price

No matter what you pay for a wolf-dog hybrid, that price will be the least of the costs incurred over the lifetime of the animal. Many good quality registered purebred dogs can be purchased for less than \$500. Wolf-dog hybrids may be priced anywhere from \$50 to \$1500. Remember these are mongrel/mixed breed canines being discussed in this booklet.

Although low/no content wolf-dog hybrids may be priced well under the purebred price of \$500, it's not uncommon for unscrupulous breeders to sell such animals for up to \$1500, claiming them to be high content animals. Those may be nothing more than northernbreed crosses, similar to what can be found at the local shelter sitting on death row.

Pricing on supposed mid content wolf-dog hybrids can vary widely. If the animal looks quite wolfy, the price will normally be higher. One breeder, convicted on fraud charges, sold large numbers of mid contents as high contents for \$3000 + with a guarantee that the buyer could make thousands of dollars using them for breeding. She served little jail time, and has made no restitution. Buyers beware.

True high content wolf-dog hybrids seem to be selling for \$750 to \$2,000+. Many will come with a pedigree from a reputable registry, a seven page contract, and all of the behavior quirks discussed in this booklet. As high contents are often placed in the buyer's homes before the age of four weeks, there is no way to assess the pup's temperament before purchase.

Are these reasonable prices to pay for a mongrel? Only you can decide that.

Whelping season

Domestic dogs breed approximately every six months, at any time of the year. Males are fertile year round; females come into estrus approximately twice a year and can produce puppies each time. Litters can range from one pup to more than fourteen. As there are over one hundred fifty pure breeds recognized by the AKC, there might be variations in those times from breed to breed.

Both male and female wolves are fertile only once a year, in the late winter months. They whelp from late March through May. An average litter ranges from two to six pups.

Gestation in both wolves and domestic dogs is approximately sixty-three days.

Wolf-dog hybrids may follow any of the above cycles. Low content wolf-dog hybrids are often fertile twice a year, at any time of the year, more dog-like. Mid content wolf-dog hybrids will normally have only one fertile period in a year, but it could occur in any month. High contents usually follow the wolf's breeding and whelping cycles.

Knowing the reproductive cycle of wolves is important. Unscrupulous breeders have been known to sell faux 'pure wolves' born in July. If one parent is supposed to be pure and the pups were born in August, there is little chance that the parent was even a high content. This is not an absolute, but there are few exceptions.

Many have asked if the breeding and/or whelping season for wolves would be significantly altered if they resided in the southern part of The United States rather than in Northern Canada or Alaska. The widest discrepancy that has been observed in cycles between the farthest northern point and farthest southern point has been less than three weeks.

So, that 98% Russian Black Wolf/Louisiana Swamp Wolf/malamute/collie born in August, is probably a very low to no content wolf-dog hybrid. Many long time owners were fooled in this manner when they first obtained a wolf-dog hybrid. On the other hand, if a breeder is actually selling a true 98%er to a first-time owner, they are the epitome of irresponsibility.