

Wolf-dog Hybrid Myths

1. Wolf-dog hybrids are fully domesticated animals, just like all dogs. Domestic dogs are genetically identical to wolves.

Wolves are wild animals. Dogs are domesticated animals. It has taken over 10,000 years to domesticate dogs to be the wonderful companions they are. When you combine wild with domesticated, the best you will get is a tamed animal, an animal that can be worked with, but certainly not a dog to sit with you and watch football, or run off-leash in the park.

Wolves and dogs are not genetically identical; although they differ genetically by mere fractions of percentage points, they are different. They are, however, similar enough to breed, and produce fertile offspring. One of the most significant differences seems to lie in their hormone systems. While the systems themselves are not significantly different, the timing of hormone release and hormonal changes is triggered by different locations on the chromosomes and genes. For example, wolves of both sexes only become fertile once a year in late winter or early spring. Male dogs, on the other hand, are fertile year round and female dogs typically come into season twice yearly at any time during the year.

2. Wolf-dog hybrids do just fine in the house, in pens/cages, and in backyards.

Wild wolves roam areas ranging from fifty to five hundred square miles, depending on their location, neighboring packs, and availability of food. Roaming behavior is hardwired into them. Can you provide at LEAST an acre enclosure per animal, for them to have some of the freedom needed by the wolf part of the equation? If not, chances are your wolf or wolf-dog hybrid will not be exceedingly happy.

Do you value your house and what's in it? If so, don't leave your wolf-dog hybrid inside while you are gone. They are often not reliable inside even when being supervised. Many cannot be house trained and most are whirlwinds of destruction at their best.

3. If I treat and feed my wolf-dog hybrid like a domestic dog, he will be a domestic dog.

Domestication of dogs took thousands of years. Adding wolf back into the canine equation essentially eliminates the process of domestication. Knowing the Laws of the Pack and their language goes a long way to promote understanding between wolf-dog hybrid and man. We adapt to them, not they to us.

Feeding a wolf-dog hybrid cheap dog food will not make him a domestic dog. Actually, it could very well make him sick or dead.

4. A wolf-dog hybrid will turn on you when it reaches maturity.

Unlike domestic dogs, wolf-dog hybrids tend to reach social and sexual maturity later; usually around two to four years of age, and they mature beyond the level of domestic dogs. A five-year-old dog still exhibits puppy-like behaviors in comparison to a mature wolf, a phenomenon known as “neotany”. A common comparison is that dogs mature to about a five-year-old child’s level and a wolf matures to the level of a teenager.

When a wolf-dog hybrid reaches social and sexual maturity, he/she may challenge the humans for the alpha position in the pack/family, especially if the humans have not become supreme Alpha in the canine’s mind. This is not BAD behavior, but behavior that is entirely appropriate in the hierarchy of the wolf pack. Their adaptation to living in a civilized human society goes only so far, and does not equate to living totally by our rules or our thoughts on how things should be done. Some instinctual behaviors, which are genetically hardwired, appear more evident in high content wolf-dog hybrids, than in low content, mostly dog, animals.

5. Wolf-dog hybrids cannot be trained.

Actually wolf-dog hybrids are extremely intelligent beings. Their Alpha human can easily train them. However, they get bored very quickly. At that point, they make up their own games like ‘how can I distract Alpha and not have to do what I’m told’. Wolf-dog hybrids must be motivated to perform even the simplest commands they have learned. Every wolf or wolf-dog hybrid has its own unique motivator. Food treats motivate some, but not others. You must find the key to motivating them, be it food, a toy, positive attention, etc. Each animal is different.

Some wolf-dog hybrids can be reliably housebroken, others cannot. Usually the lower the content the easier it is to house train, although this is not a hard and fast rule. It takes time, energy, consistency, perseverance, and cases of paper towels and enzymatic cleaners to reach an approximation of the result you are seeking. Intact adult animals often mark their territory with urine, and no amount of housebreaking will cure that; it is a part of having a tamed wild animal as a family member.

6. Wolf-dog hybrids are good watchdogs.

Wolf-dog hybrids are normally shy, aloof animals. Wolves typically avoid human contact in the wild. That is exactly opposite of what trainers look for in potential guard and personal protection dogs. Wolf-dog hybrids are NOT watchdogs, or guard dogs, although some may see their job within your pack as ‘alerter’ and give an alert howl or bark when they sense something is out of order. This may be a stranger approaching, a

bird flying by, or even the wind blowing. They may instinctively protect their Alpha human, or their perceived “den” (your house), but it is pure folly to rely on them doing so.

7. If it doesn't work out, I can set him/her free.

This is absolutely false. When you buy that cute ball of fuzz, you are making a lifetime commitment to him/her, a lifetime that could extend beyond 15 years. Even a pure wolf that is raised in captivity does not have the skills to reliably hunt for food. Hunting is taught usually around two to four years of age, and they mature beyond the level of domestic dogs. A five-year-old dog still exhibits puppy-like behaviors in comparison to a mature wolf, a phenomenon known as “neotany”. A common comparison is that dogs mature to about a five-year-old child's level and a wolf matures to the level of a teenager.

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8. The wolf is my totem animal/spirit guide. If I have a wolf-dog hybrid, he/she will bring me spirituality and a oneness with Nature.

Few things are farther from the truth. Wolf-dog hybrids may, however, teach you incredible amounts of patience while you grit your teeth and try to remember why you wanted this animal, as he urinates on the carpet, rips the couch to shreds, and chews up your \$1,000 boots. These animals will keep you at home and away from nature, because vacations while owning a wolf-dog hybrid are few and far between.

9. The ONLY way to raise a social wolf-dog hybrid is to remove them from their mothers before two weeks of age.

The rationale of most breeders is that since the mother will not allow them to touch the pups, they must be totally removed and bottle-fed in order to be social. Many things are wrong with doing this. No matter how good the replacement formula, the bitch's milk is best; it not only provides the most appropriate nutrition for growing pups, but also contains many antibodies that protect the pup from disease. Canine mothers teach their pups manners, bite inhibition, and pack social structure.

If the female is not social enough to allow the breeder and family to interact with the pups from day one, she is not social enough to be bred. Wolf-dog hybrid pups must have good experiences with humans from birth to best bond with humans; but these experiences should only supplement time with their mother and littermates. It is harder to socialize the pups to humans while they are with their mothers, because it is the mother's natural instinct to protect her puppies; but it is best over all not only for the puppies, but also for their new human owners. It takes more work for the breeder to socialize the pups when left with their mothers, something most breeders choose not to tell consumers.



10. Wolf-dog hybrids do fine in the city.

Wolves live in locations far from human habitation by choice. Many domestic dogs do poorly in cities. Wolf-dog hybrids don't belong in apartments, in zero lot line tracts, or where neighborhood children can tease or hurt them. They must have secure outdoor confinement where they can run, play and feel safe. Often city zoning does not allow for the extensive containment needs of these exotic canines.

Cities tend to be more polluted than rural areas, and though there are no studies to confirm it, animals seem to be healthier and live longer in rural areas.

11. I am helping wolf reintroduction by keeping a wolf hybrid.

Actually you may be harming wolf reintroduction. Any animal with wolf heritage must be welcomed by all in the area, and behave impeccably in order to not harm the cause of reintroduction.

If neighbors are not thrilled with howling at 2 a.m., or they are afraid of the animal because he looks like a wolf, or they object to a backyard that looks like the craters of the moon, then how would keeping a wolf-dog hybrid be advancing the cause of reintroduction? Finding out that the neighbors don't like noisy, destructive animals after the pup arrives can only cause you grief.