Typical behavior?

As wolf-dog hybrids are a combination of wolf and dog, their behavioral characteristics will encompass both that of the wolf and of the dog breeds involved in the formula.

Wolf-like personality characteristics

Most people who have observed wolves in a zoo realize that they do not act like a typical domestic dog. They keep their distance from humans, prefer to be private, are oriented toward pack members rather than humans, and are prey driven even when they are well fed.

When combining wolf with dog, the characteristics of both are mixed randomly. Some wolf-dog hybrids will be human loving, content to stay in the house, obedient, etc. Many others will be shy, aloof, fearful, prey driven, and destructive no matter how intensely you try to socialize them to the human environment.

Most domestic dogs react to stimuli. Wolves are more apt to think a problem though to a conclusion than to react, though fear elicits the flight or fight reaction in both. With a wolf-dog hybrid, a combination of cognitive characteristics will be exhibited. No two pups in a wolf-dog hybrid litter will exhibit the same physical, mental and emotional characteristics. If they are “98%” or pures, it is reasonable to assume they will exhibit the full gamut of wolf-like behaviors.

Wolf psychology

As already mentioned in other chapters, wolves are pack animals. They follow a very intricate family hierarchy. When making them a part of our human family, we must meet them halfway. Allow them to be the animals they are within the parameters of a relationship from which both human and animal benefit.

Instead of insisting they learn our language and always respond to it, we must compromise and learn theirs—their body language, their vocal language, their eye contact language.
He was just 9 months, a youngster in wolf-dog hybrid terms, but fully bonded to his owner. He traveled with her, spent time at work with her, lived in the house with her. She thought she knew him totally.

One evening after returning together from work and shopping, she put the grocery bags on the floor, and flopped down on the couch, exhausted. He came over and looked deeply into her eyes. She knew it was the look of adoration. He then went over and lifted his leg over the groceries. He was growing up, and his language was changing.

Consistency is of the utmost importance, because the laws all wolves live by are consistent and reliably enforced. As is true with children, a wolf-dog hybrid without limits is an animal without love. The limits must be consistently enforced, or testing will become the name of the game and you or another human could be injured by such games.

As mentioned elsewhere, wolves mature fully, and domestic dogs remain neotanous, at a puppy stage. An immature wolf or wolf-dog hybrid is not as difficult to deal with as the mature animal. If you have remained consistent throughout their puppyhood, the trials and tribulations of maturity may be less intense and thus easier to deal with.

**Predictable vs. unpredictable**

Those who are unfamiliar with wolf behavior often label wolves and wolf-dog hybrids as unpredictable. If one has studied wolf behavior in depth, it is fairly easy to predict the sequence of events in a wolf’s day. If one knows the laws of the pack, they should be able to predict a wolf’s reaction in a majority of situations.

That means it is essential to learn and understand both the vocalizations and the body language of your particular wolf-dog hybrid. Because hybrids can be any mix of wolf subspecies and dog breeds, it is difficult for someone not familiar with a given animal to predict his behavior. This may give the illusion of a particular animal being totally unpredictable.

German Shepherd behavior differs from Alaskan Malamute behavior differs from Siberian Husky behavior. In the same but more subtle ways, different subspecies of wolf have different inherent behaviors or intensities of behaviors. Without knowing the animal well, how could one assess the probable behavior of a cross with arctic wolf, eastern timber wolf, malamute, German shepherd, and
collie? How could a breeder accurately predict the personality traits in pups from such a cross? If the animal had been your companion for a number of years, you should be able to predict behavior in a given situation, but never expect to accurately predict the behavior of a strange or unknown wolf-dog hybrid.

Wild wolves are fairly predictable within the parameters of their pack laws. Dogs are less so, but specific breeds seem to lock in specific behaviors. Wolf-dog hybrids are predictable only to their owner, as so many variables have gone into their genetic make-up. It is difficult to tell unless you know the animal well, if the animal has inherited predominantly wolf behavior, German Shepherd behavior or Siberian Husky behavior. Knowing the complete background of the animal does help to some degree, but just as there are variances in behaviors and intensities within subspecies of wolves, there are also variances in the behaviors of different lines of domesticated dogs. What is normal behavior for a poorly bred line of Siberian Husky, may not be normal for a well bred line.

Though all behaviors exhibited by a wolf, will be found in various breeds of dog, the full gamut of wolf behavior is seldom found in any one domestic dog breed. The intensity of some of the behaviors has been bred out of domestic dogs, such as the hunting and killing aspect of prey drive. In some cases those same behaviors have been intensified, but given a different focus—such as herding behavior. Herding behaviors are believed to be intensified prey drive that is cut off before the killing and eating stage.

A word of caution—although you may know your own canine, never try to anticipate what another, unknown canine will do or how they will behave. To do so may be a dangerous or fatal assumption on your part.

**Prey Drive**

All canines have some level of prey drive—some very little, others exaggerated and directed toward a specific goal, such as herding or retrieving. Wolves have prey drive directed toward hunting, killing, and feeding the pack.

Wolf-dog hybrids will have a certain amount of the instinctual prey drive of the wolf added to that of whatever dog breeds are in the cross. What does that really tell us? Only that the prey drive, whatever the intensity, will be partially directed toward hunting and killing—not the best choice for an urban setting. Because this instinct is hard-wired into the animal, making sure the wolf-dog hybrid is adequately fed will not alter the drive.

Although all dogs exhibit prey drive to some degree it is important to discuss the specifics of a wolf-dog hybrids’ prey drive. These exotic animals often exhibit an intensified prey drive, as they exhibit intensified behaviors in nearly all areas.
As a result of the intensified prey drive, the majority of wolf-dog hybrids are not good with small animals even if they were raised with them. Many will play well with smaller animals while they are young, then one day the smaller animal will do something that triggers prey drive and it will be killed or seriously harmed as a result. Small children often run around and scream, looking and sounding much like wounded prey—this is a common trigger for prey drive since wolves normally hunt the sick or injured of the herd in the wild.

How can this intensified prey drive be handled successfully? Keeping the wolf-dog hybrid securely contained is the best way to prevent any mishaps arising from this intrinsic drive. That means erecting zoo-quality fencing, and having a secure perimeter fence as well. In addition they need supervision while in the house, intense supervision if exposed to small animals and children, intensive socialization, and supervision when exposed to people other than family members. That will mean a lot of lifestyle changes for most owners.

**Children and Wolf-dog hybrids**

A number of children have been seriously injured and even killed by wolf-dog hybrids. Is this because wolf-dog hybrids are inherently vicious canines? No, it is often because the wolf-dog hybrid’s owner did not take proper precautions to keep the animal in a secure compound, separated from children.

ALL children and large animals need to be under strict supervision when they interact with each other. All animals have teeth, and under the proper conditions they can and will bite. Toddlers need intensive supervision with animals because, no matter how well they have been taught, they will often poke and prod not realizing that it causes pain to the animal. An animal’s method of defense is to use his teeth.

The American Veterinary Medical Association reports that 4.5 million people are bitten each year by canines. Almost half those victims are children younger than twelve.

Wolves discipline their young roughly, often with their teeth. A child’s skin is fragile in comparison to that of a pup. Adult wolf-dog hybrids often see the family’s children as pups. Instinct tells them to protect the pups of the pack, but they must also teach those pups. All interactions between the wolf-dog hybrid and young children need to be limited and fully supervised—meaning that the parent is in the room, within arm’s length of the child at all times. Taking a bathroom break or a shower and leaving a child alone with a wolf-dog hybrid is not acceptable.
A few of the many reported Wolf-dog Hybrid bite and fatality Incidents

1986 - Anchorage, Alaska - Nicola Martin, 2 years old, was killed while playing in a yard near a chained wolf hybrid.

1988 - Ft. Walton Beach, Florida - Four-year-old Nathan Carpenter killed by a neighbor's recently acquired hybrid that had been featured as "pet of the week" at the shelter from which it was adopted; Panhandle Area Welfare Society (PAWS) paid a $425,000 settlement to the boy's family.

1990 - Anchorage, Alaska - Four-week-old Paul David Mahler is killed by "Kessy," a hybrid, when the child's mother held the infant out to the animal and the hybrid grabbed the child by the head.

2001 - Six-year-old child may lose her leg after attack by two "pet" wolves or wolf hybrids. (WXII-TV (PAX) - www.wxii12.com)

2001 - Four-year-old boy is mauled to death by wolf-hybrid. Wolf-hybrid bites boy several times and severs his jugular vein. (Southern Illinoisan)

2001 - Wolf-hybrid attacks nine-year-old boy playing with animal. Boy's bites require twenty stitches. (The Press Enterprise)

2003 - 13-month-old boy dies after being attacked by a wolf-hybrid. The wolf-hybrid repeatedly bites boy more than 100 times, eventually puncturing his jugular vein. (KBCI-TV Boise, ID)

If the wolf-dog hybrids had been properly contained, if the owners had been responsible care takers, and if the children's parents had been behaving in a responsible manner, most of these tragedies could have been prevented. They were not prevented, and have become a part of the statistics in Appendix B.