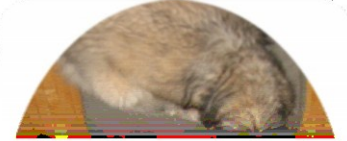




## Chapter 1 Understanding the Leonberger

Despite the regal appearance of that Leonberger you may have seen in the ring at the dog show or the photos you've seen in books and on the web, the Leonberger you live with is more likely to be rolling on his back in the mud or



shedding leaves and its hair all over your floors! Leos are very large and take up a lot of indoor space (coffee table size) While they do not drool, they love sharing a drink of water with you especially if you are wearing good clothes! They are definitely not the breed for fussy housekeepers.

They are very loyal to their families and love spending time with them and the other four footed members of their pack but they also will wander if they aren't enclosed by an appropriate fence and most consider the whole neighborhood as their property. As adults they may not take to strange, same sex dogs coming on to their home turf. Once human strangers are

introduced to them, they are usually accepting of them but they are also watchful guardians, and their deep, loud bark and sheer size will easily warn off an uninvited guest. Putting that bark and guarding ability under your control is very important from the time you get your puppy so that your pup understands that you are the one in charge of saying who is allowed on the property.

Strong leadership is very important with the breed and especially with the males who will be more challenging and stubborn than the females. Leos are pretty sensitive and will train very well with praise and positive reinforcement and poorly with dominance and negative training techniques.

Unlike some of the more sedate giant breeds, the Leo is lively, enjoys playing and running, is light on its feet and very athletic. Because of that, a Leo puppy may not be a good choice for a small suburban lot or an apartment. They need room to run straight out in a large area. An older Leo that does not need as much



exercise and whose body has finished growing may be a much better candidate for living with only walks for exercise. Walks are great for socialization but they aren't enough exercise for a Leonberger. Also because they grow quickly but mature slowly, you need to be careful of what you do with a young dog whose growth plates are not yet closed and whose cartilage is soft. Turning them loose at the local dog park is like putting a toddler out on the field with the high school football team.

Leonbergers are gentle and even tempered, self-assured and calm. Even as an adult the Leo still enjoys playing "tree tag" with doggie friends and soccer with its favorite ball. They will give back to you all of the time you take to socialize and train and love them and you'll wonder how you ever lived without one. Or two. Or maybe three or four...



## Personality and physical traits

Personality Traits	What This Means To You
<p>A mature Leo is calm rather than reactive, and should be comfortable in all situations. Young Leos are very exuberant and lively and require a lot of education to become those wonderful ambassadors of the breeds. They are a sensitive breed and in teaching them it is important to remember to be firm but fair.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialization is the key. Introduce your Leo to a large variety of unique situations and people during the first year of its life</li> <li>• Because of its size and confidence some Leos have a tendency to be bossy. It is important that house rules are not only taught but implemented from the beginning of your relationship as an undisciplined dog of the Leo's size can quickly turn into a major behavior problem.</li> <li>• Have patience and give your puppy a lot of appropriate mental and physical exercise to tire it out</li> </ul>
<p>An adult Leo has common sense, is reflective and non-aggressive. Hormonal surges in adolescent Leos though, especially in males, can be trying. If you are considering a male puppy be sure you are up to the challenge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An adult Leo won't jump into situations without thinking about them.</li> <li>• Leos are usually very social and tolerant of humans and animals they are introduced to if socialized to them early and often throughout their lives.</li> <li>• Continue training through the adolescent stage when it is more important than ever to assert your leadership.</li> </ul>
<p>The Leo "has an outgoing temperament within the family that is slightly more contained with friends, and with strangers it becomes dignified and even reserved" Guido Perosino in <b>The Leonberger</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leo's universe revolves around its family, but don't expect a Golden Retriever type of temperament with everyone it meets. The Leo is very social but even more loyal to its owners.</li> </ul>

<p>The Leo is vigilant, obedient and exudes good-natured watchfulness, depicting intelligence and vigor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leo is not an excitable breed and barks only for a reason if exercised enough, but that bark is strong and loud.</li> </ul>
<p>Today's Leo excels as a multi-purpose working dog. Its most important task is being a reliable family companion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Originally a family, farm and draft dog, the Leo needs a purpose, even if it is being the "hall monitor". Left to its own devices a Leo will invent a job which could easily be digging huge holes in your yard or giving you a start on replacing the siding on your house.</li> </ul>

Physical Traits	What This Means To You
<p>Males should exude masculinity while females should be feminine. However, both sexes are very large, powerful and impressive.</p>	<p>Female Leos range from 25.5" to 29.5" although 27.5" is preferred  Males range from 28" to 31.5" although 30" is preferred.  Weight is in proportion to the overall size and structure.</p>
<p>Waterproof, thick, abundant coats with a shorter, wooly undercoat.  A longer, soft to rough overcoat with a medium texture preferred.  Distinct feathering on front and rear legs with a well-furnished tail.</p>	<p>They need brushing weekly to remove dead hair and shed heavily twice a year.  Males have a mane at maturity.  Their tails can clear your coffee table.</p>
<p>Colors range from lion-yellow, golden, to red and red-brown, sand, cream and pale yellow.</p>	<p>Black tips may be found on any of the colors.  A small white patch or small unobtrusive stripe on the chest, or a few white hairs on the toes are tolerated.</p>

<p>Their bodies grow quickly.</p>	<p>The joints of this heavier boned breed are still forming and excessive stress or strain may cause cruciate ligament problems and permanent injury if care is not taken while they are young. Be careful letting young Leos rough house.</p>
<p>Ear leather is heavy, fleshy and hangs close to the head. Some Leos produce more wax than others.</p>	<p>Owners should clean ears weekly and be watchful for head shaking. Leo ears do not allow good air circulation and are prone to infection.</p>



## Chapter 2

### Is the Leonberger the right dog for you?

Before making the decision to bring a Leonberger into your family, ask yourself the following questions.

1. Do you know that while adult well trained Leos are overall calm, good natured and loving, Leo puppies and teenagers in particular are full of energy and hormones and can be quite a handful for the first year or two?
2. Do you know Leonbergers love to be with their family and don't make good "only outside" dogs? A Leo isolated from its family will become very destructive.
3. Do you have a large, fenced property? Leonbergers can cover a huge amount of ground in 30 seconds and they have large feet which can ruin a small suburban lot in a matter of days. A Leo kept in a small backyard without enough exercise can easily become over protective.
4. Do you have a large enough indoor space to provide room for them to walk around without constantly being in your way and lie down without blocking entryways? Think extra coffee table!
5. Are you OK with heavy shedding? Do you have time to brush a big dog every week and a good vacuum cleaner? Leos shed twice a year and you'll be able to make articles of clothing from the hair you pull out of your carpets.
6. Do you have the time to meet the Leo's socialization requirements? The window of socialization closes by 20 weeks of age and it's important to get your Leo to as many new and unique places and introduce it to as many new people and things as possible to help bring out the natural self-confidence later in life.
7. Do you have older children? Although gentle, Leonbergers can easily topple a small child (or an unwary adult!).

8. Do you realize the Leonberger, like most giant breeds has a shorter lifespan than the small and medium breeds? The average lifespan for Leos is around 8 years.

9. Do you have a good training facility nearby and the commitment to take your Leo to group classes so it learns to work with you around distracting circumstances and be able to better socialize with a lot of different dogs?



If you have answered “yes” to the above questions then a Leonberger may be the right dog for you!

Siv Solberg’s Gulgutta



## Chapter 3

### How to Find a Leonberger

Once you have decided that the Leonberger is the type of dog that will fit your needs, a number of topics must be addressed in helping you find the right dog.

The best place to obtain a well-bred Leonberger is from a reputable breeder. The key here is “reputable”. If you would like to adopt an older Leonberger, you may want to work with one of the many reputable rescue groups located across the country.

If you are already reading this, chances are you’ve found it on the Leonberger-U website. The Leonberger Club of America is the parent club for the AKC and a great place to start your search for the right Leonberger puppy. LCA member breeders and stud owners follow the Member Practices when breeding a litter and are working to maintain and improve what the club has been striving for since it was established in 1985. Here are some good reasons to buy from an LCA breeder.

1. You’ll not only know who your puppy’s breeder is but you’ll be able to learn a lot about the pup’s parents and other ancestors and may even be able to meet some of them. Your breeder will probably be there for you over the life of the puppy to answer questions and you will be welcomed into a community of great owners who share a lot of your interests.
2. While Mother Nature is still wiser than any of us, LCA member breeders strive to improve their knowledge of genetics and breeding and many are taking courses at Leo U. They health test their breeding dogs so they know where problems lie and are then able to avoid doubling up on them and they use available genetic testing to prevent as much as they can. While Leonbergers have a lot of the same health issues as most dogs, breeders’ goals include trying to improve health and longevity in their breeding programs.
3. Leonbergers are not cheap, due partially to all of the health testing that breeders do for your benefit as well as the dogs’. That testing runs into



hundreds of dollars. Because this is a club that cares about health as much as it cares about conformation, many reputable breeders will ask that you also do a number of health tests when your dog reaches maturity so that the information can be used to keep your next Leonberger just as healthy. Information from pet owners is critical for breeders being able to make conscientious breeding decisions. The interesting fact about this is that you will probably be paying even more should you be unlucky enough to find a Leonberger at a pet store and you will not get all of the services you will get from an LCA member breeder.

The next section of the chapter discusses these topics:

- How to find a reputable breeder
- Questions to ask a breeder and questions that a breeder will ask you
- Should you consider an adult or a puppy; a male or female?
- Companion pets versus show quality prospects
- Adopting a pet from a Leo rescue group



### **Reputable Breeders do the following:**

1. Are usually members of the Leonberger Club of America and believe in working toward improving the conformation and health of the Leonberger. LCA Member breeders are guided by The Member Practices.
2. Ask many good questions of prospective owners in order to ensure their puppy is going to a good home.
3. Sell their “companion” puppies on limited registrations.
4. Often compete with their Leonbergers in conformation, obedience, agility, water work or drafting.

5. Health test their breeding stock and attain CHIC # so the results of testing are available in an open database.
6. Sell their puppies on contracts, spelling out the breeder's and the buyer's responsibilities
7. Have first right of refusal clauses in their contracts to take back or help to re-home a Leo if the owner can no longer keep it.
8. Are happy to help you if you have any questions regarding the health or training of your puppy.
9. Will not place a puppy until it is 8 weeks of age.
- 10 Never sell puppies or litters to pet shops or wholesalers.

## Questions to ask a Breeder

It is up to you to do your homework to assure yourself that the breeder is in fact ethical and conscientious. Don't be afraid to ask the following questions.

1. How long have you been breeding Leonbergers?  
Everyone has to start someplace and longevity doesn't always mean quality, but breeders who have produced three or four litters over a number of years have experience and should have some idea of what their breeding stock is carrying. If you are buying a puppy from a breeder's first or second litter, they should be able to tell you about their own mentors and advisors.
2. Do you belong to the Leonberger Club of America or the Leonberger Parent club in your country?  
Membership and involvement in Breed clubs involves working within the clubs' Member Practices that give greater credibility to a breeder.

3. In what type of activities do your dogs participate?

Many reputable breeders are involved in conformation competition or in various performance events.

4. Do you have any puppies available, and, if not, when do you plan to have another litter?

If they will have puppies available in the near future, the majority of breeders will put your name on a waiting list. Breeders whose lists are full are usually more than willing to refer you to other reputable breeders. There are not a lot of Leonbergers born every year in comparison to many other breeds.

5. What kind of guarantee do you offer on your puppies?

Reputable breeders will guarantee a puppy to be in healthy condition at the time of sale. Most breeders will offer some type of guarantee on the health of a puppy for a specific period of time if the puppy has to be euthanized due to an inherited disease.

6. What is the price of the puppy?

As with everything else, there is a range of prices for Leonberger puppies in different areas of the country. A higher price does not necessarily indicate quality but neither does a lower price.

7. Will you provide proof of vaccinations and worming as well as a contract and AKC registration papers?

Reputable breeders should provide a bill of sale, a contract detailing conditions of sale and a copy of the puppy's health record. AKC registration paperwork should be provided when you get your puppy.



John McCrae and Coach

8. Do you have any recommendations that I should follow when I bring my puppy home?

Most reputable breeders will provide some form of puppy packet that includes their own recommendations on care, diet and training of the puppy,

Note:

“If a breeder states that AKC papers are available for an additional charge,” this should be a red flag to potential puppy buyers.



## Questions a Breeder May Ask You

1. Have you ever owned dogs before and specifically what breeds?

Familiarity with very large breeds, in particular working breeds, ensures a higher success rate in placing a puppy in a new home. It is a particular “plus” if a prospective buyer has had the experience of owning a Leonberger previously.

2. Why do you want a Leonberger?

It is important for the breeder to determine what type of puppy personality will fit best with each owner. If you have specific things you want to do with your Leonberger, those will be taken into consideration as well as the ages of your children. Whether you have a busy or quiet household, whether you are more of a leader or a follower will all be important in the breeder’s final decision of which puppy will make the best match.

3. Do you have an enclosed or fenced in backyard?

Many Leonbergers are “explorers” and want to investigate the world beyond your property. A securely fenced yard can prevent your Leonberger from being lost, injured, or worse. A dog that is tied to a tree or other object cannot escape a threat and could become aggressive.

4. Where will your new puppy live?

The friendly, affectionate nature of the Leonberger craves the companionship of other animals and humans. It will be happiest in the house where it can be cared for by a loving family. Leonbergers are NOT good outside only dogs.

5. What is your plan for the times when you will have to leave your puppy alone?

Most breeders will be concerned if a young puppy must be left alone for more than a few hours. Puppies need to be fed 3 X a day at first and have to have frequent potty breaks and playtimes. The breeder will want to know how you will handle those times.

6. Are you familiar with the latest research on the pros and cons of spaying and neutering?

We now know that hormones affect many other systems besides the reproductive system and their absence can have deleterious effects on many aspects of the dogs' health. Would you be comfortable following your breeder's recommendations on spaying and neutering?

7. Are you aware not only of the purchase price of this puppy but also the costs of its care and maintenance?

Everything about a Leo is large from its appetite to its vet bills. Big dogs simply cost more.

8. Do you have children and if so what are their ages.

Your breeder will want to know if your children have had experience in dealing with giant breed dogs and if they are comfortable with them. Remember your Leo puppy will outweigh your three year old very quickly.

9. Is the decision to purchase a Leonberger a unanimous one in your family?

Your breeder will want to be 110% certain that every family member wants this puppy.