



What to Name Your Dog

By Candy Lewis, D.V.M.

The idea of naming a dog is an old one. As far back as people and dogs have lived in groups, people have needed a way to refer to each individual separately, thus the concept of naming. However, the art of selecting a name is much more subtle.

Some dogs come with names. Others practically tell their new owners what to name them. However, if your dog is allowing you to pick its name, here are a few pointers in selecting a good one.

First, consider the fact that the name is something you will have to say one to five hundred times a day. Make it something that is easy to get out. "Euripides" may sound nice the first few times, but imagine having to shout it ten times into the breeze at the beach.

Second, avoid any name which sounds like the name of another member of the family. For instance, if the husband's name is Jack, avoid calling the dog "Mack". Not only will the dog be confused when you call him to the phone, but Jack may be perturbed at being summoned to a nice bowl of kibble. Avoid, too, names that sound like the names of species of other pets in the house. I once knew two dogs, (living in one house) called Tuffer and Tuffit. No one, including the dogs, was sure which was which.

Third, avoid a name, which sounds like a command. "Mitt" is a poor choice of name as are "Town" and "Fay". The worst names are those that sound like No, especially when dealing with an untrained dog or a puppy, which is, face it, when most of us are naming our dogs. Don't call your dog Noah, Cyrano, Beau (sorry, all those Beaus out there), Piano or, if you can help it, any other word ending in "o" unless you plan to indicate that the dog has done something wrong by using Nyet!, Nein! or Phooey! (In which case, don't call your dog Louie!) It really is hard enough to educate a new dog or puppy without the dog confusing his name with a reprimand (and vice versa).

Fourth, if you are like most of the rest of us, you will probably either lengthen, shorten or fiddle with your dog's name as you come up with affectionate nicknames. Don't be too rigid in picking a name. At our house, Travis becomes Trav, Travi, Travesty, Travistation or Travling. August becomes Aug or Auger (never Augie!), Rrhea becomes dia-rrhea. When we want both Rrhea and her sister, Jade, we call for Rade and Jea. Hershey becomes Tershey-dog. Collie is Collie Wobbles, which is both a British phrase and a statement of her uniqueness as she only has 3 legs. And so on...

Last, and most important, have fun naming your dog. Make up a word, if you are good at that. If you wish, pick something unusual or rare (but easy to say) so that no one will accidentally call your dog while calling theirs at the park. If you follow these guidelines, you should be able to avoid the hidden naming traps and come up with just the right name for him/her/it! (Final note: if you want to sound

original, avoid Max or Sam for either sex! These are the current most popular names for dogs.)

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