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2nd Edition

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or dog for your lifestyle

Keep your dog groomed,
fit and healthy

Solve common
behavioral problems

Gina Spadafori

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medical writer

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Dogs

2nd Edition

by Gina Spadafori

FOREWORD BY **Marty Becker, DVM**

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Dogs For Dummies[®], 2nd Edition

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Foreword

These days, people's pets have become bona fide members of the family. Moving from the kennel to the couch, they share our beds, family rooms, and holidays and are recipients of our kindest impulses and utmost concern.

Yet pet owners know that a pet is also a big responsibility because they are dependent on us for almost all of their basic needs, including food, water, shelter, and love. A pet is a living being whose life your human family will shape, share, and nurture. A pet partnership is a lifetime commitment. Do it right, and your pet will become an important and valuable part of the family for years to come. Do it wrong, and you've broken a sacred covenant between mankind and man's best friend.

As a veterinarian who's done thousands of new puppy and kitten visits, and as someone who works with the leading veterinary experts at most of the major veterinary schools in the United States, I've had the good fortune to see firsthand what steps you can take to begin your pet ownership the right way. Luckily, they are all found in the wonderfully written, comprehensive book that you hold in your hands: *Dogs For Dummies*, written by Gina Spadafori.

Many veterinarians recommend this award-winning book to new pet owners because it so quickly and easily delivers the information that clients want — and pets need. It's a proven “in-the-trenches” look at the simple steps you can and must take to make your pet an “ideal” pet — one that is well-behaved, content, and perfectly integrated within the human family.

I enthusiastically recommend *Dogs For Dummies* to all of my clients and to millions of pet lovers through my work on television, radio, and in print because the book is both a comprehensive manual and a quick reference, is easily understandable yet authoritative, and is inspirational as well as instructional. Complete this educational book and you'll have an honorary “Dogtorate” degree *in The Bond*.

Buying this book is most certainly one of the greatest gifts you can give a beloved pet. By following the principles, plans, and proven positive approaches described in *Dogs For Dummies*, you'll be the owner every pet wants and deserves — informed, responsible, and loving.

Marty Becker, DVM

Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of *Dogs For Dummies*, the canine reference for those who want all the basics covered in one easy-to-use book.

Well, you've found it. Dog health. Dog training. Not to mention dog gear, dog grooming, dog breeding, and dog sports. Whether you're looking to adopt a dog, trying to improve your relationship with the one you have, or attempting to come up with fun things to do with your furry pal, this book contains something for you.

The first edition of *Dogs For Dummies* was the first of the *For Dummies* pet books, and the most common question I heard was: "Wait! Don't they just do computer books?" I don't hear that anymore, with *For Dummies* books available on just about any imaginable topic, and with lots more on the way!

Dogs For Dummies was more than the first *For Dummies* pet book: It was my first book. I'd written a pet-care newspaper column for many years, and I was featured in the pets area of American Online when I was asked to write the first edition of this book. I felt like my prayers had been answered when I was offered such a great opportunity.

The first edition of *Dogs For Dummies* was critically acclaimed, and named Best General Reference and Best Writing on Dogs by the Dog Writers Association of America. Even more important, I started hearing from lots of book buyers about how much my work had helped them.

Buoyed by the success of *Dogs For Dummies*, I co-authored *Cats For Dummies* and *Birds For Dummies*. I'm proud of them all, but this book will always be my first, and I'm so happy to have the opportunity to make it even better.

So make yourself comfortable and enjoy this comprehensive and easy-to-follow book for dog lovers from dog lovers. The dog you get — or the dog you have — will thank you, believe me.

We Love Dogs . . . to Death, Sometimes

In spite of the popularity of dogs, some numbers suggest we don't love dogs all that much. How can anyone explain a society where doggy birthday parties and doggy day care aren't all that rare, but millions of dogs are put to death every year in humane society shelters and municipal animal-control facilities?

Undoubtedly, some of these dogs are semiwild strays, some are psycho, some incurably ill, and some are ancient. But many are none of those things: They're healthy, young, beautiful dogs — mixes and purebred both — who will die because the people who took them in don't want them anymore, for reasons as frivolous as redecorating and as serious as biting.

And what about the puppies who won't make it? Where did they come from? Some end up in shelters as part of "oops" litters, others are leftovers from litters planned by people who overestimated the demand for Golden Retrievers or Poodles or Rottweilers and got tired of the extra mouths to feed.

Because no one wants to imagine the worst, everyone who has ever dropped a dog at a shelter imagines that he ends up in a perfect home.

For many, that home is in heaven. Such is the dark side of a dog-crazy society.

How Do Dog Disasters Happen

Too many decisions about dogs are made because of emotions, not facts. The truth is, most of us are suckers for a puppy face.

Few things are more adorable than a puppy, no matter the breeding. They are endowed with noses like licorice jelly beans, big eyes that sparkle with curiosity and affection, big paws and gangly legs that give them an adorably bouncy gait, and soft, fluffy fur that's better for snuggling than any teddy bear ever made.

Like human babies, puppies even smell special.

My own theory is that they are made this way as some kind of ingenious natural defense, to keep the humans they rely on from seeking revenge for every carpet soiled, every finger nipped, and every couch corner chewed during what can seem at times a very long babyhood and adolescence. You come upon your wondrous puppy in possession of your new and very expensive running shoes, the upper of the left one neatly severed from its sole by sharp puppy teeth. You feel the blood rush to your face. The puppy stops, a piece of fine leather dangling from an eye tooth.

Before you can snap his little neck, he's running toward you, stumbling over those big paws of his, every inch of his body happy to see you. And before you know it, you're smiling.

See what I mean? Do you think a wild dog would fall for cuteness? Think again. He'd nail him if they had been *his* running shoes. Or *his* tasty leg of rabbit. Cuteness counts for nothing in the wild.

The awwwwwww factor

It's a shame we aren't a little less impressionable where puppies are concerned. Every year hundreds of thousands of people bring puppies into their homes, many after little more than a moment or two of thought.

If you take away only one thing from this book, it should be that getting a dog on impulse offers low odds for a successful relationship. Still, it's easy to see how it happens.

Maybe you see a puppy at the mall, in a pet-store window that's emblazoned with the symbols of every credit card in your wallet. Or maybe you get waylaid by a couple of kids outside the grocery store, hawking a box of free puppies.

"And you say the amount of shedding isn't really that bad?" you ask the nice people at the pet store while cuddling a collie pup, thinking of your navy-blue couch and your closet full of basic black. The puppy sighs and snuggles against your chest. Soon you're adding a lint brush to the growing pile of supplies on the counter and, lest you start to worry about the cost, the sales clerk quickly points out that you can always breed your dog and get your money back with puppy sales. You look at that wonderful puppy face and imagine seven more just like her, and then seven times the purchase price in your pocket. A beautiful pet *and* a return on your investment? Sold.

Or maybe you're moved by pure altruism.

"Say, mister, that one really seems to like you!" says the kid in front of the market, as you stop just long enough to cuddle the pup with that amazingly adorable patch over his eye. The puppy is licking your fingers while your brain struggles to work this dilemma out. You know you ought to call your spouse. But hadn't you talked about getting a dog someday, now that you've bought a house? How much effort can a little puppy be? You always had dogs when you were a child; how can you deny your children that pleasure?

"Dad says if we don't get rid of 'em today he's going to drown 'em," says the kid, urgently.

“Not Patch!” you yell and, a little while later, you’re driving home with a puppy in your lap and ten pounds of puppy food in the trunk of your car.

Puppy love is fleeting

When it comes to puppies, love at first sight is a disaster in the making. A year later, Patch and the collie touch noses at the shelter. On TV, Timmy never seemed to care about Lassie’s fur on his jeans, but you can’t stand it on your clothes anymore. As for Patch, who’d have thought he’d turn out to be so large? You have neither the kind of space nor the time for the exercise he needs. And you’re tired of yelling at the kids over whose turn it is to clean up the yard. One dog isn’t house-trained, the other never seemed to understand that chewing wasn’t OK. Not surprising, because neither dog was ever trained as a puppy.

They’re still nice dogs, though. Young, and apparently healthy. A country home, a little training, and they’d be perfect — for someone else. Problem is, they aren’t so cute anymore. Maybe they both make it, maybe neither does. It’s not your fault, is it?

A Preventive Approach

Nobody adopts a dog guessing that they’ll be dropping him off at the shelter later. Just thinking about doing so is heartbreaking. You get a dog because you want a loving, well-mannered companion. A playmate for the children. A crime deterrent, perhaps.

The most important factors in determining whether you end up with your dream dog or an ill-mannered and possibly dangerous beast is how well you educate yourself before you buy and how well you educate your dog thereafter.

That’s part of what this book is all about. Preparing you to make the right selection when you’re ready to adopt a dog and giving you the information you need to make good on the bright promise of that first meeting.

Improving the Dog You Have

Of course, many people wouldn’t dream of giving up on their dogs, although the infatuation stage is long past and the relationship is strained. They endure “bad” dogs the way they do bad marriages — and for many of the same reasons. Because

the children would be heartbroken or because friends and relatives would be disappointed. Because it's the right thing to do, or because they don't want to admit they made a mistake. Because if they wish hard enough, maybe the situation will get better. Because maybe the problem is their fault, and they're sure that they still love him (or her).

Is this you? You may get points for being a good sport, but admit it: This isn't any fun. You want a *good dog*.

I can help you with that. Your marriage? You've got the wrong book. (Although there is a *For Dummies* book on making marriage work, and another on rekindling romance!)

Why You Need This Book

A saying in dog-training circles — “Every handler gets the dog he deserves” — refers to the fact that your chances at success are directly related to your abilities to choose, raise, and live with your dog properly. What you put in determines what you get out.

In the more than ten years that I've been advising people about dog problems, I've discovered that, more often than not, the lack of accurate information — *not* the lack of effort or concern — is the number one reason for doomed people-pet pairings.

What kind of dog do *you* deserve? I think you deserve a healthy, happy, and well-mannered canine companion, and I'm going to show you how to get one — or turn yours into one. And then I show you how to have a great time sharing your life with your wonder dog.

Becoming an Informed Consumer

Think about what you did before you bought your last car or television set. You probably comparison-shopped, trying to figure out which manufacturer made the product that was best for you in terms of its specifications, its reputation for reliability, and its cost to purchase and maintain.

If you're young, single, and in an entry-level job, I'm guessing you didn't buy a minivan. Likewise, if you spend a lot of time ferrying your daughter's soccer team

to the pizza parlor on Saturday afternoons or buying plywood sheets for the latest home-improvement project, your choice wasn't a sporty economy car. As for the TV, you probably took a tape measure with you to make sure that it fit in your entertainment cabinet.

Now, consider the following: If things go right, you'll have a dog longer than you'll keep a new car and probably longer than a TV will work. So why should it come as a surprise that you need to shop carefully for a dog? Take your time, study the specifications. Determine the rate of defects, consider the cost of maintenance. Even do your homework on the person from whom you get a dog, because if you have a warranty, you want to deal with people who'll be there when you need them.

You need to be a savvy shopper — before you get a dog and every day after. Keep in mind that you'll be buying food and supplies for the life of your dog! (Don't worry, I'll give you tips.)

With that attitude and the information that follows in this book, you're well on your way to becoming a dog expert — and better still, a satisfied dog owner.

How This Book Is Organized

Dogs For Dummies is divided into five sections. If you're looking for a dog, you might want to start at the beginning. If you already have a dog, you can skip around, checking out the chapters that address your most urgent dog problems. If you want to impress your coworkers by explaining the difference between the two kinds of terriers, you probably want to read the whole book.

No matter the order you choose, here's what you'll find:

Part 1: Bringing a Puppy or Adult Dog into Your Life

Mixed breed or purebred? What size? What breed type? Puppy or adult? Male or female? Breeder, humane society, or pet store? Complicated as these decisions may be, they're also some of the most enjoyable ones you'll ever make. This section walks you through them, step by step.

Part 2: Getting the Relationship Off to the Best Start

Once you get your new puppy or dog home, there's everything you need to get the relationship off on the right paw, including house-training tips for little pups or big dogs. You'll find the information you need on dog supplies in this section, too, along with help on feeding your dog.

Part 3: Keeping Your Dog Healthy

Basic care for all stages and ages are outlined here, along with tips on choosing animal-care professionals. Learn how to groom your dog, spot health problems early, and choose the right veterinarian. Common health problems are covered in this section, as well as information on how to make your dog's senior years comfortable and happy.

Part 4: Living Happily with Your Dog

Basic training and problem-solving are covered in this part, along with what you need to know to get involved in dog sports. Traveling with your dog is the focus of another chapter. You'll also find an overview of breeding — along with reasons why your dog is almost certainly better off not becoming a parent.

Part 5: The Part of Tens

From protecting your landscaping to the best Web sites for dog-lovers, some of the best has been saved for last. Read these chapters with your dog in your lap — you'll both enjoy them more.

Icons Used in This Book



TECHNICAL
STUFF

Maybe you want to know a little more *why* some house-training strategies work better than others. This icon is the place to look to find that sort of information. If you just want to catch the basic concepts, give this guy a pass.



TIP

This icon flags things that are especially useful for making living with your dog easier or making your dog happier and healthier.



REMEMBER

This icon reminds you of information so important that you should read it more than once, just to make sure it stays with you.



WARNING

This icon marks some of the most common mistakes dog owners make, along with tips for avoiding them.

How to Reach Me

I invite you to tell me about *your* dog and your tales of living with a canine companion. You can read the exploits of my animals — as well as up-to-date information on animal health and behavior — as part of my weekly column, *Pet Connection*, which is provided to newspapers by the Universal Press Syndicate and also appears every week in the Pet Care Forum (www.vin.com/petcare), part of the Veterinary Information Network (www.vin.com), a subscription service for veterinary professionals. I also write an exclusive essay on pets every week for Pets.com. You can e-mail me at writetogina@spadafori.com, but snail mail is just as nice to get, at the following address:

Gina Spadafori

PMB 211

5714 Folsom Blvd

Sacramento, CA 95819

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this book comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet. To get this Cheat Sheet, go to www.dummies.com and search for “Dogs For Dummies, 2nd Edition Cheat Sheet” by using the Search box.

1

Bringing a Puppy or Adult Dog into Your Life

IN THIS PART . . .

This part explains where to look for your new puppy or dog, how to choose the right one for you, and how to get the relationship off to a good start. In here, you'll get the information you need to evaluate whether a male or female, puppy or grown dog, is a better fit with your family. If you want a purebred puppy, you get the facts you need to find a good breeder — and find out why you should avoid any other kind. Considering a grown dog? A mixed breed? Good for you! I give you plenty of information in this part to help you find a good source.