

Information for Prospective/First-Time Vizsla Owners

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Owned and loved by four Vizslas: Beamer & Amber, and over Rainbow Bridge: Spaetzlle & Sweetie

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About the breed:

The Hungarian or Magyar Vizsla represents one of the best in sporting dogs and loyal companions and has a strong claim to being one of the smallest of the all-round pointer/retriever breeds. His size is one of the Vizsla's most attractive characteristics and through the centuries he has held a unique position for a sporting dog-that of household companion and family dog. The Vizsla is not content to be "put in the kennel with the dogs" after the hunt and only reaches his fullest capacity when he is a member of the family he serves.

The Vizsla started arriving in the United States at the close of World War II. As interest in and devotion to the breed began to increase, owners formed the Vizsla Club of America in order to gain AKC recognition. As a result of registering foundation stock with the AKC, Vizsla owners were able to obtain official recognition in 1960 and the Vizsla became the 115th breed recognized by the American Kennel Club.

The Official Standard of the Vizsla Breed has been developed and adopted by the Vizsla Club of America and its members. This information should be used as a guideline for understanding and appreciating the breed. The standard may be found at clubs.akc.org/vizsla/standard.htm.

Exercise needs:

Tired puppies are much less trouble than puppies who are full of the devil! Regular daily exercise, off the lead so your pup can tear around, will help a great deal in keeping your house and your life more puppy-proofed. BEWARE! Vizsla pups NEED this exercise without it they will use your house as a race track and actively look for trouble! Start looking now for parks and fields where you can run your pup. For the next few years you will be spending an hour a day minimum (!) tiring out your little darling, so find a variety of places to exercise off leash. You will be out, rain or shine, for at least one major off-leash run a day, SO BE WARNED!!! A small fenced-in backyard is insufficient space for a Vizsla to really stretch. In young puppies, moderation is advisable because of the risk of damaging growth plates in their legs. Adolescent puppies are another story! It is difficult to raise a puppy when no one is home during the day, and housetraining becomes much more difficult. Puppies need a midday meal and to potty frequently. If your pup will be home alone for extended periods of time, you will need to have a plan for the pup's care, such as using neighbors, friends, relatives, paid pet sitters or puppy day care. Many breeders recommend crating your puppy when the pup is not able to be supervised for both the safety of the puppy and of your house; however, most agree that puppies should not be crated for more than a few hours at a time.

Training needs:

While waiting for your pup, start looking for a place that trains the way you want to have your dog trained. There are many methods and you need to consider that Vizslas are very smart and trainable and eager to please, but they are slow to mature mentally. In fact, they need training to be good companions so all that mischievous energy gets properly channeled. They are sensitive dogs who usually do not respond well to harsh training methods, and since they mature slowly, they often have short attention spans and get bored easily during training sessions when young. The rule of thumb is not to let a puppy do anything you wouldn't want a 45-65 lb. adult dog to do, and never to continue with a trainer whose methods make you uncomfortable. Most puppy buyers will want to get a minimum of a year of obedience training, and two years is better, with other socialization experiences continuing after formal training. See the list of books at the end of this handout for more information. This does not mean sending your pup for someone else to train, this means attending classes with your dog.

Vizslas and children:

Vizslas are a high-drive hunting breed and children frequently unwittingly act just like prey. Vizslas are also more needy in terms of affection and human companionship than other breeds and can see children as competition. Vizslas can be tolerant with children given proper supervision and training—if the children are good with the dog. “Being good with children” does NOT mean “without supervision.” NO CHILD (family member or not) UNDER 11 SHOULD BE LEFT UNSUPERVISED WITH ANY DOG. All children should be taught how to interact with the dog and that dogs are not toys, for the two to live in harmony. Little boys in particular need to be taught how to handle a dog and not to pull on the dog’s ears, tail, or private parts, or to stick things in the same places. Puppies tend to mouth and bite small children, steal their toys and knock them down, and you and the children need to learn how to handle these situations calmly. The immediate reaction of many children is to start screaming and running, which just exacerbates the problem.

Children should also be taught that the puppy's crate is off limits; it is the puppy's safe haven, and to respect the dog’s space, especially near food dishes and wherever the dog sleeps or rests outside the crate. “Being good with children” does NOT MEAN tolerating any amount of pummeling from a child without ever growling or biting. This is an unrealistic expectation for any breed, but particularly for one that is sensitive like the Vizsla.

Families with children might also consider whether they will have time for the dog to get enough attention and exercise with young children demanding parents’ time and attention. It is extremely hard to be successful when trying to house train a pup and toilet train a human in the same time period. The pup usually ends up being the one who suffers on the training end. Whether people have children or not, though, they should do as much as they can to childproof their dog; especially to toddlers and prepubescent children who seem to be especially threatening to dogs. They smell and behave differently than adult humans, which makes them confusing to dogs.

Velcro dogs:

Vizslas are NOT dogs that can just be left in a yard. They were bred to be affectionate housedogs as well as hunting and field dogs, and they want to be WITH their people. They will follow you from room to room, including the bathroom, sleep next to you or at your feet, and lay their heads in your lap at every opportunity, etc. One friend has said that once you have a Vizsla, you will never go to bathroom alone again. Left to their own devices without human companionship, they will become lonely, bored and destructive. People who expect dogs to raise themselves by themselves will not like this breed.

Shedding:

Vizslas do shed, but unless you are allergic or obsessive, it sort of blends in with the décor. You can control this by rubbing the dog with a non-cotton sweater to pick up loose hairs.

Where to find reputable breeders:

- Contact your regional Vizsla club at clubs.www.akc.org/Vizsla
- Vizsla Club of America contacts: Florence Duggan at (908) 789-0774; e-mail FloPete4@aol.com

Questions reputable breeders should ask you:

- Where did you hear about Vizslas?
- What your expectations are for the dog?
- Why do you want a Vizsla, as opposed to another breed or a mixed breed.?
- Prior experience with dogs/Vizslas, especially training them, and whether you've ever raised a puppy before and if so, what breed?
- How many people live in your home, especially children and their ages?
- What is your lifestyle like, and how the dog will fit into it, especially during the next 2 years, and is someone home during the day?
- What particular characteristics do you want in your puppy/dog, including personality and gender and why?
- Are there other pets in the house?
- Do you intend to spay/neuter or breed your dog?
- To describe where the puppy will live, sleep and stay when you are away.
- What kind of dwelling you live in, if you have a fenced yard and if not, where the dog will exercise?
- What are the activity level/exercise requirements you have for your dog and how do you plan to exercise your puppy?
- Are you are interested in showing your dog, or co-owning with the breeder until show qualities are or are not obvious?
- What are your current veterinarian's name and phone number?

Questions to Ask Breeders:

- How is the temperament of the sire and dam?
- What health tests have you done on sire and dam?
- What were you striving for as part of your breeding program?
- Do you personally know other dogs in the pedigree of the puppies?

- Are you affiliated with any regional or national Vizsla clubs?
- How do you plan your litters and rate the puppies?
- What temperament tests and exposure to new things will you do with the pups?
- Are you going to keep a pup? If not, why not?
- How do you determine which puppy goes to which home? If I cannot pick out my own puppy, please explain on what basis you would decide which one comes to me?
- What are the AKC registered names and titles of the sire and dam?
- Do you require me to sign a contract, and if so, would you share a copy and explain it to me?
- Do you require co-ownership of puppies, and if so, why?
- Do you offer a health/temperament guarantee with your puppies? What does it entail?
- How long have you been in the breed?
- Are you willing to answer my questions after I take the dog home?
- Do you require a spay/neuter or limited registration on pets?
- Will you assist me if I cannot keep the dog?
- When can I visit my new puppy?
- What veterinary care will the puppy have had when I take it home?
- What paperwork will I receive with my puppy?
- Will you give me the names of two people who have your puppies so that I might talk to them? (and DO it)

Puppy prices and Issues:

Puppy prices vary. (On the East and West coasts between \$1200 to \$2500 depending on the breeder and the pedigrees involved; prices are slightly lower in the Midwest). A higher price does not necessarily equate with better quality; many responsible breeders are working to keep prices reasonable in an effort to discourage puppy mill breeders.

Ask the breeder of any litter you consider about the goals of their breeding program; ask why they paired the parents of this litter and about titles the parents have earned. Make sure that both parents have been cleared of hip dysplasia by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) registry. Get a copy of OFA numbers for both parents. (There are also other tests that really should be done such as CERF and Thyroid as well as heart a puppy from a reputable breeder, you also acquire support throughout the lifetime of your dog). Be suspicious of any "bargain" prices for this breed, especially if "AKC registered" or "AKC papers" is part of the selling pitch, without show or field titles and OFA numbers within the first two or three generations. Since breeders in this breed have been very forward thinking about hip dysplasia, there should be hip ratings (OFA or BIC) on all dogs in most five-generation pedigrees. Avoid purchasing a puppy from a breeder with whom you do not have good rapport and avoid puppy mill, pet store and Internet purchases.

Sometimes, breeders may seem "snooty" to first time owners, and you should not purchase a puppy from someone with whom you feel you can have no rapport. Because of the special needs of this breed and because of their own breeding objectives, many breeders may seem reluctant to take a chance on a newcomer, especially one who only wants a pet who won't even

consider doing any competitive events with the dog. You need to "sell" yourself (honestly, not deceptively) to the breeder as much or more than you need to be able to pay for a Vizsla puppy, and you need to keep an open mind about what you might do with the dog in the future with the breeder's help and encouragement. You are buying more than a dog. You are buying a carefully planned breeding, a pedigree, and a lifetime relationship with a breeder. Remember that Jack Sharkey, a retiree, only wanted a pet, and his Vizsla Chartay is now the first (and only) quintuple champion in AKC's 116-year history.

Breed rescue and contacts:

For a variety of reasons, some people are not able to keep their Vizslas, and these dogs become available for rehoming. Sometimes, they have had no prior training, or they have been abused and need major caring and rehabilitation, or they are available because of divorce or the owner dying. Rarely are they puppies. Potential rescue owners are screened as carefully as new puppy buyers, and because of the unique needs and challenging demands of Vizslas, preference in rescue situations is usually, but not always, given to persons who have already raised a Vizsla and know what is involved. THIS IS NOT AN ALTERNATE ROUTE TO A CHEAPER DOG! Usually, prospective owners are asked to pay transportation charges for a dog and to make a contribution to breed rescue to further the work of rescue for other dogs. Rescue is expensive in both time and money.

- VCA National Breed Rescue Coordinator: Kate Payne, at threereddogs@sbcglobal.net; (713) 863-8607.
- Other VCA State and regional rescue coordinators may be found at <http://www.clubs.akc.org/vizsla/coordinators.htm>

Further sources of information:

- The Vizsla Club of America sells an information packet for prospective Vizsla owners for \$3.00 at clubs.akc.org/vizsla/vcastore.htm.
- Books (borrow from your local library, buy in a bookstore; or get online from <http://www.dogwise.com>, amazon.com or <http://www.bn.com> Adopted Dog Bible by Kim Saunders and Petfinder.com.
- Before and After You Get Your Puppy: The Positive Approach to Raising a Happy, Healthy & Well-Behaved Dog by Ian Dunbar
- Childproofing Your Dog by Brian Kilcommons
- Culture Clash by Jean Donaldson
- Dog-Friendly Dog Training by Andrea Arden
- Dog Problems: The Gentle Modern Cure by David Weston & Ruth Ross
- Dog Training For Children by Ian Dunbar
- How to Raise a Puppy You can Live With by Clarice Rutherford
- How to Teach a New Dog Old Tricks by Ian Dunbar
- Living with Kids and Dogs...Without Losing Your Mind by Colleen Pelar.
- Meeting Milo by Yvette Van Veen, and David J. Parks This is a picture book for young children (www.meetingmilo.com)

- My Smart Puppy: Fun, Effective, and Easy Puppy Training by Brian Kilcommons and Sarah Wilson.
- Perfect Puppy by Gwen Bailey
- Power of Positive Dog Training by Pat Miller
- Puppy Primer by Patricia McConnell
- Sirius Puppy Training by Ian Dunbar
- Versatile Vizsla by Marion Coffman
- Vizsla by Bernard C. Boggs 2nd ed.

On the Internet:

- American Kennel Club. <http://www.akc.org> under "Future Dog Owners."
- Vizsla Club of America: <http://www.clubs.akc.org/vizsla> The national AKC Breed Club site.
- VizslaFT:<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VizslaFT> A discussion list for people interested in field trials with their Vizslas.
- Vizsla Hunt: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VizslaHunt> A discussion list for people who want to hunt with their Vizslas.
- VizslaTalk at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VizslaTalk> An international discussion list for people who love Vizslas.
- Vizsla Web Ring: http://www.blayne.com/v_ring/A collection of sites related to the Vizsla.
- American Kennel Club: <http://www.akc.org>
- Ingle and Mead's Vizsla Encyclopedia: <http://www.vizsladogs.com>
- Safe Kids/Safe Dogs Project: <http://www.safekidssafedogs.com/>