

# What's A High Maintenance Dog?

By Nancy Secrist, Easdale the best petcare

**W**e were checking out a regular customer and her dog from an Easdale vacation. The black and white Whippet/Greyhound type Charlie had just celebrated his 15th birthday! We all admired his vigor and health and then his owner said, "He's one of a kind. When we lose him, I know I'll still want to get another dog some day, but am at a loss on what to get." We talked about the pros and cons of some types....she didn't want a lot of shedding, or grooming, or behavior problems. Naturally, a healthy pet is ideal. So, she's looking for a dog that's not high maintenance. What makes a dog high maintenance? Well, it could be one of three things: coat, temperament, or health issues.

Let's look at health issues--some dogs are born to a disadvantage with problems in development or heredity. We are often drawn to the three-legged dog or a puppy that has trouble walking. Some breeds are prone to heart problems, gut issues like bloat or torsion (twisted stomach), or breathing problems like bulldogs and pugs with short pushed-in noses. Some types have chronic ear or skin infections and others may need special precautions to protect their long backs or thin little leg bones. Some have had a rough life with all the scars to prove it. While you may be attracted to these pets, consider carefully if you have the will and finances to care for them!

Temperament is an often overlooked aspect of high maintenance pets. Border collies, huskies, and Weimaraners are high energy dogs requiring quite a lot of exercise and mentally engaging activity. Bored dogs of these types have been known to develop a taste for drywall, taken up home remodeling/demolition projects, and may require buying all new personal clothing and shoes. Horror stories about leaving a high energy or, worse, anxious and high energy dog home alone are everywhere! Most guard dogs require an experienced owner and excellent training to maximize their best qualities or they can be dangerous and a liability. A



few are known barking or howling grand masters--heard across valleys and neighborhoods clear as a bell--and might land you in hot water with noise ordinance violations.

Finally, the coat maintenance breeds are a bit more predictable. We all admire the gorgeous flowing coats of Old English Sheepdogs, the pompadour of a Standard Poodle, the stunning Lassie dogs of the Rough Collies, and yet, these beauties are high maintenance! Frequent grooming appointments may require \$85-125 every 4-6 weeks. The alternative is to shave them down to avoid matting, skin problems and neglect. Anyone considering a coated breed needs to not only consider the price of the puppy, the food, and the vet but also give a fair portion to the groomer keeping them beautiful, sweet smelling, and healthy!

Then consider the double up dogs. They have two of the three high maintenance issues above. But wait! Win the trifecta with dogs that have all three issues! Yes, you can end up with a dog that has health concerns, regular coat maintenance requirements AND challenging behavior. At Easdale we can care for most of the high maintenance dogs we meet and not every pet care provider can say that. Carefully research the fluffy puppy with beseeching eyes that you are considering--look BEFORE you leap.

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