

Introduction

The aim of this booklet is not to give a detailed list of *Do's and Don'ts* but hopefully the content will assist the prospective or new Afghan Hound Owner in getting the very best from their dog.

The Afghan Hound is a very ancient breed of hunting dog. It was first introduced into the UK in the 1890's but its popularity stems from the mid twenties and interest in the breed has grown considerably over the years, so much so that registrations with the Kennel Club are increasing annually.

The Afghan Hound is a beautiful, eye-catching dog, elegant and stylish with its distinctive gait and coat pattern, but do not be deceived by glamour. The Afghan Hound is *first and foremost a Hound* and as such will require specific care and attention to its basic welfare and training to achieve the very best and to provide you with a loyal, affectionate and reasonably well-behaved pet for the next 10 to 12 years of its life span.



Characteristics of the Breed

The breed standard (see page 14) states:

"The Afghan Hound should be dignified, aloof, with a certain keen fierceness"

They do have another side to their character: they can be clowns with a great sense of humour and fun (usually at human expense!); they can most certainly be elegant and aloof to the point of arrogance and disdain. A certain keen fierceness (not to be confused with aggression!), well, yes, they are fiercely independent by nature, not servile, but extremely loyal to their chosen family pack. In many respects they are a breed apart and need careful understanding.

Does YOUR LIFESTYLE and YOUR temperament suit the special needs of this breed of dog?

A bored dog is a naughty dog, this can be said of any breed but especially the Afghan Hound. If you have a job that means that the dog will be left for long periods alone, then this is probably not the dog for you. A settee or chair can be great fun to chew and demolish, as can houseplants, carpeting, wallpaper, etc. etc. . . . so do not say you have not been warned.

An Afghan Hound requires a routine that includes *exercise*, both lead walking and free running and galloping: do you have the time and the facilities?

Another trait of the breed is their vocal ability! *They howl . . . ranging from soprano to contralto; they do not necessarily need an accompaniment . . . although perhaps sound better in 'duo' . . . a great way to pass away the hours of boredom when left alone . . . to the chagrin of your neighbours!*

On the bonus side, they are a very affectionate breed to their family and chosen friends, can make excellent house pets and once you have become addicted to the breed will probably be so for life.



Choosing a Puppy

You may wish to take a look at the Afghan Hounds that are being exhibited at Dog Shows. An ideal means of seeing a number of the breed together; an opportunity of seeing the type of dog produced by different bloodlines and kennels and you will be able to talk with the owners of the dogs (but preferably not just as they are about to go into the ring or are busy preparing their dogs). The canine press: *OUR DOGS* and *DOG WORLD*, advertise shows and their locations. A phone call to the secretary of the advertised club will advise you if the breed is classified at the Show. The Secretary of the Southern Afghan Club will also be pleased to advise you in this matter.

Decide what you want, a *dog* or a *bitch*: both have advantages and disadvantages and you must decide for yourself what sex will suit your lifestyle. Having made the decision, stick to it. When you do go and look at litters of puppies, do not make your decision on only one sex being available. It is always far better to wait a few months for the puppy you want, dog or bitch, or from specific breeding stock (because you like the sire or dam or what they are producing), but whatever your decision, do please buy from a *breeder* where you can see how the litter have been reared, the dam and possibly the sire if he too is owned by the breeder and maybe other similarly bred dogs. Do avoid buying from a kennel that deals in *all breeds* of dogs and the pet shop. An 'after sales service' is essential: the breeder should want to retain an interest in their stock and you will need to deal with someone who has a good practical understanding of the breed.

When you are going to look at a litter of puppies, please do ensure that you have not been in contact with any dog that is or has been ill (within the past six weeks). Be prepared to ask lots of questions and do not be too surprised if you are 'interrogated' by the breeder! — and this may be before you get even a glimpse of the puppies for sale.

Breeders decide at what age they like prospective buyers to view their puppies and at what age the puppy can leave for its new home, varying from 6/12 weeks or older if stock have been 'run on' to observe their development and their potential in the show ring.

Do not expect the dam of the puppies to look glamorous and in peak condition. Most Afghans lose much of their coat when nursing a litter; she may look on the thin side and her top line will sag; it is a great physical strain to rear an average litter, which could exceed 10, but most important she should have a good temperament. Do not expect her to greet you enthusiastically with a wagging tail, the natural instinct of the breed is to be wary of strangers, especially if she has a young family to protect, but she should not treat your viewing of her family with aggression, providing that the owner is present and the pups are not very young. i.e. under 4 weeks.

Choosing an Afghan Hound puppy for the show ring from a very young age take much experience, possibly a good eye which may come from experience or be a gift and most certainly an awful lot of *luck*. The most promising puppy at 8 weeks can be a dismal failure at 9 months as far as its show potential; so much may depend on the way that the dog is brought up, fed, general treatment and exercise during the vital developing period of the first 12 months. No breeder worth their salt will make wild promises as to the puppy's potential in the show ring. A reputable breeder will aim to sell you a sound, bold healthy puppy and possibly guarantee the pedigree. Being bred 'in the purple', that is an abundance of Champions in the pedigree, is no guarantee either. Many a Champion has parents that themselves never made great wins and this may especially apply to the dams, who were of suitable breeding stock and sound with no outstanding faults in their basic construction.

The showing of dogs is high competitive and not all good dogs may make champion status for a variety of reasons. If you ultimately decide to show your puppy, well, you have certainly chosen a breed where the competition is very keen, both in quantity as well as quality and very little separates the final winners on the day for the top award, but do remember that there is much more to living with an Afghan Hound and the pleasures to be gained are worth far more than all the 'Blue Ribbons' of the show ring. The dog that you take to the show is the same dog that you bring home, regardless of its success or failure on the day, it is only human ego that has been boosted or deflated; your dog just wants to please *you*. Remember, that as a breed they are extremely sensitive, especially to the mood of the owner.

Feeding and General Management

The correct feeding of a balanced diet consisting of protein for body tissue, carbohydrate for energy and the addition of vitamins and mineral supplements is essential to the growth of your puppy.

The breeder will have provided a diet sheet and it is most important to keep to the diet to which the puppy is accustomed for the first few weeks at least, in its new environment.

When the puppy first arrives at your home, it will naturally miss the companionship and competition from its litter mates. It may well refuse the food that you give it and will need tempting. The move away from the puppy's natural family is a traumatic experience; whilst it may appear happy and busy investigating its new surroundings, when feeding time arrives, the nervous system which is upset will react in loss of appetite

with subsequent refusal of food and lots of encouragement will be necessary. The use of nourishing liquids such as milk will help, as will a good marrow bone with plenty of raw meat on it.

It is most important that the puppy is given encouragement to form an eating habit from an early age and this may take a lot of time and patience on your part. Many Afghan Hounds have excellent appetites and eat well consistently throughout their life, even to the point of the owner having to take great care that they do not over-indulge, as this coupled with perhaps too little exercise may result in obesity, which can prove a serious health problem in later life. Others can be most finicky eaters; these dogs soon learn that their small appetite puts their owners in a state of panic and may play this to their advantage, delighting in the attention that they receive.

Some dogs will eat well yet still lack body weight, although apparently fit and well, they may be using up their calories in nervous energy. It is not uncommon for some dogs to take *years* to 'body up'. The Afghan is a late maturing breed and many will remain thin until 5 or 6 years of age, although fit and well. Persistent poor eaters and those that fail to thrive must be examined by a veterinary surgeon to check that there is no underlying health problem. It is most important to get this checked out early. The addition of vitamin supplements to stimulate appetite may be advised, the Vitamin B complex being the most suitable.

Puppies under 3 months of age should average 4 meals daily: 2 of meat and 2 of milk spaced out as breakfast, lunch, tea, supper.

From about 4/5 months of age they may go off their breakfast or tea meal. Preferably keep to 2 meat meals for at least a year/18 months. After this period, a light breakfast of a drink and biscuits with one main meat meal should suffice. Some Afghans do prefer their meals spaced out into small amounts throughout the day with possibly a snack left down at night, this applies especially to the older dog. With age the stomach and gastric juices may not be able to cope with large amounts of food given at one time. A dog that has been subject to a severe gastro-intestinal disorder such as parvo-virus, which can have a long term effect on the gut, may also require a different routine.

Is it expensive to feed an Afghan Hound?

During the vital growing period the answer could be *Yes* as the puppy needs good quality feeding to produce bone, substance and condition. A mature adult may become less expensive to feed. It is not possible to make definite statements concerning the feeding of dogs as no two dogs may be alike and their requirements may not be the same regarding quantity. It is what suits your dog. You may choose to feed on either fresh meat or a complete diet. The addition of vegetables for roughage is appreciated by many dogs. If your dog is in good bloom and condition, it is probably being fed correctly; there are no hard and fast rules on this point.

Between the ages of 3/6 months is a rapid growth period so that good feeding plus plenty of undisturbed sleep is vital. A puppy will love to play and will love your company, you have, after all, become part of its 'pack'.

It will require supervised exercise periods and should not be allowed to become overtired. Your puppy will need a warm, draught-free place of its own where it can sleep undisturbed between activity periods.

- All puppies will *chew* whilst at the teething stage. It would be inadvisable to invest in an expensive dog bed. A sturdy cardboard carton well lined with old rugs, blankets or woollies that can be easily replaced is ideal.

If you have children, understandably they will wish to pet and play with the puppy but great care must be taken in teaching and supervising initially how the pup is handled.

NEVER, NEVER ALLOW ANY YOUNG CHILD TO WAKE A PUPPY FROM ITS SLEEP AND NEVER, NEVER ALLOW ANY DOG, WHATEVER AGE, TO BE MAULED AND TEASED BY A CHILD, this could result in tragic consequences for both dog and child.

Afghan Hounds are not difficult to house train but it does take time and patience. A puppy does not have any bladder control until at least 3 months of age, after this age it does begin to develop but is by no means reliable. Most puppies can be trained by putting outside at regular intervals with newspaper down at night, putting them outside or taking to newspaper on waking, after meals, they will soon learn what is expected of them. You too will soon learn when to expect 'accidents' and anticipate them.

No puppy possesses self control, either physically or mentally. It is your responsibility to *teach*. Remember that this will take *time, kindness* and much *patience*. The Afghan Hound is a large and powerful animal, his historical and genetic makeup is that of a hunting dog; his introduction into so termed Western civilisation goes back only six decades and primitive instincts still present could cause problems for you and for the dog if you are not firm and consistent in your behaviour and attitude from the very start. Be firm from puppyhood so that your dogs knows who is 'Pack Leader'. The Afghan Hound is a sensitive, highly intelligent animal. Firmness, patience, kindness and consistency in your manner and attitude toward your dog will produce a loving, loyal and responsive pet. Bullying and the use of physical violence is unjustified in any animal and will only result in an unhappy, cowed or aggressive dog (too many of whom find their way into our rescue services, victims of human abuse and ignorance.

Exercise

Regular exercise to include free running as well as lead walking is essential for your dog's mental as well as physical well-being. It would be virtually impossible for the average Afghan pet to be over-exercised in our present day society. A regular routine should be maintained as far as possible . . . remember, Afghans learn very quickly: they are intelligent, not stupid as considered by some, because they do not come to heel immediately on being called, or choose to follow their own pursuits, that is to *chase*, when given the opportunity!

Baby puppies up to about 6 months of age, apart from lead training sessions and short walks to accustom them to the lead and general socialisation with the world outside their home territory, are far better left to run freely and exercise as they wish in the garden. They instinctively know their limitations and capabilities (although they often leave us with our hearts in our mouths at their activities and especially turn of speed) and will just stop and sleep when they become tired. Never allow a puppy to run with adult hounds, this could result in a serious injury. Lead training puppies again requires much patience and training. Some will take to it enthusiastically, whilst others will let out howls of protest, bringing your neighbours to their doors!

Always use a good strong leather collar (the greyhound type are most suitable — some people prefer to train using chain check collars but these must be used correctly, misused they can indeed be cruel and will serve no useful purpose other than to choke your puppy, who certainly will not appreciate your ideas of lead training) attached to a good length of strong lead (nylon or leather). Remember, if you take puppy for a ride in the car, remove the lead . . . it will probably be *chewed!* Do ensure that you have a name disc with details of ownership/address/telephone number recorded, attached to the collar. (By law, dogs over 6 months must have a licence and a collar with the name and address of the owner.) An adult hound requires a minimum of 3 miles road walking daily to aid muscular condition and keep nails trimmed. (Do check to see if your puppy still has its dew claws, not all breeders have these removed at birth and these will need to be clipped regularly.)

Free running can be difficult, always look for a safe, suitably enclosed space away from traffic or livestock. The Afghan Hound is a hunting dog and by its natural instinct, which is never suppressed, do not ever be fooled by even the most obedient dog! It will, given the opportunity, *chase*, be it livestock, poultry, traffic or the neighbourhood cat!

Do be very dilligent in free exercising your dog, sadly too many much loved pets have met their fate chasing livestock. Farmers are entitled by law to shoot on sight any dog chasing stock. A loose Afghan in traffic can be very worrying and apart from the injury or death of your much loved pet, could also result in serious damage or injury to third parties and you being responsible in law for vast amounts of compensation. (*Membership of the Southern Afghan Club gives you third party insurance coverage.*)

Many Afghan Hounds who have limited access to safe areas for free range exercise benefit greatly from the organised racing activities that are now available for the breed on most weekends throughout the summer at different tracks in many parts of the country. These meetings provide a lot of fun for both dog and owner and have gained in popularity since the mid-70's, although Afghan Racing is by no means new and many pre-war dogs participated in the sport, with their enthusiastic owners. However, racing should not be considered as an alternative to other means of exercise, only as an extension. The racing of un-muscled dogs can cause serious damage and injury.

Innoculation

No puppy should be taken out from house or garden until it has been fully inoculated, and guidance obtained from a vet in this matter. A vaccination programme can commence at 8 weeks, so your puppy may come to you having received no vaccinations, be in the middle of a course, or have completed the programme, dependent on what age you acquire the puppy. The breeder will advise you in this matter.

Do find a vet in your area and it is advisable to discuss your puppy's vaccination programme with him. Various vaccination programmes are available and he will decide which is most suitable for your dog. The main canine diseases for which vaccination is available are: *DISTEMPER/HARD PAD; HEPATITIS; LEPTOSPIROSIS: 2 types — leptospire canicola and leptospire icterhaemorrhagica; and CANINE PARVO-VIRUS*. The latter is a relatively new and very serious disease especially affecting young puppies, although as with all other diseases can affect a dog at any age that has no immunity.

Research undertaken some years ago suggested that it was inadvisable to inoculate the Afghan Hound with a live hepatitis vaccine as this could cause serious eye problems resulting from an allergic reaction to the cornea, causing a condition known as Blue Eye — so always ensure that you ask your vet for the killed vaccine; most vets are fully aware of this problem in the breed but it is as well to check. It is advisable to continue with booster injections especially against the rat borne leptospirosis icterhaemorrhagica annually.

Grooming

Regular grooming is an essential part of an Afghan Hound's lifestyle, or should be and is best begun at the puppy stage so that the dog becomes accustomed to the routine. Fondle and pet your puppy, making the whole procedure enjoyable rather than a chore, reward with tit-bits and lots of love. Do *talk* to your puppy during the routine. Teach it to stand on a firm surface and also to lie on its side whilst you brush the coat. The best type of brush for the Afghan Hound coat is a MASON PEARSON® pure bristle/or bristle and nylon, expensive but well worth the investment. A wire pin brush is more useful during shedding of the puppy coat, which can last from 9 to 18 months of age. This is the most difficult period in dealing with the Afghan coat as knots and tangles quickly form and if not dealt with promptly will soon felt and will result in matted hair to the skin, making the task of removal not only difficult for you but painful for the dog. A daily brush through the coat will be essential during this period if matts are to be kept at bay. Do not brush coat dry but dampen using a spray of water/dilute conditioner or one of the many de-tangling conditioner preparations available from pet shops. Once the adult coat is established a weekly brush through will suffice. If you are going to have any long coated breed of dog you must be prepared to spend time and trouble in keeping the coat well groomed. Many pet hounds may go to a canine beauty parlour for their coat care, but do not expect the time to be spent on a neglected coat that an individual owner might give; a matted coat will simply be cut off and possibly this may be kinder to the dog. Shearing and cutting of coat should not be used as an alternative to the owner's neglect. Pet Afghans not being shown and older dogs who have, if necessary, belly coat and some of the hair on the inner aspect of the legs and behind elbows (areas that tend to matt easily) trimmed for easier maintenance in coat care.

There is no sight more rewarding than that of a well groomed Afghan. No hard and fast rules can be laid down as to what coat preparations are best to use. Coat colour may be a factor, as are the coat textures of certain bloodlines. The Afghan coat does vary considerably, especially in density. Many are walking mop-heads, others appear sparse in contrast. This may stem from the interbreeding of the two strains of Afghan, i.e. the Bell-Murray's or Desert type, a more sparsely coated hound and the Ghazni's or Mountain type who apparently had thicker textured coats.

Do be careful when using human shampoos and conditioners, not all types are suitable because of the additives and highly perfumed substances that may prove irritant to the dog's skin. Do rinse shampoo out of coat thoroughly. Conditioners and cream rinses are the key success to the final look achieved, and certainly aid grooming in preventing hair from splitting and breaking.

When bathing do be very careful to keep shampoo from the eyes and put cotton wool inside the ears before you start. Check ears for any accumulation of wax, which can be removed by wiping gently with cotton

wool soaked in olive oil or liquid parafin. Any unpleasant smell or discharge coming from the ear must be investigated by a vet, do not probe inside the ears yourself with cotton wool buds.

A rubber mat place in the bath will provide a firmer footing for your dog, prevent slipping, making the dog feel more secure. A heavy coat will dry far quicker if a hair dryer is used and the overall finish will look better. Special dog dryers are available, expensive but a worthwhile long term investment and essential if you are going to regularly exhibit the dog, who will need more frequent bathing than the average pet. Ordinary hair dryers and fan heaters can be used as an alternative.

The importance of getting down to the roots of the hair, i.e. skin, cannot be over emphasised. A sliding of the brush over the top coat will not do and will only result in a solid felted mass beneath top layers of hair. Tangles and knots can be pulled apart with the fingers, gently separating the knot. When grooming your dog, always check for parasites, i.e. fleas and lice that may have been picked up. You may also find grass seeds in the coat, especially in the feet between the toes, these must be removed, if left they can penetrate the skin and cause a painful abscess. The accumulation of dirt and grit in the feet can also cause problems so after exercise in wet muddy weather, it is advisable to wash the lower part of the legs and feet. The physical condition of the dog can often be seen through its coat. No amount of external beauty preparation can achieve the bloom that comes from within from good feeding. If the coat tends to be dry and the skin flaky, the addition of corn or sunflower oil to the diet may help. Never, never attempt to preserve the coat at the cost of exercise. Twigs and dirt are easily removed. Tip-top physical condition will produce healthy hair.

Show Training

Over training and over showing can soon turn an eager young potential showman into a bored unwilling performer. The Afghan, we have already said, is most sensitive, especially to tone of voice; they soon learn, with continued encouragement, what is expected of them. The dog will basically want to please so the keynote is not to overtrain, go easy. Continuous repetition of moving to heel, standing for long periods in set positions and re-positioning of limbs soon bores this intelligent breed. Providing that you are sensible in the basics and can take a youngster into the ring who will stand to allow the judge to examine closely, including the bite by looking at the teeth, and move sensibly on a loose lead at a steady gait, both you and puppy will soon gain confidence with experience.

Dogs cannot be exhibited under Kennel Club regulations until 6 months of age but much ground work can be done before this in teaching the puppy the basics of ring procedure.

Many Afghans have an inherent dislike of being touched by a strange person, they will draw back when approached by a stranger so a good grounding is to get friends and family to handle the dog; take it on shopping expeditions so that it gets used to being among crowds of people and different levels of noise — an evening at the pub, if dogs are allowed within has been many a training ground for a show dog. Show training classes are held in many areas and these can prove most useful in socialising your pup with other dogs. You may also pick up a few useful tips from more experienced exhibitors as well as learning some of the practical aspects of showing.

Try to remember that a dog show for the vast majority is a sport and do try to treat it as such, unfortunately it can become an obsession . . . to win at all costs, often to the detriment of dog and owner.

General Points

Car Sickness

Many dogs are sick at their first experience of car travel, it may stem from fear and nervous reaction. Introduce to car travel by short rides from an early age, gradually increasing the amount of time spent in the car. Generally they will outgrow this malady. If necessary there are a variety of medications that can be used to prevent travel sickness and your veterinary surgeon is the best person to consult.

Worms

Most dogs at some during their lives have worms, usually during puppyhood; all puppies are wormed regularly from an early age and your breeder will advise you what has been done when you collect your puppy.

Coat Chewing

Some hounds display this distressing habit, not only their own coat but in some instances the coat of their kennel companions. This habit has been compared by some to that of nail-biting in humans and may be psychological in origin. In others it has been traced to boredom; dogs tend to chew when bored an alone. There are preparations available to put onto the coat, bitter to the taste, that may put the dog off.

Do ensure that when you feed your dog, the long ear fringes that grow with the development of the coat need to to be tucked up to avoid them dropping into the food dish and collecting debris of food that will invariably be chewed by the dog. Snoods, especially made for Afghan use that fit over the head are readily available from most of our breed club rescue stalls at shows, will combat this problem.