

Animal Welfare: A Man's Best Friend

We all probably know someone personally who has taken on a new puppy, foster dog or even adopted a dog during the pandemic as they have more time at home than ever before with extended furlough or working from home.

It's been a particularly crazy time for the 'pandemic puppy' with a huge rise in puppy purchasing, some prices of popular breeds even increasing over 100%. French bulldogs nearly doubled in price over the last year with the famous English Bulldog going up from £1650 to nearly £2500 as breeders take advantage of the increased demand. The Kennel Club reported an increase of 168% for people searching for puppies during lockdown. Although this can be a great time to introduce a puppy into the home especially if it has been a genuine consideration for a long time, the serious demand for puppies means unscrupulous breeders are catching on to this growing trend. There is a huge rise in awful puppy farms and people selling puppies across social media platforms. Alongside this, there are many pregnant dogs coming over in bad conditions from Eastern Europe as it has become a very lucrative business for criminal gangs.

Puppies are seriously hard work and some people don't realise the time, energy and money it takes to really look after them properly. The 'impulse buy' of these puppies has led to 1 in 5 people admitting they hadn't considered the responsibility it will take to look after one. Charities are already reporting those being given up as people who purchased them during the first lockdown but there is probably worse to come when lockdown eases then people go back to work and lives resume. Dog schools and training classes haven't been able to run as usual so there are limited opportunities to socialise, train and support puppies in those crucial early months of their lives. People are resorting to watching internet training tips which don't always provide positive and correct training techniques. Additionally, puppies are getting so used to having people around the whole day, they are starting to suffer with being independent resulting in separation anxiety issues. Over 40% of people in a Dogs Trust survey reported their new puppies and dogs being 'clingy' and following them around the house all day, often barking when they leave the room. Additionally, sadly dog bites have risen due to the family being around the whole time and children not realising the importance of leaving dogs alone when they are sleeping, eating and relaxing.

It isn't all doom and gloom though, Battersea Dogs and Cats Home reported interest to adopt a pet from April- June 2020 rose by 53% from the three months before this time and shelters have really started to see fewer dogs in their care and many more people able to foster, to give dogs a break from their kennels. People have had more time so volunteering is now more popular than ever before meaning our four-legged friends in rescues are getting a lot more walks and cuddle times. Our pet dogs are more walked than ever before.



The next year will be a really important time when life resumes. We have to remind people that our dogs are best friends for life, not just for the pandemic!