

# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Newfoundlands need more care than most



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When Josh, a 155-pound Newfoundland dog who looks like a teddy bear, won best in show at the Westminster Kennel Club this month, Gina Destro had mixed emotions.

Destro, who lives in Richmond Heights and works with Newfoundland Club of America to find homes for Newfoundlands in need, thought Josh was deserving

of the win, and she was happy for his owners. But she feared everyone would want a "Josh" and then not have the ability to care for it.

Since Josh's win, inquiries to the Newfoundland Web site have tripled, she said. The Newfoundland is a wonderful pet, but it is not for everyone, Destro said.

"Don't get a Newfie if you are attracted to the breed primarily for its appearance," Destro said. Dogs in the show ring are the product of many hours of bathing and grooming.

"Don't get a Newfie if you are not prepared to commit to it for its lifetime, which in this breed is around 8 to 10 years.

"Don't get a Newfie if you are unwilling to share your house and your life with your dog," said Destro. Newfies are working dogs, but they thrive on companionship. They are house dogs who want to be where you are.

Newfoundlands were bred as cart dogs, so when Destro and her husband removed two trees from their yard, their dog, Dino, was hitched to a cart to help carry away the limbs.

"Don't get a Newfie if you don't plan to train it," she said. Newfoundlands are gentle giants at heart, but basic obedience training is a must. You must commit yourself to eight to 10 weeks of lessons and practice every day. Don't expect someone to train the dog for you.

"Don't get a Newfie if you lack the ability to assert yourself calmly and confidently to exercise leadership."

If you have difficulty with this personality trait, choose a breed known for its socially subordinate disposition, such as a golden retriever or Shetland sheepdog.

"Don't get a Newfie if you are fastidious about your home." This breed sheds excessively and drools. The thick, shaggy coat requires brushing, preferably every day.

"Don't get a Newfie if you dislike daily exercise." Because of his laid-back personality, your Newfoundland will not give himself enough exercise unless you accompany him. An adult needs a brisk mile-long walk in the morning and again in the evening.

"Don't get a Newfie if you believe that dogs should run free." Such freedom inevitably leads to injury or death from dog fights or automobiles, not to mention annoyance it can cause neighbors.

"Don't get a Newfie if you can't afford to buy feed and provide health care for one."

Newfoundlands eat large meals, and large dogs tend to have larger veterinary bills as anesthesia and medications are predicated on body weight.

The breed is subject to hip dysplasia and bloat, both of which can be costly to treat. The best insurance against dysplasia is to buy from a litter bred from parents and, if possible, grandparents, certified against hip problems by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals. This generally means paying more for a pup.

No predictive tests can guard against bloat, but don't feed dogs immediately before or after strenuous exercise.

If you drive a compact car, plan on buying a van or SUV, or your dog won't be able to accompany you.

"If all the bad news about Newfoundlands hasn't turned you away, then by all means, do get one," Destro said.

Shop carefully for a responsible breeder. The breeder will question prospective buyers to make sure the dog is getting a quality home. And a good breeder will be a mentor for life.

For details about Newfoundland dogs, visit [www.newfdogclub.org](http://www.newfdogclub.org). For Newf Rescue, call Gina Destro at 216-481-2756 or visit [www.NewfRescue.com](http://www.NewfRescue.com).



Dino, a Newfoundland dog rescued and owed by Gina Destro of Richmond Heights, is a registered therapy dog and has a water rescue title. Dino will be working on his draft and companion dog titles this summer.