



# Managing breed expectations

Article brought to you by Dr Alice Marshall, Registered Veterinarian (NSW VSB)

Deciding what breed of dog to get is as important a decision as choosing whether to get a dog in the first place, for people considering pet ownership.

Each breed has its unique temperament, trainability, exercise, grooming and health needs. Managing breed expectations from the outset with owners is key to establishing good communication, compliance, and commitment.

An informed owner, armed with information about their breed, is more likely to be aware of potential breed and welfare-related issues. In turn, they are more likely to turn to your clinic for help and information rather than Google.

## Education

Educating pet owners about their chosen breed is not without challenges. Educating brand-new

pet owners, many of which adopted a dog for the first time during COVID lockdown restrictions, can be even more challenging.

However, as vets, we have a unique opportunity to provide education in a neutral setting where owners are (hopefully) more likely to follow our advice. We can help people become better pet owners by:

1. Educating owners on breed traits and personalities
2. Helping owners pick the right pet for their family and lifestyle
3. Educating owners early on possible health predispositions in their chosen breed and reinforcing at each interaction
4. Encouraging obedience training
5. Establishing a routine of annual health checks, routine husbandry procedures and information flow

## 6. Discussing pet insurance

### Pet insurance

Pet insurance is an important consideration for new dog owners. However, it's not very exciting. Using real-life examples that demonstrate what pet owners could have to face can help with discussions. These tend to highlight the money and stress involved with funding expensive treatment when a pet wasn't insured and its repercussions.

These conversations are even more important with first-time owners with no prior experience of veterinary treatment costs. Seeing a dog for the first time is a natural time to ask about insurance.

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It's vital that owners get the right policy, first time, that will live up to their expectations. Therefore, anything that can be done in practice to support this is valuable. Vets can ensure owners are aware of common breed-related issues and potentially insured to cover costs associated with them.

### Improving animal welfare

Improving animal welfare is one of the **AVA's three strategic priorities**.

Campaigns like **Love is Blind** highlight the welfare aspects of owning some breeds and the AVA has many **excellent resources for communicating** with prospective and current dog owners.

Veterinarians are in a unique position to help new owners manage breed expectations. As vets, we can support and enhance animal welfare by providing owners with the education and knowledge needed to ensure they are aware of common breed-

related issues and, hopefully, through education and communication, avoid many adverse welfare outcomes.

Join us, and work with Vets Choice insurance for pets to help more pets get the care they deserve by becoming a Vets Choice partner. To learn more visit **vetschoice.net.au** or call **1800 999 738**.



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