An Introduction to the Boxer

Congratulations! You are now sharing your life with a Boxer—he wouldn't have it any other way! The Boxer’s most notable characteristic is his desire for human affection. Though his spirited bearing, square jaw, and cleanly muscled body suggest the well-conditioned middleweight athlete of dogdom, the Boxer is happiest when he is with people—especially children. He is truly a “dog for all seasons,” suiting the need for household guardian, attractive companion, playmate, and loyal friend.

History

The Boxer’s origins are ancient, dating back as far as 2500 BC. But it was Germany in the 19th century that refined and developed the breed as we know it today. The Boxer was used on the ducal estates to run down and hold large, fierce game—wild boar, bear and bison—until the human hunter could approach and dispatch the quarry. To that end, the Boxer was bred to be a powerful, muscular dog with the wide undershot jaw for maximum holding power. Though he is not used any longer for such pursuits, the Boxer of today should be able to perform the duties for which he was bred.

Beauty and Brains

The Boxer is a hearing guard dog, ever alert to protect his family but tolerant of any stranger once he knows there is no danger. He is a happy, exuberant dog who delights in children and is eager to play long after he has left puppy hood behind. The mood-mirroring quality of his expression and his overall sweet nature have endeared him to generations of Boxer owners. He is a natural show-off, and Boxers excel at Conformation, and performance events ranging from tracking humans and scent work to agility, obedience and herding of livestock. The boxer enjoys varied working tasks including police, search and rescue, service, assistance and therapy. The well-trained Boxer is a glorious sight to behold.

The Boxer is a medium sized dog ranging from 21½” in height for a smaller female to 25” and sometimes more for a taller male. Adult weight may reach 65-80 lbs. in the male with the females about 15 lbs. less. There are no giant or miniature varieties. The short, close-lying coat comes in two equally acceptable colors—fawn and brindle. The fawn may vary from a tawny tan to a stag red. The brindle ranges from sparse, but clearly defined black stripes on a fawn background to such a heavy concentration of black striping that the essential fawn background color barely, although clearly, shows through—creating the appearance of “reverse” brindling. White markings should be of such distribution to enhance the dog’s appearance, but may not exceed 1/3 of the entire coat. It is not uncommon to have an entirely white Boxer born in a litter, or one with predominately white background known as a “check.” In order to retain the beauty of the fawn and brindle colors, the American Boxer Club members are pledged not to use these “whites” for breeding. They may not compete in Conformation classes but are eligible for Performance events.

Care of Your Boxer

The Boxer requires relatively little grooming, but ownership of any dog is a definite responsibility. HE MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO RUN LOOSE. Exercise within a fenced area or on a leash will be adequate. Death from automobiles, poisons, or other hazards await the Boxer who is allowed to roam. While he is learning to be a responsible member of the household, especially while still a puppy, a crate is very advisable. It will protect him from household temptations and dangers while you are away. In addition, it is a great aid in housebreaking—your Boxer will rarely soil his crate. Be sure to use a collar with care. They can and do snag on the most unlikely objects with tragic consequences. Your Boxer should not be left alone with a collar around his neck—or while playing with canine friends. The Boxer has a natural tendency to keep himself clean, but it is the owner’s
responsibility to keep his nails trimmed to a reasonable
length, and to keep his teeth clean as he ages. An occasional
bath and/or currycombing should be all that he requires.

You should feed your Boxer a good quality (usually kibbled)
dog food. These are often found at feed or specialty stores.
Most breeders recommend soaking the food in warm water as
opposed to feeding it dry. Mixing it with a small amount of
canned food is always enjoyable to your dog. Remember that
the Boxer is a relatively fast-growing dog, and should not
need supplementation with vitamins or calcium as he grows.
Over supplementation can cause bone and joint problems.
Always speak to your veterinarian if in doubt.

Shall I Breed My Boxer?
While it may seem appealing to contemplate a cute litter of
puppies, you should realize that breeding your Boxer is
an unremitting commitment of time, money, and emotion.
Maintaining contact with your Boxer’s breeder over the
years, and asking his advice, will prove immensely helpful
when making a decision to breed. For the majority of pet
owners, spaying the female Boxer is to be preferred. This
operation will also lessen the risk in later life of mammary
tumors and other reproductive diseases. The male Boxer may
also benefit from being neutered, and this procedure will cool
his desire for any neighborhood female dog in heat. Spayed
and neutered animals are not eligible to compete in AKC
Conformation classes, but may still participate in numerous
performance and companion events run by AKC such as
herding, tracking, obedience, scent work and agility.

Exhibiting the Boxer
Many Boxer owners become involved in the world of
showing dogs and enjoy a lifelong passion for this sport.
Showing may involve many pursuits such as conformation,
agility, obedience, scent work, herding and many others;
the boxer enjoys almost everything it can do with its owner
as a team. The Boxer has proven to be a great success in all
avenues of formal exhibition. The bond that develops when
the owner trains his dog in these disciplines only adds to the
mutual love and respect of man and canine. The American
Kennel Club or the American Boxer Club will prove helpful
in giving you advice and guidance in these pursuits.

Cautions
The Boxer is not overly tolerant of extreme conditions of
either heat or cold. He should definitely be kept in the house
as a beloved member of the family, and enjoy safe climatic

conditions. Never leave him in a closed car in hot weather,
or even with the windows slightly open—the temperature
may reach dangerous and even deadly levels in a very few
minutes.

Occasionally, Boxers are especially sensitive to certain forms
of both local and general anesthesia. Certain tranquilizers
are contraindicated. Always discuss anesthesia protocols
thoroughly with your veterinarian. The breed is relatively
tolerant of mild discomfort, and most Boxers can have
common skin tumors, should they develop, removed using
local anesthesia alone.

Especially as he ages, some Boxers may fall victim to
cancers in various forms, as well as to heart disease. The
Boxer who faints or seems unsteady on his feet should see
a competent veterinarian immediately, as these symptoms
are often warnings of cardiac arrhythmias. Hopefully, with
competent veterinary care and immunizations according
to current protocols from the AVMA (American Veterinary
Medicine Association), your loving, devoted Boxer will live
a rich and full life.

The American Boxer Club
This is the national parent club dedicated to the well-being of
the Boxer breed. The Club is also responsible for the written
Breed Standard—a description of the ideal Boxer. The
American Boxer Club was founded in 1935 and now has over
900 members in 50 states. The ABC encourages interested
Boxer lovers to join any of its more than 50 member clubs
throughout the country. For information, or a copy of the
Breed Standard, contact:

Mrs. Sandy Orr, Secretary
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Please visit us online at the American Boxer Club website:

www.americanboxerclub.org

Recommended Reading

A New Owner’s Guide to Boxers
Richard Tomita

The Boxer - An Owner’s Guide to a Happy, Healthy Pet
Stephanie Abraham

The Boxer - Family Favorite
Stephanie Abraham

The Everything Boxer Book
Karla Spitzer

The New Boxer
Billie McFadden

World of the Boxer
Richard Tomita