

A group of people, including children and adults, are gathered around a golden retriever puppy sitting on a grassy field. They are all smiling and petting the dog's head. The scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a pleasant outdoor setting. The text is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

Six things to consider  
**before adopting  
a rescue dog**



# Thinking of adopting a furry friend into your family?

With 4.8 million pet dogs in Australia – and plenty more cats, birds, and other animals – we’re well and truly a [pet-loving country](#).<sup>1</sup> Research from the Real Insurance Pets survey suggests that over 80% of us love our pets just as much as we love our family, with close to 90% of respondents agreeing pets are just as important in their family structure as partners and children.<sup>2</sup>

Even though we see our pets as part of the family, tens of thousands of dogs end up in rescue shelters every year.<sup>3</sup>

If you’re ready to welcome your new furry friend into your home, it’s worth looking into adopting a rescue dog. Here’s what you need to consider.

<sup>1</sup>How many pets are there in Australia? | <sup>2</sup>Real Insurance Pets | <sup>3</sup>RSPCA Australia National Statistics 2015-16

## 1 / Do you want a puppy or adult dog?

Both have their pros and cons, with puppies able to be moulded by your training methods from a young age (but requiring lots of attention), and adults likely already knowing some of the basics (but perhaps with some baggage from their past).

### Puppies:

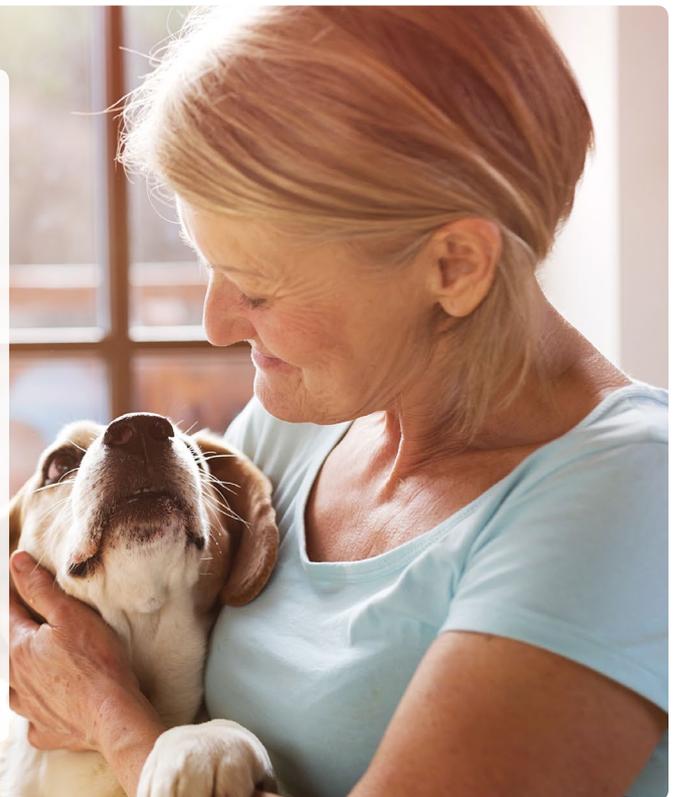
- ☺ generally won't be toilet trained
- ☺ can be expensive with puppy school, and puppy-specific food, vet visits and all the necessities like vaccinations, microchipping and desexing.
- ☺ will need some time to learn to socialise with humans and other dogs.

### Adult dogs:

- ☺ usually have at least a basic understanding of commands, socialisation and toilet training.
- ☺ are likely to be familiar with other dogs and humans.
- ☺ may be expensive if they need additional training or have pre-existing conditions.
- ☺ may have anxiety or aggression issues, depending on their background.

**"I usually get pets from shelters and this helps an animal to have a good home and they have always been good pets, not pedigreed but good animals all the same. A pet gives me someone to come home to and they are very loyal and nice to have around. Pets make me go for a walk and do some exercise when otherwise I might not and also to have the cat as a nice soft cuddly animal to pat and look after is good. I think pets are good therapy as they are always there for you and don't judge you and are gentle and kind and have their own personalities."**<sup>2</sup>

- Real Insurance Pet Survey, Female, 61 years old, NSW



## 2 / Do you have the time to train, socialise and exercise a dog?

Whether it's a puppy or adult, all dogs need socialisation – with both humans and other dogs. But much like toilet training and teaching them the basics like sit, stay, shake and roll over, it takes time.

Similarly, your dog will need regular exercise, with walks at least once a day. Many breeds, especially working dogs like Border Collies, Kelpies and Aussie Shepherds, will need a minimum of two walks every day, as well as mental stimulation at home to keep them occupied.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Real Insurance Pets | <sup>4</sup>Exercising your dog 101

### 3 / Am I set on a specific breed?

You may be thinking to yourself, “I don’t want a rescue dog because they are all mixed breeds.” In fact, you’d be surprised by how many purebreds end up in shelters. It’s worth visiting some organisations and checking their websites to see what animals they currently have. Many rescue groups, such as Australian Working Dog Rescue, focus specifically on placing certain breeds with new owners.

If you’re not set on one particular breed or purebred, a mixed breed is actually a great pick. They are typically healthier than purebreds (which means fewer visits to your vet) and have fewer genetic health conditions.<sup>5</sup>

### 4 / Can I afford to look after a dog long-term (potentially 15 years or more)?

Owning a dog is certainly a big commitment. Many dogs live to be 15 years or older, with smaller breeds like Chihuahuas, Jack Russell Terriers and Toy Poodles averaging longer than that.<sup>6</sup>

With respondents to the Real Insurance Pets survey suggesting they spend an average of 41 hours per week of quality time with their pets,<sup>2</sup> it’s essential that you’re prepared to maintain a frequent schedule of exercise and playtime with your pet.

On top of that, pet owners spend approximately \$117 on their pets in a month.<sup>2</sup> It pays to look at your finances, including your projected income, to determine if you can afford the cost of a pet including things like food, training and classes and [pet insurance](#).

You also need to consider your living arrangements. Do you have a backyard to keep your dog active and happy when you’re not home? Are your fences tall and sturdy enough so that they can’t jump over or dig under them? Do you have small children who may not be the best fit for larger or more active breeds?

### 5 / Is my home dog-ready?

**In order to acclimatise your dog to their new surroundings, make sure your home is dog-ready. Consider the following:**

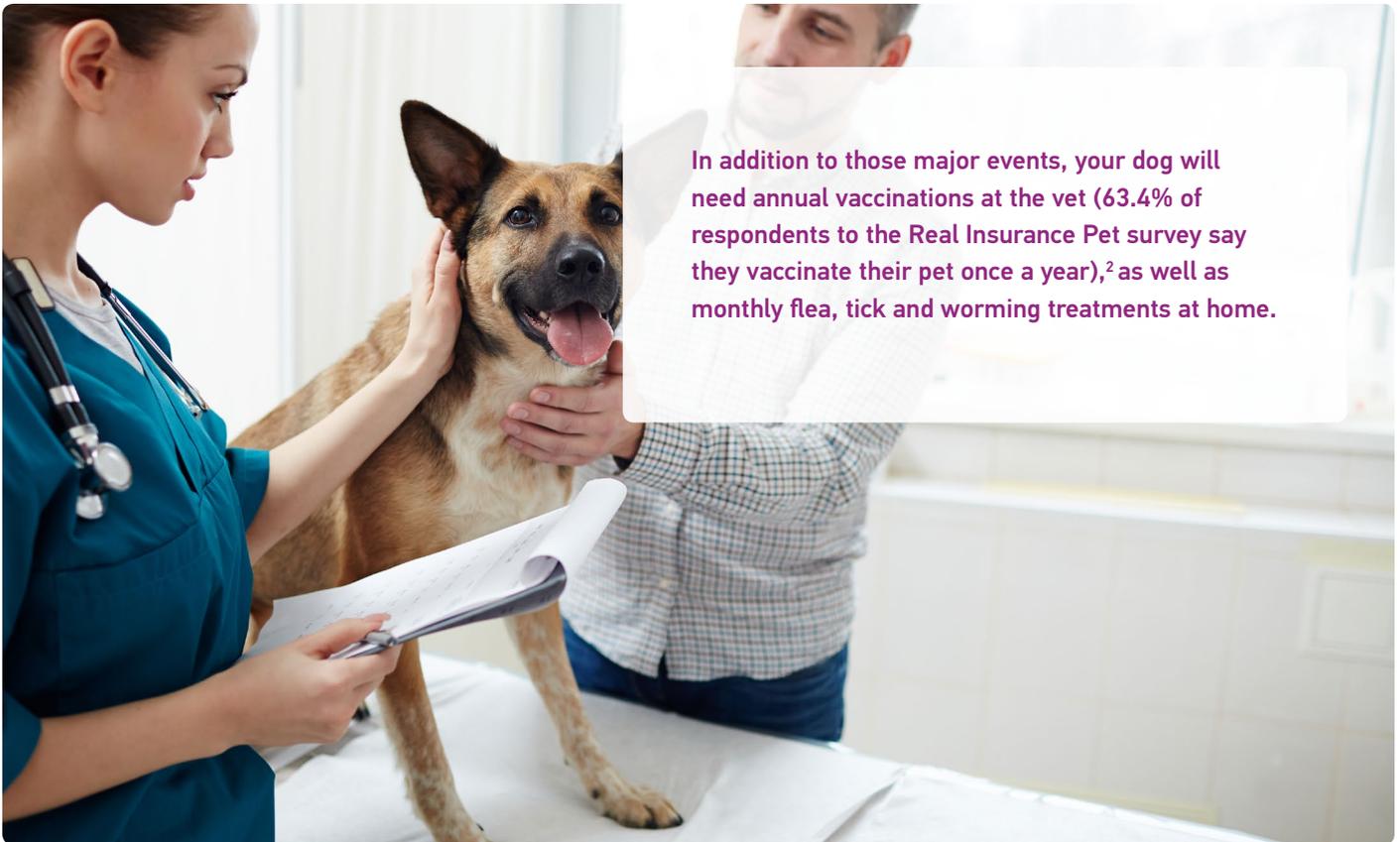
- ✔ food and water bowls, as well as dog food.
- ✔ leash, collar and (if appropriate) harness for daily walks.
- ✔ kennel if an outside dog, bed if an indoor dog.
- ✔ toys for mental stimulation.
- ✔ keep chemicals and things like pest traps out of reach.
- ✔ [pet insurance](#) to cover ongoing vet visits and medical expenses.
- ✔ high fences with solid earth underneath so dogs can’t dig under.
- ✔ introduce them to other dogs and family members in a neutral setting to reduce anxiety.
- ✔ tape down electrical cords that could get caught up in your furry friend’s four legs.



<sup>2</sup>Real Insurance Pets | <sup>5</sup>5 reasons to adopt a mixed-breed dog | <sup>6</sup>Top 10 breeds that live the longest

## 6 / Am I familiar with dog vaccinations, microchipping, desexing, and flea and tick treatments?

If you're bringing a dog home from a shelter, they've likely already been given their current vaccinations and are microchipped. Adult dogs typically will be desexed, but if you get a puppy from a shelter you'll need to remember to do that after they are at least six months old.



In addition to those major events, your dog will need annual vaccinations at the vet (63.4% of respondents to the Real Insurance Pet survey say they vaccinate their pet once a year),<sup>2</sup> as well as monthly flea, tick and worming treatments at home.

There's nothing like bringing a new dog home for the very first time, and it's even more special for a rescue dog who you're giving a second chance at life. To keep your best friend covered for life – and to protect your wallet during those regular vet visits [Real Pet Insurance](#) can cover up to 80% of eligible vet bills up to \$12,000 a year, with no excess to pay. [Get a quick quote now.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Real Insurance Pets

