

The Stafford Knot Questions & Answers

Each month TSK will take questions from our readers and present them to breed specialists, experienced breeders, veterinarians, geneticists or experts in the field of the particular questions being asked.

We hope you enjoy the information provided based upon YOUR feedback!

Send your question to [ASK TSK](#)



ASK TSK - Q & A

Question:

Dear Stafford Knot,

I have been offered a Staffordshire Bull Terrier puppy that was from a singleton litter. Is this puppy prone to having behavior/socialization problems when he reaches adulthood?

What should I look for if considering this puppy for my family?

Thank you and I look forward to your reply.

Answer:

#1 -

The question of a singleton pup and behavioral issues is multi-faceted and not something that has a simple answer. First, there are certain behaviors that may be genetically "hardwired". Those behaviors make each pup an individual - whether it is a singleton or a member of a healthy litter. Definitely something that should be considered before taking a singleton into your household.

No doubt the dog-dog information that a pup gleans about communicating with other dogs while in the litter is something that cannot be replaced or duplicated. However, that said, a dedicated and diligent owner can provide education and experiences that will go a long way toward providing the information ...

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the pup lacks for want of litter mates. It won't be quite the same, but it will be helpful. Very early training and carefully supervised socialization is one key to helping provide your pup with the in-litter education he lacks.

My personal experience has been with two very different singleton pups. The first had a very "stable" easy going mother. As this pup grew up his basic genetic make up was confident and low key. I have a very large multi-dog household so the "family" provided him with lots of social interaction within my family pack. I started puppy classes at 8 weeks of age and continued his schooling through adulthood, He is a well-rounded adult with no undesirable behaviors. He is now a 7 year old intact male with agility and obedience titles - still a confident and easy going dog.

My other pup has just turned a year old. Her breeding is from the same lines, but she is a completely different dog. Both her parents are high drive, excitable individuals. Her genetic "hardwiring" seems to have gone to this side of her pedigree. I basically followed the same program of early training, exposure and socialization. She is non aggressive, but is highly reactive to any new situations. She does not seem to possess the ability to process what other dogs (and sometimes people) are conveying through their posture, eye contact, etc. She is great in my family pack and plays well with all of my dogs. But she completely lacks the confidence of my older singleton pup. She is going to be an awesome performance prospect, but she is going to take a lot more work to develop her social skills than my first singleton puppy.

I have known two other singletons on a personal basis. Neither had the extreme exposure I offered my pups. Both were males and both grew up to be highly dog aggressive.

In short I think there is a genetic component to a singleton's potential, but a dutiful owner can go a long way to providing a singleton pup the experiences that will help them to grow into a well rounded adult dog.

#2 -

I would not recommend taking on a puppy who was an only child unless he has previous experience owning a Staffordshire Bull Terrier. And by this I mean real experience with the breed, not just knowing people who own them etc.

I found The Bean(as we called him) to be very demanding of both Angels and my time - obviously as he had no litter mates to play with. Whilst I didn't mind this, nor did Angel, I feel that a solitary puppy would be very prone to separation anxiety.

The other problem that comes with being an only child is the social side of things. They do not learn manners from litter mates, so for example there is no off switch when biting - as he had never been in play with another puppy he did not have any grasp of how hard was too hard, or when to stop. Angel (bless her) would not tell him off like a litter mate would. They also do not learn any social order. In his world he was King. When he was around 6 weeks we tried to socialise him with some other staffords (mine and Angels breeder), all of which were very polite well socialised Staffords. He would be up on his toes trying to take on the lot of them. No amount of work was going to change this.

Hope some of this makes sense - In brief, I feel that an only puppy needs a very very special, patient, experienced home. Without this sort of home, I feel things could get very out of control very quickly and then they will be left with a Stafford that cannot be homed at all. So very careful consideration needs to be taken by both the breeder and new owner.