

The Dog Bible

by Tracie Hotchner

Introduction

This book is going to change your dog's life.

It will explain how she thinks, feels, develops and communicates, so you can get the most out of each other's company . . .

It will give you the truth about the different ways and places to get a dog, so when you make a decision it is a fully informed one . . .

It will give you all of the most reliable information about health care, nutrition, training and everything else that pertains to the practicalities of a dog's life, so that you can make good decisions for your dog based on your own situation . . .

It will cover every possible problem you might encounter with your dog and give you choices in how to handle it . . .

It will help you safely introduce your dog to new situations and people, to babies and children, to other dogs and to cats . . .

This book is going to change your life.

If you've picked up *The Dog Bible*, then you have a dog, you want to get a dog, or you're close to someone who falls into those two categories. You may already have discovered that no book exists that covers everything a dog-lover needs to know.

I wrote this book because I went looking for it and couldn't find anything like it. I wanted a book I could reach for when I had any questions or problems with my dogs, to find quick ideas and suggestions, remedies and advice. There's never been a book like this, and we dog people needed it. So I embarked on the research of every aspect of a dog's life and covered all the bases. I read the latest medical and nutritional journals. I interviewed vets and dog trainers, consulted breeders and pet-store owners and dog owners, asking them what they would want to find in an encyclopedic book about dogs. And here it is.

When I was researching this book, people frequently assumed I was relying on the Internet for information, but the opposite was true. Even though there are dozens of sites affiliated with dogs on the Internet—and what seems like a river of information—much of it is superficial and/or unreliable. Every so often I'd come upon something interesting, however much of it was simplistic and the origin of the information was unclear. We all tend to forget that the Internet is not just a free encyclopedia or Yellow Pages in cyberspace: it's a place where money changes hands at various levels. Many canine sites are venues to sell dog-related merchandise. There is nothing inherently bad about that—after all, commerce makes the world go around—but you

certainly wouldn't want to make any important decision about your dog's life based on anything you surfed on the Net. Having said this, there are some good Internet sites for canine health and wellness issues: any address with ".edu" means a site is affiliated with a university or veterinary school.

You're going to want this book because it has in-depth, objective, thorough facts; because it understands the different ways that dogs are dear to all of us and our desire to get the most out of sharing our lives with them; because it gives you an encyclopedic tool you can reach for when you want information about anything to do with your dog. With all due respect to the late great Benjamin Spock, M.D., you can think of this as the "Dr. Spock" for your dog, the has-it-all book that you reach for in times of need or curiosity.

Until *The Dog Bible* came along, there was no reliable place to turn with questions and concerns about pooches. The typical dog owner knows so little about this creature who basically lives for us, yet there is a mountain of information about every aspect of humans sharing their lives with canines. Researchers are discovering nuances about the nutritional, developmental and emotional needs of dogs. Our devotion to our dogs means that the standard of luxury and care for dogs is constantly being raised. Scientists and doctors are developing medical tests and treatments for dogs that were unimaginable a decade ago. In this book you can find out the latest information about what makes dogs tick; how to enhance the human-dog connection; learn the optimal conditions in which to raise a dog; advances in medical care; what choices you have in feeding a dog; the special needs of very small and very large dogs; healthy living with a dog in the city; how to manage canine health for maximum happiness and longevity; and, eventually, how to deal with the options available for bringing a dog's life to a dignified and serene close.

My goal in researching and writing *The Dog Bible* was to improve every aspect of the life you share with your dog. I was already immersed in it, having been a three-dog woman for years now, although not always with the same three dogs. I have never lived without a dog: I was born into a home with a puppy already waiting for my arrival—a fluffy Bedlington Terrier named Pango who shared my life until we were both sixteen. He was my first sibling, and that first year I spent on all fours on the floor with him left me with a compassion for the dog's point of view that I have never lost. I held onto it for Pango's daughter Pandora and then the pair of Bedlingtons we had after them—Mistress Quickly and Falstaff—and then the Golden Retriever Roma; the Cocker Spaniel Amalfi; the Rottweilers Brutus and Yogi Bear; the Corgi/Jack Russell Lucca; the Weimaraners Lulu, Billy Blue and Scooby Doo; and Miss Jazzy, a smooth Collie/sled dog mix. And that doesn't count the dozens of dogs belonging to friends and family who have shared my life and taught me so much.

There is so much more that dog lovers need to know today—so many more choices about what to do with and for our dogs. With most issues about canines there is rarely an absolute—to each his own. If you are a first-time dog owner, you will soon find that almost everyone has opinions about dog ownership. That age-old wisdom not to give people advice about their pets or children is ignored by lots of folks who want to tell you what to do with your dog. Once you have the facts, you can weigh the information and advice you get and be free to make an informed decision for yourself. But without an objective reference source to begin with, you are at the mercy of secondhand advice and hearsay, which you cannot evaluate intelligently.

How to Use This Book

Any way you want, basically. Don't let its size put you off. It's there for as little or as much as you need. You can read all of it or only snippets; the part you need today and the part leading up to it another. The front of each chapter has a list of its subjects to help you navigate, but I've tried to make it as logical and user-friendly as possible. There's a massive index so you can find and cross-check absolutely everything that interests you. Some day, at some point, you may have flipped this book open to most of the entries and gotten the direction you needed. Just knowing it's all there should be a comfort: you're not alone and you're not in the dark. This book will fortify you with enough information to help you determine whether you can handle things alone or need professional assistance.

Dogs are so deeply important to so many people in our world. In fact, a dog is front and center in so many households (sixty million in the United States alone) that collectively we don't even feel the need to defend how shamelessly in love many of us are with our dogs. We don't need to explain the huge amount of time and energy we devote to our canine companions. There are so many reasons that dogs are vitally important to us.

As dog owners we all want to take the best care of our pets. To do that, we need to arm ourselves with information, and *The Dog Bible* presents you with objective information as simply as possible.

I wish a long and happy life to each of you with your dogs. I hope you are able to give them as much pleasure as I'm sure they give you.

I hope that when people see you with your dog they say the same thing that they say to me: "Boy, when I come back, I want to come back as your dog."

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