



Mattersville Wolf-dog Ownership Protocol

Congratulations on your step into becoming the proud owner of a wolf-dog! This Ownership Protocol is here to help you as you dive into the large world that is wolf-dog ownership. Keep in mind that this is just a guide, and any good owner seeks to improve their knowledge of not just their own dog, but all canine behaviors, so that they may have a successful partnership with their new companion.

The first thing to keep in mind when it comes to wolf-dog ownership is that **wolf-dogs are not dogs**. This is something that is easy to forget after you've established a strong connection with your own pup. But just know that wolf-dogs are different from both wolves and dogs! They have mixed behaviors from both- and also all new behaviors of their own.

On this note- 90% of wolf-dogs are euthanized before the age of 2 because many people get them without doing thorough research on them. Wolf-dogs require a lot of care and attention- if you are not able to dedicate a majority of your time to training, then a wolf-dog might not be the right companion for you. Even adult wolf-dogs are similar to keeping a perpetual toddler around: so you need to be ready.

If this is your first wolf-dog, you may not know all of the lingo that pops up in the wolf-dog world. For instance, you might hear about a wolf-dog's "content". This simply means the amount of wolf that can be found in the dog, usually through DNA tracing or lineage tracing. **Wolf-dogs are defined in three types of content: high (<75%), mid (50%><74%), or low (1-49%>).** Wolves are usually bred with Huskies, Malamutes, or German Shepherds.

On average, their height is **26-34 inches**, weight **60-120 lbs**; they live about **13-16 years** and have litters of about **4-5 pups** (*Though at Mattersville it is required you get the animal fixed after adoption, if they were not already. No exceptions.*)

The Puppy Stage: If you are bringing home a wolf-dog cub, then it would be a good idea to review our [Puppy Protocol](#). Puppies are a bit different than adult wolf-dogs, so they require a different set of rules. Please check into more information about puppies along with reading the rest of this document.

At the age of 2, a wolf-dog will come into full maturity and may experience a “turn”. If you adopt a pup before the age of 2, know that your animal has not fully developed their personality, and may still experience some changes in behavior. Keep in mind that 2 is the age that a wolf-dog is most often taken to a shelter or euthanized.

Feeding: Since wolf-dogs have the combination of wolf and dog, it’s usually considered better for them to have a raw diet- though kibble is also sometimes necessary for supplementing appropriate nutrients. Consider what a wolf might eat out in the wild: deer, elk, rabbits, etc. But they don’t eat just that! They also eat all of the innards of these animals, which gives them various fibers and other vitamins. They also might snack on a fruit or two out in the wild. Either way, it’s a good idea to get your pup a well-rounded diet.

2-3 lbs of meat per day is recommended- and providing a variety of meats can keep the wolf-dog from getting bored with one kind.

1-2 cups of kibble to supplement is also a great idea. But along with kibble, there are other things you can use to supplement. Try adding a bit of canned pumpkin to help with digestion. **You can also add apples, bananas, blueberries, carrots, eggs, fish, green beans, grains, honey, kiwi, mango, oatmeal, peaches, peanut butter, pears, pineapple, shellfish, sweet potato (cooked/no skin), watermelon, yogurt.**

Do not feed raw pork or cooked bird bones. Pork can cause dietary issues while cooked bird bones can splinter when eaten, causing them to choke. Other dangerous foods include: Alcohol, Avocado, Caffeine, Chocolate, Citrus, Coconut, Garlic, Grapes, Gum, Macadamia Nuts, Mushrooms, Nuts, Onions, Pits/Seeds from Fruit, Potato Skins, Rhubarb, Salty Foods, Yeast Dough, Xylitol.

Living Conditions and Containment: Mattersville has a recommended containment protocol to follow, but **many local and state laws also provide requirements on containment.** In the end, wolf-dogs can be highly destructive when left to their own volition, and to keep anything bad from happening to your home, it is recommended that your wolf-dog have proper containment.

While in your home, you should work to make your wolf-dog kennel comfortable, but that doesn’t mean to leave your wolf-dog in a kennel all day. **A wolf-dog can need up to 3-5 hours of play and exercise daily.** If left in your home alone, it will find things to play with. But your wolf-dog companion likes to cozy up with you at home like any pet- just make sure it’s a safe space for them, and then have an outdoor enclosure as well.

Toxic Indoor Plants: Aloe Vera, Asparagus Fern, Caladium, Corn Plant, Crassula Ovata, Dieffenbachia, Ivy, Lilies, Philodendron, Pothos, Sage Palm, ZZ Plant

Providing a wolf-dog with an outdoor enclosure made from no-climb fencing is suggested. The fencing should be at least 6-8 ft high, with additional lean-ins. Dig-guard should be provided on the ground so that the wolf-dog cannot dig under- they will dig. Hot wires may need to be provided for some wolf-dogs, as they can be escape artists.

Grooming: Your new companion is most likely going to have a double coat. Your wolf-dog will shed! This will usually happen two times a year. It will be necessary to brush them. And then brush them again. And again. It is also easy to become tangled and matted. A rake-style brush is the best thing to use for this.

Your wolf-dog may be used to having their nails trimmed or teeth brushed, but probably not. These are grooming techniques that become necessary at old age, but can be dangerous to train in. Approach with caution, and know your animal.

Howling: Your animal is going to make noise. A lot of it. Be prepared for this, and make sure your neighbors are as well. Sometimes you might need a bark controller- but if you are not able to handle frequent howling, then a wolf-dog is not right for you.

Exercise/Walking: As mentioned, wolf-dogs need to play and exercise for 3-5 hours a day. Wolf-dogs have a lot of energy with a mind that's even more active. They seek to be entertained frequently. One of the best ways to entertain them is to play with them or exercise them. Providing a good enclosure is one way to help with this, but your animal will also need to be walked. It is advised to walk your wolf-dog with two leashes and a harness, as they are prone to escape. But there are tons of other exercises that can be done, like hide-and-seek or tug-o-war.

It is also suggested to get your wolf-dog a bandana or some other identification that lets people know it is a friendly animal, especially if out in nature.

Please let your dog sniff when it is out walking! Sniffing is important for wolf-dogs! It might be boring to you, but sitting in a house for hours on end is boring for them. Let them sniff!

Socializing: It is necessary to socialize your wolf-dog with both people and other animals. Keep in mind that they are pack animals, and do best with other canines around, particularly canines of similar size. Wolf-dogs can be prone to high prey drives, so keep a watchful eye on small dogs or cats. Some wolf-dogs can be socialized into being loving toward all animals, while others just aren't able to break from the instinct- but socializing is the key. Be sure to work on slow introductions with animals though, as this can keep from developing a fear or an unsafe situation.

Dog Parks are not always the best place to socialize your animal- especially a wolf-dog. Be sure to have a good form of animal identification at a dog park (like a bandana or harness) and work on recall with your dog before going. Unfortunately, one of the difficulties in owning a wolf-dog means that your dog will be targeted first if something were to go wrong. Be sure to really scope out a dog park before taking your wolf-dog.

Enrichment: Exercise and walking isn't the only way to help work out your wolf-dogs mind and keep them entertained! Enrichment is also a phenomenal way to keep your pup happy. Enrichment just means additional activities done with your dog that keep their mind active- enrichment can be toys, smells, games, or new items. There is so much to learn about enrichment- please look into additional resources for more information.

“Winter Wolf Syndrome”: You might have heard of something called “Winter Wolf Syndrome” is now more referred to as “Seasonal Aggression”. It is a period of time between November-April when hormones are flooding the wolf-dogs, and they become overstimulated. Think of it a bit like wolfie-seasonal depression. Your wolf-dog may get grumpy and may try to test you. It can get really intense for some animals, so again, it is best to learn your animal and understand what they're like. Understand their boundaries and learn their language. “Alpha” Theory was disproved years ago, and not the suggested way to handle Seasonal Aggression- in fact, it can put you in more danger. Just know that your companion will return to normal at the end of the season.

Resource Guarding: Your wolf-dog may do something called “Resource Guarding”, which was previously known as “food aggression” but can also happen when guarding anything they become possessive of. This is a behavior commonly found in wolf-dogs, and can be reduced with training and socializing, but needs to be treated carefully. Learn your animal and their behaviors. Resource Guarding can become dangerous if not kept in check.

Training: It is really hard to train a wolf-dog and requires time and patience- but it isn't impossible. Sometimes it might feel like taking two steps forward and one step back, sometimes it might seem like they'll never get it, and sometimes they'll seem more intelligent than you. It's just the price that comes with owning a wolf-dog. They're highly intelligent and they get bored. If they don't see a point to your training, then they won't necessarily do it. They also won't just do it all the time for treats like some dogs will. Wolf-dogs are looking for respect and companionship- not subservience.

Start with doing 2 twenty-minute sessions a day with one particular trick until your pup learns it at the bare minimum. Carry a treat bag around with you to be able to practice

round the clock. But don't feel too hurt if you feel that you've made a lot of progress, and one day your wolf-dog doesn't listen. It's not you- it's just the fact that they're a little wild.