



Paw Prints

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Columnist

Who gets the family pet after a breakup?

Splitting up is never easy, especially when there is a beloved pet involved. Whether you and your ex decide to share custody, give the dog to solely one of you, or draw up visitation rights, make sure that you have your dog's best interest at heart.

With dogs increasingly considered family members, pet parents face challenges after a breakup: Care and custody arrangements for Rover, division of expenses for feeding and vet appointments, and arguments over whom the dog prefers can make an already tough situation even tougher.

Pet custody is a sensitive subject, not unlike child custody disputes. And divorce judges are recognizing the need to consider what's best for the pet.

But splitting up the family doesn't have to mean disaster for your furry friend. Though a breakup/divorce can be painful, in most cases it is a good thing for the people involved. Many divorced people agree that it's better to seek a new life than stay unhappy together, and for dogs caught in the middle of an unhappy relationship, divorce can mean the end of a home filled with tension and stress. By keeping the best interests of your dog at heart, you can help make the difficult process of splitting up a little more bearable for the whole family.

Pets need consistency — especially during and after a family breakup. So, however friendly or bitter your split, it's important to prioritize your dog's best interests during the breakup. Studies have proven again and again that what's best for your dog is a loving, stable home with an established routine.

Some "who gets the dog" situations are more clear than others. For example, if you came into the relationship with the dog, he should stay with you unless for

some reason your partner or spouse developed more of a bond with your dog than you did. Also, if your pooch is much more attached to one of you, in most cases he will be the person who assumes custody.

Many people find it works best to have one person remain the primary caregiver for the dog, with the other having regular, but limited time with their furry friend.

But what to do in situations where one or the other of you is moving to a residence that doesn't allow pets? In that case, you can consider having that person visit the pet, or take him for walks, or to the dog park or even on vacations.

If you and your partner share joint custody of children, you might think about having Rover go back and forth between residences with the kids.

Depending on many factors, it may make sense for some couples to share custody, while others may feel the right thing to do is to relinquish their beloved furry friend to the person better able to care for him.

Whatever the specifics of the arrangement, sharing custody of the family dog (in amicable splits) can be a great way to keep your

dog active and satisfied, and let each person maintain their relationship with their family member.

The stress of domestic discord can lead to anxiety or misbehaving in your pooch. Dogs are creatures of habit, and breakups may mean disruption in his routine.

Remember that your dog has been used to sharing a home with two people, and now he's likely splitting time between two homes and two different schedules. A dog who has always been perfectly house-trained might have a few accidents, or a formerly quiet dog may



PHOTO PROVIDED

Wolf went to the pet parent he was most attached to after a divorce. He's done very well.

develop an anxious barking habit.

It's important to be patient and loving with your dog, and remember that he's not being "bad" — he's simply having a natural reaction to a confusing situation.

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541-549-2572 | 250 W. Cascade Ave.

Mon.-Wed. 11 to 4
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Quilt Drawing

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100% of the proceeds go to Furry Friends Foundation.

"Pets Just Wanna Have Fun" quilt was designed, appliqued, and quilted by Valerie Fercho-Tillery. The original design and incredible detail make this a spectacular quilt!

The quilt is currently on display at The Nugget office, 442 E. Main Ave. Bring your pup by for a dog cookie and have a look!

Tickets may be purchased at The Nugget office or online at our website www.furryfriendsfoundation.org.



Tickets are \$1 each, six for \$5 or go for it, 25 for \$20.



Info: 541-549-9941



"Pets Just Wanna Have Fun" - by Valerie Fercho-Tillery (45.5"w x 57.5"h)