

# PROTECTION DOGS

By Robert Cabral

Personal Protection Dogs have been popular for many years. People spend tens of thousands of dollars on a well-trained dog to protect their families and their homes. They are considered the Rolls Royce of dogs, but are they right for everyone?

There are many things to consider when deciding on a protection dog. First off, not every dog is a protection dog, and 99.99% of dogs can't ever become protection dogs. These dogs have immense training and are screened to be good with people, children and most of all they must be clear headed. They are bred through select lines and are conditioned from very early on for the job they will do. You'll spend top dollar for one of these dogs but you must consider it is still a dog. They require attention, exercise, structure and most importantly continued training. Once the skill is taught it must be reinforced regularly.

The breeds that are most common used are working line German Shepherds, Belgian Malinois, Dobermans, Rottweilers and a small handful of others. The most common is the German Shepherd namely because of their lineage and their overall temperaments. Malinois are the hands down best choice for police work or military work, but are one of the worst choices for house dogs because of their immense drives. A well trained protection dog is usually around 3-4 years old, has learned the skills through sport training such as IPO, Ring Sport or KNPV and was then further trained, they are good in the house, car or when travelling.

Some people will sell protection dogs based on levels, for example Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. I don't believe in this grading namely because a level one dog is not a protection dog, only a level 3 dog should be considered for the task, that is why it is best to buy a dog based on the dog, not because of the graded level that someone placed upon him. The level is most always related to the grading level of the dog sport the dog competed in. One of the most important things to consider is the dog's overall temperament. Since most of the time he will be a dog and not a protector. We expect these dogs to live in our homes and be members of the family, not rogue warriors.

Undoubtedly most people who purchase these dogs get them as an extension of their personality, not because they really need them. That being said, I would hope that people think twice before getting a dog like this. I've worked with several clients who spent \$40K on a dog and can't control the dog now that he's in a home where he's not working regularly.

If you are looking for a dog to protect you, your family and your home, most any dog will be a good deterrent against a break in. One of the very best deterrents to a burglar is a dog. A barking dog will scare away most criminals because they are looking for an easy target. So even Fluffy the shelter mutt will suffice to ward off the bad guys.

If you are thinking about a protection dog ask yourself, "Am I ready for this commitment? Will I be able to continue the dogs training throughout it's life to keep the dog happy and balanced?" The commitment is more than just the initial purchase price, it's like buying a Lamborghini, you need to brace yourself for a lifetime of upkeep and service to keep it running perfect.

If anyone offers to train your pet for protection, RUN. Personal pets should never be considered for as candidates and neither should most breeds of dogs. As I mentioned above, protection dogs are bred and raised with that goal in mind, it is NEVER an afterthought.



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