Collie types (Border Collies, Collie-crosses and Working Sheepdogs) are often to be found in rehoming centres waiting for new homes. They are highly intelligent and require enormous amounts of mental and physical stimulation. There is a popular misconception that because they are intelligent dogs, they will be easy to keep as pets. This is not always the case. In fact, collies are often given away by their owners because they are too active and demanding.

The aim of this factsheet is to tell you more about Collie types and their suitability as pets. If at some point in the future you consider giving a home to a Collie type, you will hopefully know enough about these dogs to know whether or not to choose one as your new companion.

What is a ‘Collie type’?
The term ‘Collie’ tends to be used to describe a variety of dogs, which are active, intelligent and beautiful. This group includes Border Collies, Working Sheepdogs and some Collie Crosses.

- If a Collie is to be recognised as a Border Collie, it must be registered with either the Kennel Club or the International Sheepdog Society.
- Working Sheepdogs often come from farms and their parents are usually working dogs.
- Collie Crosses are any variety of Working Sheepdog or Border Collie crossed with any other breed of dog. These are commonly mistaken for Border Collies and many may look and act like Border Collies and Working Sheepdogs.
Collie Types as Family Pets

**Working dogs?**
Collies have been bred for a very long time to have strong herding and working instincts. If they do not have a suitable outlet for these instincts, they often develop behaviour problems. These behaviours include chasing, nipping, destructive behaviour and sometimes the dogs become so frustrated that they become aggressive.

Collies and their crosses love working and are often very easy to train. The problem is that they quickly become bored and always need new things to do. Many pet owners just do not have the time or energy to keep up with this type of dog. Because of their speed, agility and their need to herd, they may not be ideal for households with young children, as they can easily become over-excited.

**Is a Collie type the right dog for you?**
Just because a home is ideal for an average family pet, it may not be so for a Collie. If you are thinking of adopting one of these dogs, you should consider the following carefully:

- **How much experience have you had with Collies?**
  Remember that there is a big difference between many purpose bred working type Collies and Collie Crosses. If you have not had a dog before, perhaps you should consider getting a dog which is less demanding.

- **What are your reasons for choosing a Collie?**
  The only really good reason for choosing a Collie is that you have enough time, energy and experience to know that you can provide for all of his needs.

- **How much time have you got for the dog?**
  Collies demand not just time, but quality time. Long walks are not enough to keep most Collies happy. These dogs will need training every day and activities that challenge them physically and mentally.

- **Have you got young children or are you considering a family?**
  Collies are not always ideal for very young children. They can react very quickly, become excitable and resort to herding behaviour easily, especially if their physical and mental needs are not being met.

- **Do you have a lifestyle suited to keeping a Collie?**
  You need to have a very active lifestyle to consider keeping a Collie. They are well suited to people who are involved in outdoor activities.

- **Are you prepared to become involved in dog club activities such as agility or flyball?**
  Many Collie owners find that the best way to provide for their dog’s needs is to join a dog sporting activity.

- **Are you prepared to enrol in a good dog training class?**
  Collies need lots of training. This must be done without force and be very motivational. A good training class will help you to understand the needs of your dog and give you new ideas to keep him interested.
Where to find your ideal dog
If you decide that you would be able to offer a Collie the perfect home, you need to consider where to get one. If you decide to get a puppy from a breeder, ensure that the breeder is reputable and that the puppy’s parents are healthy and have a good temperament. It’s always best to meet the parents to ensure that they are friendly.

Border Collies and Working Sheepdogs suffer from some hereditary diseases, so it is important to ensure that tests for Hip Dysplasia, Collie Eye Anomaly, Central Progressive Retinal Atrophy and Primary Lens Luxation have been done on both parents and that they are clear. The puppies should be kept indoors and have been well socialised with children and other animals. If the puppies are kept outside in kennels, there is evidence to show that they are more likely to develop behaviour problems. Your vet will be able to advise you on these tests.

Never buy a Collie from a farm or large commercial kennels if you plan to keep one as a pet. Plenty of activity is an important to keep all dogs happy and healthy, but puppies bred from working dogs are particularly active and will have the instinct to be ‘working’ all day. If you take on puppy bred from farm working dogs, you will need to be prepared to provide a lot of mental and physical activity to channel this bred-in disposition to work.

Rehoming Centre Collies
Keep in mind that there are many specialist Border Collie rescue organisations and they, as well as all-breed rescues such as Dogs Trust, often have puppies looking for good homes. If you get a Collie puppy from a reputable Rehoming Centre, he should have been well socialised, given a thorough health check, vaccinated and microchipped. You should be offered assistance should you have any problems in the future.

Rehoming organisations will also have a number of adult dogs looking for good homes. Be aware that Collies usually find kennel life very stressful, so you may find that they appear somewhat unruly in the kennel environment. Before you make a decision about a dog, ask to see him away from his kennel so that you can get an idea of his true personality.

Collies are beautiful, intelligent, active and loyal, but they are not for everyone. If you live a very active lifestyle, have plenty of time, are fit and you want a dog that will keep you challenged, then a Collie might be just the dog for you. Why not visit your local Dogs Trust Rehoming Centre and make up your mind?

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