



Is a Brussels Griffon the Right Breed for You and Your Family?

Griffs are not like other dogs. They are affectionately known as Velcro dogs because they attach themselves to one person in the family, sometimes two, and need to be with that person 24/7.

They want to sleep in bed with you. They follow you from room to room and are never more than 2-3' from you. If you are standing at the sink, you may find your Griff sitting on your feet. When you sit down, your Griff will be in your lap. Can you handle that as part of your life style?

Griffs do not do well when left alone, even in the company of other dogs. An ideal situation is someone that works from home, is allowed to take their dogs to work with them, works part time or is retired.

Following, is some information about Brussels Griffons that we have collected. Please read as much as you can about the breed so you feel confident that this is the right dog for you. This is a life-time commitment for the Griff and a 12-15 year commitment for the adopter.

Brussels Griffon Temperament and Behavior

- Generally the Griffon is an intelligent, happy, affectionate, adaptable companion who loves his caretakers best and craves their attention.
- It is not unusual for a Griff to be shy with strangers or new situations, and hang with his owner until he warms to what's new.
- He barks when someone comes to the door or when appropriate.
- He doesn't care for aggressive behavior, and if he can't escape, he'll defend himself.
- It is very possible to find some Griffons who are hyperactive, and on the other end of the scale, some who are very mellow even shy

- Male or female makes little difference in temperament.
- If you aren't the leader, he can easily develop bad habits.
- Because of their small size and complete attachment to their family, Brussels Griffons are strictly house dogs.
- If relegated to a garage or kennel, not receiving the love and personal attention he needs, the Griffon will pine away, no matter how well their other needs are met.
- They should always have the opportunity to socialize with their people, otherwise they will become unhappy and withdraw into their shell
- Griffons are happiest when they can sleep in your bed, follow you throughout your daily activities, and be an integral part of the family.
- Griffons get along well with other pets, and enjoy the companionship of their human and animal family members.
- A word of caution - due to their innate sense of self importance, they are not aware of their small stature. As a result, they will often try to dominate dogs many times their size and could be hurt by a larger pet.
- Griffons love to romp and play, and will often amuse you by tearing through the house and running in circles for the sheer joy of it.
- When playtime is through, they will curl up next to you for a nap, again showing that they are true Velcro dogs.
- A Griffon left alone will devise many ways to amuse themselves, many of which their family may not appreciate.
- The decision to have a dog has to be a "whole family" commitment, not an experiment to teach children responsibility.
- A Griffon will bond with his caregiver.
- If he's to be a family dog, everyone must help in care and training.
- The Griffon is not recommended for families with kids under 5 years.

- Because of the Griffon's small size and sensitive nature, they are not recommended as pets for small children that might be unwittingly rough or even tease the dog.
- They do make excellent pets for families with older children, singles, empty nesters or grandparents, in fact anyone with the commitment to the health and well being of their Griffon.

Is a Brussels Griffon easy to train?

- If you are referring to housetraining, the answer is no. Sporting, working, and herding breeds housetrain with less effort, and will hold it longer when left unconfined.
- Not that it's impossible to have a housetrained Griffon, but often it is you that gets trained.
- There are books and pamphlets on house training. Be sure you look into the commitment needed for this BEFORE a dog is adopted.
- We expect you to purchase a crate or exercise pen to use in housetraining before you adopt a dog.
- If you have a house with carpeting or expensive oriental rugs, it would be foolish to allow a Griffon access where a "piddle" would break your heart.
- A securely fenced yard is a must for this breed.
- Housetraining can be accomplished - however, it will not be as easy as with other breeds. Remember, consistency and kindness should always be employed, as well as keeping the Griffon on a regular, frequent schedule of "bathroom breaks".
- By keeping your Griffon on a regular schedule, and taking him outside immediately after waking up and after eating, your chances for successful housetraining will be improved.
- If you are referring to obedience training, the answer is yes, if the training method suits the temperament of the dog.
- This is an intelligent breed, but sensitive. The Griffon will not respond to rough handling, hitting, or excessive shouting.
- Once a Griffon learns, he needs variety to keep his interest.
- Training methods that use praise, clickers, treats, and patience work best.

- Brussels Griffons have a high degree of intelligence coupled with a sensitive nature.
- As a result, force does not work well with them in training; when forced they will decide they want no part of the training session.
- They will, however, respond well to guidance given with kindness, consistency and love.
- For example, catching a Griffon to crate them can result in a game of "catch me if you can" that can lead to frustration on the part of the owner. Enticing the Griffon into his crate with a treat elicits the desired behavior for you and a reward for the dog - a training win-win strategy that should be utilized consistently.
- Griffons will bond easily to their trainer when gentle training methods are used.
- Their intelligence and desire to please makes them wonderful participants in obedience, agility, confirmation and tracking events.
- We encourage all new owners to take their Griffs to Beginning Obedience classes as it gives alternatives in disciplining and builds owner confidence in handling the Griff.

Adopting a Rescued Brussels Griffon

Many rescued Griffs come from neglectful homes or from commercial breeding facilities, commonly known as puppy mills. The Griffs in ABGRA's adoption program are placed in foster homes where they live in a loving home environment, are rehabilitated and trained to the best of our ability. The foster home becomes intimately knowledgeable about these Griffs and will share behavior, routines and health with the potential adopters. The foster home will want to know a lot about the potential adopters to ensure that the Griffs are matched with a perfect forever home.

- Every rescued Brussels Griffon is different. What works on one or many, will completely fail on others; the only thing that is consistent is that they will need lots of patience, understanding, love, and probably most importantly, unconditional acceptance of what they are and what their limitations may be.
- Most Griffs are not housetrained before they enter our adoption program, but normally become very reliable over time.
- When a Griff moves to a new home, potty accidents are common until they understand the routine.

- Belly bands for the boys and doggy diapers for the girls may be a lifetime necessity for a few special Griffis.
- Mill Griffis often have the most difficult time learning house manners, but it is usually accomplished, especially if the Griff has ample scheduled opportunities to go outside.
- Mill Griffis were forced to eat, sleep and eliminate in their small living space (a cage), so potty training makes no sense to them at first. Patience, love and consistency are the only “secrets”.
- Mill Griffis have never experienced human affection before they enter their foster homes.
- Since all Griffis crave human affection, this hurdle is easily overcome. However, once a mill Griff understands how good it feels to be held and loved, they want it all the time and return that love a hundredfold.
- Rescued Griffis are often fearful because of past abuse or rough handling. They need a gentle touch and soft words to trust fully.
- Once trust is achieved with a rescued Griff, that person will have a loyal, loving companion for life.
- Some rescued Griffis enjoy the security of a crate, but others are extremely fearful of crates.
- Overall, adopting a rescued Griff is a lifetime commitment and should never be taken lightly.
- If circumstances require the adopter to leave their Griff alone for long periods of time, the rescued Griff’s behavior will most likely regress and problems could occur.
- Adopting a Griffon is like having a baby that never grows up, but remains dependent for 12-15 years.

Do Brussels Griffons shed?

There are two coats in this breed - the rough and the smooth.

- The smooth coat, like any smooth coated dog, has a seasonal shed. That means that in the spring and fall, the dead hairs fall out.
- The shed lasts maybe two weeks and is encouraged with warm baths followed by brushing.
- Regular grooming for a smooth uses a "hound's glove" to give the coat gloss and catch the loose hairs.
- The rough coat does not have a seasonal shed.

- Each hair in the body coat grows to about 3-4 inches and then dies and a new hair grows in the follicle. But the hairs do not come out all at one time.
- Regular grooming and daily brushing keeps hair off furniture and floor.
- Rough-coated pets need to visit a groomer about every three months where clipping trims the body coat and a scissors trims the beard and legs.
- For conformation showing the rough coated Griffon is hand stripped or tidied for neatness by hand. The rough show coat should never be prepared with scissors and/or clippers, and should be of sufficient length to determine texture.

Grooming a Brussels Griffon

- Grooming is very different for the two coat types.
- Beginning with the smooth coat, regular brushing and occasional bathing should suffice.
- Nails must be trimmed short, and ears should be cleaned occasionally with a cotton ball and ear cleaner.
- Even on a smooth dog, the hair can sometimes grow long around the neck, rump and tail.
- Ears should also be trimmed to maintain a neat appearance.
- The rough coat can be maintained in two ways.
- Most pet owners will opt to have their Griffon taken to a groomer, where the coat on the head, ears, back and sides will be clipped very short.
- The furnishings on the legs are left slightly longer, and the beard is trimmed to maintain a neat appearance.
- An alternate method is to hand-strip the coat - this is the grooming method used by breeders to maintain a show coat.
- This is done by pulling out the long dead hairs with a stripping knife or with fingers a few hairs at a time.
- Maintaining the coat in this fashion will keep the Griffon's coat at the proper harsh texture and deep color so he looks his best.
- By shaving your Griffon with clippers, some of the depth of color and wiry texture is lost, but the grooming process is much easier to learn.
- The stripping process is not difficult to learn, but does require dedication and attention to detail.

- Whether the dog is clipped or hand stripped, the important thing to remember is to keep your Griffon well groomed and neat.
- The grooming process, when done gently and frequently can be an important bonding ritual between owner and dog.

Is this breed for someone with allergies?

- There are exceptions, but the Brussels Griffon does not make a good pet for those suffering from allergies.
- If a member of the family has allergies, it is important to consult an allergist about the purchase of a dog, and follow his/her advice. A lot depends on the sensitivity that causes the allergy.
- Some are sensitive to dog fur, some to dog dander, some to saliva. Dogs like the Yorkshire Terrier, the Poodle or Bichon Frise are easier to tolerate because they do not shed, and they have skin and hair that take frequent bathing. This is not the Brussels Griffon.
- Although there are dog products that may reduce dander and are advertised to help control allergic reactions, sensitivity usually grows with exposure.
- Some doctors prescribe shots and/or pills to reduce allergies, but it's up to your doctor to tell you if this will be effective with a dog in the house.
- A Griffon, or any dog, should never suffer the trauma of uprooting to a new home or neglected because you couldn't say "no"!

General Breed Description

- A Brussels Griffon attracts instant attention with its' large lustrous eyes, delightful pout, and almost human expression.
- They are a small, sturdy toy dog and are often referred to as a "big dog in a small package".
- The Griffon is extremely alert and takes note of all activities in the household.

- This intelligence, coupled with their loving personalities, make the Brussels Griffon an excellent house pet.
- Their wonderful air of "self importance" is a constant source of amusement to anyone lucky enough to be owned by one.

Appearance

- There are four coat colors: red, black, black and tan, and belge (which is red and black mixed, giving the coat a shaded look).
- In addition, there are two coat types, rough and smooth.
- The wiry haired rough coat is dense and somewhat harsh to the touch.
- The rough coat is hand stripped short on the body and left somewhat longer on the leg furnishings and the face to form a beard.
- The smooth coat is short, tight and glossy, similar to that of a Boston Terrier.
- The smooth-coated Griffon will not have a beard and furnishings.
- The two coat types give the Griffon a different look, but the dog underneath is the same.
- In fact, the two coats appear interchangeably, as both coat types are often born in the same litter of puppies.
- Griffons can range in size from as little as 6 lbs. up to 12, or even 15 lbs.

Brussels Griffon Health

Brussels Griffons are relatively long lived, with an age span of 12-15 years being the norm.

Once they are past young puppyhood, Griffons are not subject to many serious diseases that plague some breeds.

There are, however, some genetically based diseases that do occur in the breed.

Griffons are not overly prone to eye or skin ailments, but being a flat faced (bracycephalic) breed, must be protected from overheating in hot weather. Extremely cold weather can also affect their breathing.

Some Griffons will snore - this is usually more amusing than it is annoying.

Regular health checks, vaccinations, and heartworm prevention are important components in maintaining your Griffon's optimal health.

Griffons are born with ears that stand up and then fold over - the ears may also be cropped to form a small prick ear. They may also have their tails cropped - this is done when the puppies are just a few days old.

How was the breed developed?

The Brussels Griffon, like many dog breeds in existence today, was developed by combining other breeds to select for certain traits that long-ago breeders found desirable. There are several theories of breed development proposed by students of the breed, but most agree that the wire coated Belgian stable dog, known as Griffon d'Ecurie, was crossed and re-crossed with the black Pug, Affenpinscher, and Ruby Toy Spaniel sometime in the mid 1800's. The Belgian stablemen that initiated these breedings apparently kept no records, but the present day Brussels Griffon was known in its' present form sometime between 1870 and 1880.

Each of the breeds used in the development of the Brussels Griffon provided unique traits that make the breed the delightful little companion he is today. The wire coated Affenpinscher and Griffon d'Ecurie provided the harsh coat seen in the rough coat of today, while the Pug, a favorite in Victorian England during the mid 1800's contributed the black color and smooth coat. The smooth Brussels Griffon is also known as the Brabencon in Europe, named for the Belgian anthem "La Brabenconne". The King Charles (black and tan) and Ruby Toy Spaniels legacy can be seen in the occasional kink tailed, web footed or tailless Griffon that sometime appears - these dogs often have the most extreme, desirable head type. The crossbreeding of the Pug, Toy Spaniels, and Affenpinscher all contributed to the domed head, large expressive eyes, upswept jaw and flat face of our current day Griffon. The Brussels Griffon has evolved from the scruffy stable ratter into the delightful little companion we know today.

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