

Everything You Want And Need To Know About Large Dog Breeds



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When you kids ask for a dog for Christmas, you're probably going to look into a small to medium breed pup like a Yorkie, a retriever, or maybe even a boxer or a husky. However, what if you want something bigger because you live by the motto that bigger is better and you want something that resembles more of a living teddy bear?



If that's what you're going for, then you're going to want to look into some large breed dogs like a Cane Corso puppy, a Bernese mountain dog puppy, a German shepherd puppy, a German shepherd mix, or... Well, there are a lot of large dog breeds out there that you could choose from, and we are going to be discussing some of them throughout this guide!

In this extensive guide, we are going to cover a lot of ground so you are fully prepared to take on caring for one of these large or giant dog breeds.

We have a lot of ground to cover, so let's get started!

Before we do, we want to clarify that the category of “Large Dogs” are breeds that weigh more than 50 pounds and less than 90 pounds when they are fully grown. If a dog weighs more than 90 pounds, it is considered a giant breed, but for the purpose of this guide, we are going to include giant breeds with the large.

The Purpose Of Large Dog Breeds

For centuries, large dog breeds have been used by man to be work dogs. They were expected to hunt larger animals, be able to pull sleighs or carts, and pull in fishing nets in freezing water.

Because of the work these dogs were expected to perform, they have developed large muscular frames that would allow them to carry out these jobs with ease. Many of these dogs no longer perform those kinds of tasks, but they still have those characteristics their breed developed through the years.

Notable Work Dogs

Lets look at some of the most recognizable large work dogs:

Alaskan Malamute

This breed was officially recognized by the AKC (American Kennel Club) in 1935 and are the oldest and largest breed of Arctic sled dogs. These dogs have incredible strength and endurance.



These dogs were bred to pull sleds with large loads on them for far distances. These dogs are believed to be descendants of wolf-dogs who crossed the Bering Strait with Paleolithic hunters over 4,000 years ago. They stand between 22 to 26 inches in height and they can weigh up to 95 pounds.

Bernese Mountain Dog

This breed was officially recognized by the AKC in 1937 and they are one of four varieties of Swiss mountain dogs. The Bernese mountain dog thrives in cold weather and it's their strength and intelligence that has helped them excel on the Swiss farms.

These dogs have a refined appearance which may seem out of place, as they were typically found on farmlands in the center of Switzerland. They stand between 25 to 28 inches in height and they can weigh up to 110 pounds.

Samoyed

This breed was officially recognized by the AKC in 1906 and these are most alike the primitive dog because there's no mixture of fox or wolf in the dog's lineage. These dogs were bred to be sled dogs and were typically found in the Siberian town of Oymyakon, where the temperatures dropped as low as -60 degrees.

They were able to thrive in those conditions because of their thick white coat. Though these dogs are beautiful dogs, they prove to be extremely useful. They stand between 19 to 24 inches in height and they can weigh up to 65 pounds.

Saint Bernard

This breed was officially recognized by the AKC in 1885 and they didn't always have their thick fur! Before the 1830s, these dogs once had short hair. Though these dogs aren't very popular, they are still quite admirable.



Described as "powerful" and "muscular," some people even said the look imposing and massive. They were used by monks to find and rescue injured travelers. They stand between 28 to 31 inches in height and they can weigh up to 260 pounds!

Other than being expected to perform jobs, many people noticed that people were intimidated by their large size. So, naturally people like farmers and the wealthy saw that these dogs could be used to protect their farms and families.

To this day, many people have large guard dogs like the common German Shepherd, a Doberman Pinscher, Rottweiler, or exotic breeds like any of the Mastiff breeds, a Great Dane, or the Siberian Husky. Unlike watch dogs who will just bark at intruders, visitors, the mailman, a squirrel, or even a leaf (watch dogs bark at anything), a guard dog is going to act. These dogs are brave, loyal, and incredibly protective!

Large Guard Dogs

Lets look at some of the most recognizable large work dogs:

Bullmastiff

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1934. They are strong and powerful, but they are also very intelligent and have an eagerness to please their owners. These large dogs are agile and active.

They were first used as guard dogs back in England to protect large estates and game preservations back in the 1860s. They stand between 25 to 27 inches in height and they can weigh up to 135 pounds.

Doberman Pinscher

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1908 and they originated in Thuringen, Germany sometime around 1890. These muscular dogs are known for incredible speed and endurance.



When you look at these dogs, they look refined and like they've descended from nobility. With proper training, they can be friendly but still be quite the guardian. They stand between 24 to 27 inches in height and they can weigh up to 90 pounds.

German Shepherd

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1908 and they are among the most popular and most recognizable breed in the United States. These dogs are considered the “finest all-purpose workers” because they are intelligent, agile, and muscular. They are often used by law enforcement because they take to training very well and are incredibly obedient.

They stand between 22 to 26 inches in height and they can weigh up to 90 pounds. Families often find some kind of German Shepherd Mix because the qualities in the shepherd make them incredibly versatile for a variety of tasks. Some examples of a German shepherd hybrid include:

- ➔ Golden Shepherd - Golden Retriever, German Shepherd Mix
- ➔ Chow Shepherd – Chow Chow, German Shepherd Mix
- ➔ Doberman Shepherd – Doberman Pinscher, German Shepherd Mix
- ➔ Shepkita – Akita, German Shepherd Mix
- ➔ Shollie – Collie, German Shepherd Mix

Rottweiler

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1931 and are a descendent of ancient Roman drover dogs. These dogs have similar markings to a Doberman Pinscher, but they are much more robust with a lot more powerful.



These dogs are incredibly intelligent and when you combine that with their endurance and eagerness to protect their owners, they make excellent guard dogs. They stand between 22 to 27 inches in height and they can weigh up to 130 pounds.

Of these dogs, people tend to debate between a German Shepherd and a Doberman Pinscher. If you're in this situation and trying to see which is right for you, we've set up a little comparison chart to help you decide.

German Shepherd VS Doberman Pinscher

German Shepherd VS Doberman Pinscher

Shedding:	Constant	Moderate
Life Expectancy:	10 to 12 Years	10 to 12 Years
Height Range:	24 to 26 Inches	26 to 28 Inches
Weight Range:	75 to 95 Pounds	65 to 90 Pounds
Barking:	Frequent	Frequent
Good For New Owners:	No	Yes
Good With Kids:	Yes	No
Hypoallergenic:	No	No
Cost:	\$1,150	\$800
Litter Size:	4 to 9 Puppies	3 to 13 Puppies

Typical Characteristics Of Large Dog Breeds

Looking at any large dog breed, the most notable thing you're going to see is their size—you simply cannot overlook these dogs because they were right there, large and in charge! However, this is a bit more to these big dogs than just their size. Notable characteristics of these dogs include:

Age

These large dogs will take several years to reach full maturity. Don't be surprised to find that your big dog may be as tall as your hips but still act like a puppy. Until they are about 2 or 3 years old, they are going to be playful, clumsy, and energetic.

It may take an additional 2 to 3 years for them to calm down and be a mature adult. Unfortunately, because their bodies grow so rapidly, they will develop serious health conditions and will have a shorter life span than small dogs.



Shedding

When you look at the list of large dog breeds, you might think that they all have lots of hair and they are going to shed a lot. That isn't the case. In fact, there are several large dogs that don't shed. If you want a large sized dog, but you don't want a large sized vacuum cleaner to clean up the hair, you may want to check out one of these large non-shedding dogs (mind you, this is just a very small selection!).

Wired-Haired Pointing Griffon

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1887 and they are bred to be able to cover all sorts of terrain that a hunter may cover. They have a coarse double coat that will protect them from briars and underbrush, and gives them a messy look. Their medium length coat rarely falls out and only requires occasional grooming. They stand between 20 to 24 inches in height and they can weigh up to 60 pounds.

Saluki

These large short haired dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1929 and were used for hunting, they once were the royal dog of Egypt. The coat of these dogs are kept short, although some owners may choose to have feathering on their legs. They do require a lot of exercise and training, but owners have said they are great companions. They stand between 18 to 24 inches in height and they can weigh up to 60 pounds.

Standard Poodle

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1887 and the denominations (standard, toy, and miniature) are only to describe the size—they are all the same breed and follow the same standard. Though these dogs look like they may give you a hard time with shedding, they actually don't shed at all.

These dogs are known for being show dogs, but they were originally used as water retrievers who would bring in fowl for their hunters. They stand between 15 to 24 inches in height and they can weigh up to 70 pounds.



Komondor

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1937 and look like they could be a mop on legs! This rare breed with its corded coats were mainly used in Hungary for over 1,000 years, however they are used as companion dogs today.

As the dog ages, the corded hair forms naturally and it used to help him blend in with the flock of sheep back in the day. Today, you can find them participating in shows and obedience rings. They stand between 25 to 30 inches in height and they can weigh up to 130 pounds.

Temperament

It's difficult to say what the general temperament of the large breed dogs is like because it varies from breed to breed. However, when you look through the different large breeds, you'll notice that most of them are all relatively mild mannered and low key. There are some that are high energy, like the German Shepherd, any of the retrievers, and the poodle. But, there are plenty that are generally low-energy like:

Chow Chow

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1903 and they are only one of two dog breeds to have a blue-black tongue! These dogs are compact dogs, but very powerful. Perhaps the most recognizable quality about these dogs (other than the color of their tongue) is the lion-mane-like fur around their head and shoulders.

These dogs also have almond, deep set eyes that makes them a little more intimidating than other breeds. They stand between 19 to 22 inches in height and they can weigh up to 75 pounds.



Great Dane

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1887 and they were “developed” to be boar hounds by the Germans. Of all the dog breeds around, perhaps this is one of the most recognizable.

While this breed may not reach the size of Clifford from your childhood books, they still get pretty tall, but surprisingly they aren’t the tallest! Though these dogs are large, they are still elegant and balanced. They stand between 23 to 28 inches in height and they can weigh up to 200 pounds.

Irish Wolf Hound

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1897 and they are the tallest of all dogs. These dogs are huge and muscular! Though these dogs are large, like the Great Dane, they are graceful and their lines look very similar to the Greyhound.

These dogs are able to cover lots of ground when they’re at a full gallop, so if they are chasing something, they’ll be able to catch it pretty easily. They stand between 28 to 35 inches in height and they can weigh up to 150 pounds.

Neapolitan Mastiff

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 2004 and these wrinkly dogs were once the estate guard dog of choice in Italy over two millennia ago!



Though these dogs may look like they are melting, we can assure you that they are powerful dogs that are brimming with dignity that is befitting its noble roots. They stand between 23 to 28 inches in height and they can weigh up to 150 pounds.

How To Care For Large Dog Breeds

As you can guess, caring for a large dog isn't going to be the same as caring for a smaller dog. Sure, they need the same things, but they are just going to be scaled up, by a lot. You're still going to want to get them a bed, but you're going to want to get large dog furniture that is going to be able to accommodate their size, but also their weight.

The same with toys, you are going to want to keep these dogs entertained and you can do that by getting them larger toys that are going to be more durable—especially for the pups because they like to chew like any growing puppy! Of course, let's not forget that you'll need larger collars, stronger leashes, and bigger crates, too.

It doesn't just end there though. These dogs are going to need more room to move around. These dogs are going to take up a lot of space in your car, your yard, and your house. Because of their sheer size, you probably don't want to be living in an apartment. In fact, there aren't that many apartments that allow large dogs to begin with!

Best Large Dogs For Apartments

However, if you do have your heart set on a big dog and you're lucky enough to have found a complex that will let you have one, here are a couple options of the best large dogs for apartments you may want to consider.

Basset Hound



These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1935 and although you wouldn't think they would be considered a big dog because of their height, they have sturdy bodies that can pretty heavy! These dogs are easy-going and only really require a good walk. If you're going to be gone most of the day, hire someone to walk the dog so he can socialize, which he loves to do! They stand between 11 to 15 inches in height and they can weigh up to 65 pounds.

Chinese Shar-Pei

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1992 their lackadaisical nature makes them perfect for condos or apartments. They tend to be a one person kind of dog, so they make perfect companions for someone living alone. They do benefit from a few short walks each day, but they aren't necessarily high energy. They stand between 18 to 20 inches in height and they can weigh up to 65 pounds.

Greyhound

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1885, and although these dogs love to run, they don't need a whole lot of exercise. These dogs have earned themselves the nickname, "the 40-mph couch potato" for a reason. These dogs are a lot like cats as they love lounging on the sofa and napping. However, if you want to go for a run, he'll be more than happy to come along. They stand between 27 to 30 inches in height and they can weigh up to 90 pounds.

Rhodesian Ridgeback

These dogs were officially recognized by the AKC in 1955 and they are more laid back than other sporting breeds. All you need to do is take them for a walk or have quality play time with them, and they're happy lounging about the apartment. Be mindful of these dogs as puppies though, because they can be quite mischievous! They stand between 24 to 27 inches in height and they can weigh up to 90 pounds.

Feeding The Large Dogs

Many of these larger dogs will have problems with their bones and joints as they mature either because they've inherited the problems from their parents, or things like an improper diet and environmental factors. Of course, it could be a combination of all of these things that will make those conditions worse.

By making sure that your gentle giant's nutritional needs are being met, especially as a puppy, you are doing your part to make sure they grow up strong and healthy. The puppy food that you feed him will ensure he develops correctly and it can go a long way to preventing a lot of those health conditions that these big dogs are prone to experiencing.



Large and giant dog breed puppies are going to need to eat a high quality dog food so that they get the proper nutrients. We recommend a holistic, all-natural dog food, but anything your vet recommends is good too. They will usually recommend a large breed dog food because it has been specially formulated specifically to give these dogs the nutrition they need.

When you look for dog food, look for food that has:

- ✓ At least 23% protein
- ✓ At least 12% fat
- ✓ At least 1.2% calcium

You do not want to feed these dogs a high calorie food! Somewhere between 350 and 380 calories is good. This moderate calorie count will keep them from developing too quickly, which can aggravate or cause their bone and joint problems, causing canine arthritis. When you dog reaches maturity, it will need higher levels of protein, fat, and calcium.

The amount of food is just as important as the kind of food you feed them. Until they reach three months old, you'll want to feed them three times a day, but not reaching more than 2 to 4 cups of food per day (check with your vet for their recommendation how just how much food your dog should have). Once they hit 6 months old, you can increase that up to 6 to 8 cups a day, but only feed them twice a day.

Again, check with your vet for their recommendation on the best feeding practice for your specific breed if you are a new dog owner.

Exercising The Large Dogs

If you have a large dog, it's important that you don't exercise them or play with them too much until they are at least 10 months old. Why? Because the rapid development can put them at risk of hurting himself and those joint and bone problems can occur much sooner.

It's recommended that at this point of your puppy's life, protect their joints and ligaments by avoiding activities like:

- 💡 Running or jogging on pavement, concrete, or other hard surfaces
- 💡 Jumping down from high places like the bed, the back of a truck, etc.
- 💡 Playing on slippery surfaces like waxed floors, wet ground, ice, etc.
- 💡 Playing too rough



With that said, you are still going to want to make sure he does get some kind of exercise. You can do that by taking him on short walks throughout the day and playing games like fetch. Also, it's a good idea if you take them to a dog park or something similar so they can start socializing early on with other dogs.

Training The Large Dogs

It's important that when you first get your puppy, you begin obedience training right away. The basic commands include things like sit, stay, and come. It's very important that you begin the training when they are young because once they get older, they will already understand that you are in control and they will be less likely to use their size against you.

It's also important that you don't let your puppy do things that you'll regret later. For example, you will want to train them to sleep in their bed at night instead of in your bed. Once they get bigger, it won't be so cute sleeping with them and you only have a tiny part of the bed!

Common Health Problems Of Large Breed Dogs

When it comes to large breed dogs, there are quite a few health problems that affect them. Many of these problems are bone and joint related, so it's important that you are proactive with your dog's health.

Let's take a look at some of the most common health problems your large dog could experience:

Dog Hip Dysplasia

This disease occurs when a dog (typically a large or giant breed dog) has an abnormal hip joint(s). Although this is most common in large dogs, smaller dogs can experience it as well, especially if the dog is a mixture of breeds that are known to be susceptible to the disorder.



Common symptoms of the disease include:

- ➔ Weakness in the hind legs
- ➔ Limping in the hind legs
- ➔ Bouncing or a rabbit-like walk/hop
- ➔ Difficulty getting up when laying down
- ➔ Clicking sound when the dog is walking
- ➔ The hind legs are closer together than normal

While these are common signs, it doesn't necessarily that your dog will have these symptoms. In mild cases of the disease, they may not exhibit any symptoms.

The only way to be certain if your dog has it or not is to take your dog to a vet so they can do x-rays on the hips. From there, the vet may recommend medicine to treat it or your pup may have to go through a surgery to correct the condition.

Panosteitis In Dogs

Panosteitis (or 'Pano') is most commonly seen in large dogs between 6 months to 18 months in age, and it is usually the male pups that have the problem. This is a bone condition that comes and goes, and it generally lasts for a month or two. However in severe cases, it can last more than a year.

The condition is basically growing pains that are caused by inflammation in the long bones in your pups legs. These pains can appear without your dog undergoing any sort of catastrophic event or any underlying illness. The pains also tend to go away after it's done running its course.



Vets cannot pinpoint the exact cause of the disease, but there are several theories behind its cause, such as:

- ➔ Infections (both bacterial and viral)
- ➔ Hormonal imbalance
- ➔ Metabolic disorders
- ➔ Nutritional deficiencies (or excesses)
- ➔ Genetics

The most common symptom of the disease is limping and it won't be constant thing—it'll last anywhere between one day to two weeks and it could affect one or all of your dog's legs at different times (or all at once!).

Other symptoms of the disease can include:

- ➔ Swelling
- ➔ Low fever
- ➔ Lethargy
- ➔ Lack of appetite
- ➔ Enlarge tonsils
- ➔ Reduced muscle mass in their legs

To properly diagnose the disease, you'll have to go to your vet where they will conduct an exam and do some x-rays. When the dog has been diagnosed, the vet may prescribe medications, as well as plenty of rest and a change of diet.

Bloat

Much like people, large breed dogs can experience bloating. This is when their stomach fills with gas and it expands, putting pressure on the diaphragm. This pressure makes it hard for your dog to breathe and in some cases, the stomach will twist and cause your dog serious shock and could die quickly. Because of this, bloating should be treated with utmost urgency.

Dog bloat symptoms can occur at any age for any breed, but it is most commonly found in large dogs with a deep chest, like a Great Dane or any of the large Setters. This often happens when the dog exercises right after they've finished eating a meal.

The most common symptom is an enlarged abdomen, but you may also notice:

- ➔ Labored breathing
- ➔ Excessive drooling
- ➔ Vomiting
- ➔ Weak pulse
- ➔ Pale nose and mouth

If you notice any of these symptoms, get your dog to the vet right away to avoid anything serious happening to your pup. You can prevent bloat from happening by giving them a normal-sized portion of food and letting them rest after meal time so the food will digest.

There are some vets that will recommend a breed that is commonly afflicted with bloat to have a surgical procedure called gastropexy. This procedure attaches the stomach to the body wall so it doesn't shift or twist.



Enlarged Heart

Large dogs like the Doberman Pinscher, Great Dane, Irish Wolfhound, and the Saint Bernard most commonly are afflicted with a heart disease called dilated cardiomyopathy. This is a disease where the heart muscle doesn't function properly and it doesn't pump enough blood to the lungs, which will then accumulate a buildup of fluid in the lungs, thus causing congestive heart failure.

The most common symptoms of this disease include:

- Lethargy
- Anorexia
- Rapid and excessive breathing
- A shortness of breath
- Coughing
- Abdominal distension
- Loss of consciousness

While the cause of this condition is relatively unknown, nutritional deficiencies of taurine and/or carnitine can contribute to the disease in certain breeds. Studies also have suggested that some breeds are genetically susceptible to the disease, and in most cases, it is the male dog that will have the condition.



The way the disease is diagnosed is by several exams including radiographic imaging of the heart, as well as an EKG and ultrasound. In some instances, an echocardiograph will also need to be done to show the heart's ability to contract.

The disease can be treated by medications and diuretics can be used to reduce the fluid from collecting in the blood. While surgery isn't needed for this disease, it will be something that you will have to worry about for the rest of your dog's life and they will have to undergo regular testing and examinations to ensure they are doing okay.

Because large dogs are prone to serious conditions such as these, some people would recommend that you purchase pet insurance to help offset some of the cost of these treatments, should your dog have them. It's always better to be safe than sorry, right?

Wrap Up Of Large Breed Dogs

There is no denying that welcoming a large breed dog into your family can be a huge (figuratively and literally!) challenge, but it is one that many people take every day. Whether you want a guard dog with lots of energy like the German Shepherd or the Doberman Pinscher, or if you want a low-key companion for your condo like the Chow Chow or the Great Dane, you'll find that these dogs can make your life a little more complete.

With proper care and giving them your love and attention, you'll quickly learn that these dogs are loyal, intelligent, and are eager to please their master. If you're trying to find the cutest large dog breeds to snuggle with, you could choose any one of them—especially the breeds with ample amounts of fur!

If you're looking for the best large family dogs, you can't go wrong with any of the retrievers, the Bernese mountain dog, or the Basset Hound. These dogs are playful, affectionate, and they will care for your children like their own little pups.

If you do decide on bringing a large dog into your home, you are going to want to keep an eye out for any symptoms we've discussed for the health conditions these dogs are prone to experiencing. These dogs are going to be a big part of the family, so you're going to want to keep them happy and healthy so they can stick around for a long time, building memories with your family!

