



My dogs as companions

Never having cared for a dog before I took out a dog encyclopaedia from the library and spent days and weeks looking through it. I eventually decided (with the help of my friends) that the Shih Tzu would be the right dog for me. I eventually purchased my pet Toby, did the usual things of walking, feeding, getting him groomed which he absolutely loved as he was collected from home and picked up by me. I listened to and took advice from my friends and vets regarding his health. Needless to say, Toby became one of the most important parts of my life. Everybody that saw him loved the 'moppy dog' that he was and all the people which helped me look after him loved him too and said how good he was. Unfortunately, Toby became ill at about the age of 6 and several tests (which I found unbearable and so I dread to think how Toby found them) didn't really reveal a decisive outcome. The vet was convinced he had Cushings Disease and eventually two weeks before his death aged nearly 9, this was actually confirmed. Nine years on, the devastation of losing my Toby is still very roar.

Because of my inability to cope with the loss of my Shih Tzu, Toby, when I was ready to let another dog in my life my friends encouraged me to look for another breed believing that another Shih Tzu would be too painful for me at the time. Once again the dog encyclopaedia was borrowed from the library and it was a choice between an Affenpinscher or a Griffon Bruxellois. I managed to speak to the Griffon people first and from there on I now have three Griffons in my life – two red roughs (Bourbon and Bagelle) who are brother and sister and aged over 9 years, and one red smooth (Alfie) who is nearly 3 years old. It has been lovely having more than one dog because they are company for each other all the time I'm not around. The grooming of the roughs has proved too much for me hence my choosing a smooth – marvellous for brushing over! They are all an integral and very important part of my life, great company when I'm stressed and come home from work – all tails wagging really lifts your spirits and also makes you appreciate what's good in your life. They have opened up my social life through companion dog shows, open shows and championship shows and the funniest thing is when people say to me that Alfie is a funny coloured Pug?! Griffons can teach anyone lessons on relaxing – mine can all snore for England, and as for dressing up for competitions they don't seem to mind. They don't even mind modelling knitted jumpers. The joy they bring to my life is immeasurable and they never let you forget basics!!

Luckily my Griffons have had good health with the exception of Bourbon's bladder

stones recently. I know that I wished I had more help when my Toby was ill and that people had talked about their experience with Cushings so that I could learn from it and act appropriately – I think it's fantastic that a site is being set up to share experiences of CM/SM so that both dogs and people can suffer less from making informed choices and decisions about health matters.

Janet



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