Great Pyrenees Breed Introduction

Early History

The Great Pyrenees is native to the Basque country in the Pyrenees mountains that border France and Spain. Known as Le Chien de Montagne des Pyrénées in its native France, the Great Pyrenees is known to be one of the oldest breeds of dog in the world. While similar in size and stature to the Mastiff family, the Great Pyrenees is actually descended from the ancient large, white livestock guardian dogs of the middle ages and therefore evolved parallel to most modern breeds of dogs as opposed to being descended from them. Because of this, the Great Pyrenees has more in common with a wolf, than that of a modern dog. Having no extant ancestor, the Great Pyrenees has remained virtually unchanged both physically and mentally for hundreds of years. This has allowed it to evolve naturally over centuries, which among other things, means that the breed has relatively few health problems, in comparison to modern dogs. The first written reference to the Great Pyrenees is from 1407, where the historian of the Chateau of Lourdes wrote of the breed in use to guard the Chateau.

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A Serious working dog

The Great Pyrenees is a working animal, bred primarily as a livestock guardian for shepherds. Their imposing size, strength, courage and resistance to the elements proved invaluable to shepherds, who learned to depend on the large white dogs for companionship as well as protection for their flock against predators of all kinds. Wild dogs, bears, wolves, coyotes, as well as many birds of prey and more, learned to respect the white dogs and give them a wide berth. Even humans, over the ages that threaten or endanger their flock have found themselves on the wrong side of a Great Pyrenees. The breed's natural characteristics are a calm, placid nature, which was a work requirement allowing them to roam freely among the flocks without alarming them. Upon sensing a threat to its flock or family however, the Pyrenees is 100% a fearless guardian dog, quite capable of convincing nearly any predator that dining on its flock is not an option. The Great Pyrenees' heavy, white double coat is a valuable asset, shielding the dog from rain, wind and snow as well as providing a formidable coat of armor against the teeth of predators.

Also known as the Pyrenean Mountain Dog in much of Europe, the Great Pyrenees is a highly intelligent and independent breed. It requires no human intervention while in the field, which was a requirement as early Pyr's often protected hundreds of acres of open farmland, fending off any predators it encountered. The working Pyr makes its own decisions and acts on them accordingly. The breed is also known for its natural ability to sense danger, with many a shepherd throughout time owing their lives to their big white companions.

Transition to show animal

The Great Pyrenees began to gain recognition in the 17th century, when Louis XIV made the breed the official French court dog, after becoming enchanted with their beauty. As well, both Queen Victoria as well as Queen Marie Antoinette fell in love with the breed and owned one. The first written reference to them in the Americas came in 1815, however it is widely believe that they were introduced to the new world in the mid 16th century.

The Pyrenean Mountain Dog was first registered and shown in England in 1885, with a preservation club being formed in 1907 designed to help preserve and boost their dwindling numbers. Until this time, the Great Pyrenees had been known strictly as a working dog. Its breath-taking beauty soon began captivating the show rings as well. In 1911, the President of the French Republic awarded the French champion Porthos with the prize of being the most beautiful dog in all of France. Throughout the early 1900's, with the big white dog's numbers dwindling, several attempts were made to try and re-establish the breeds numbers. Several Great Pyrenees breed clubs were formed, including the Reunion des Amateurs de Chiens Pyreneens in 1920, a club which still exists to this day. In 1927, the club established the first breed standard for the Great Pyrenees, which has been used as the basis for all other standards to this day. The breed was re-introduced to America in 1931 by Mr. and Mrs. Francis
dog in all of France. Throughout the early 1900's, with the big white dog's numbers dwindling, several attempts were made to try and re-establish the breeds numbers. Several Great Pyrenees breed clubs were formed, including the Reunion des Amateurs de Chiens Pyreneens in 1920, a club which still exists to this day. In 1927, the club established the first breed standard for the Great Pyrenees, which has been used as the basis for all other standards to this day. The breed was re-introduced to America in 1931 by Mr. and Mrs. Francis Crane and were officially recognized by the American Kennel Club as a purebred race in 1932. Since that time, the breeds numbers have slowly increased, with more and more responsible breeders ensuring its survival.

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And also loving companion

The increase in popularity in the latter end of the 20th century also saw a large increase in the amounts of Great Pyrenees assuming the role of family companion, as opposed to their traditional livestock guardian roles. Of all the flock guarding breeds, the Great Pyrenees is by nature the best with people, offering a great tolerance and affection of people and children if properly socialized and trained. The exception to this, is the livestock protection animal that has not been socialized around people, but rather its flock which may take exception to unknown humans interfering with its flock.

The well socialized Great Pyrenees makes for a loving and loyal companion. Naturally calm and well mannered, it is also usually quite tolerant of many other pets including cats and small dogs that it has been raised with and has a special love of children. Although very independent, it is also usually easily trained and they possess a very unique personality that Pyr owners worldwide have grown to love. Their calm nature also allows them to be trained for therapy work as well, such as hospitals and nursing homes. It should be stressed however, that a Pyr is not for everyone. There are many pros and cons and a number of challenges that are associated with its unique personality and characteristics. Our web site at http://www.greatpyr.com is designed to offer you the information required to properly research the breed, which is critical to ensure that it is suited to your situation.

Next: Great Pyrenees Characteristics
Great Pyrenees Characteristics

General Characteristics

The Great Pyrenees, or Pyrenean Mountain Dog as he is known in most of Europe and the United Kingdom, is arguably one of the beautiful breeds of dog in the world. Their principally white, large and muscular body structure defines the dog as a captivating and elegant breed. They are, however much more than a pretty face. In fact, it is only within the past 100 years that they have attracted serious attention in the show ring. Prior to that, they were selectively bred for centuries as a serious and hardy working dog.

Size

The Great Pyrenees is a large breed, with a average height of 27”-32” at the shoulder for dogs and 25”-29” for bitches. Although it is not as common for very large Pyrenees as it was centuries ago, they have been known to grow as large as 36” or more. As the overly large size leads to increased health problems and shorter life span, the size has been reduced somewhat over the centuries, which gives the Great Pyrenees an over-average life expectancy for a large breed, at 10-12 years. The breed standard is generally limited to 32” for dogs, although that is still exceeded in some lines. Adult weight of the Great Pyrenees tends to be 85-110lbs. for bitches and 100-140lbs. for dogs. Weight is relative to height, so a very large Pyr (32”+) can weigh in upwards of 160lbs+.

General Temperament

The Great Pyrenees possess a very calm and placid nature. This has allowed them to gently roam in and out of their flock, without raising alarm. As many forms of livestock are easily frightened and prone to stampede, this is a critical trait. The exception to this is if the dog perceives a threat to its flock or family. Under such conditions, the dog quickly becomes very active and will aggressively investigate and deal with the threat if necessary without hesitation. The breed is highly intelligent and perceptive and very independent. Bred for centuries to deal with predators without human intervention, the Great Pyrenees has strong instincts and will act upon them, sometimes even to the chagrin of its owner.

The Great Pyrenees is a very adaptable breed, making it a great companion, watch dog or livestock guardian animal, provided it receives appropriate training and socialization. It is a dominant breed and as individual dominance varies greatly from dog to dog, typically, most accredited breeders will be able to identify early on which Pyrs will be more suitable as pets and which would be better suited as livestock guardians. Many times the more dominant puppy will be naturally attracted to livestock while the less dominant puppy will be more people oriented. The breeds' calm nature makes them easy to train and relaxing to walk as they typically will calmly walk beside you or slightly behind you as opposed to constantly pulling as many other breeds do. Their nature also allows them to be trained for therapy work as well, where many Great Pyrenees are trained to visit hospitals and nursing homes where they help to en-richen the lives of those they meet.

The breed possesses a very keen sense of sight and smell and is constantly very aware of its surroundings. This tends to make the Great Pyrenees slightly aloof around strangers and out of the ordinary situations. A strange noise coming from a nearby bush for example may cause the
Pyr to jump back several inches out of range. This is an instinctive action, as the Great Pyrenees was bred to be very observant and possess quick reflexes so as not to be caught unaware by a stalking predator.

The Great Pyrenees has a special love of small children and makes for an excellent companion and protector if property trained and socialized. Proper socialization is critical with the breed. Its calm nature allows it to interact well with children, however all interactions should be supervised at all times as the Pyrenees may sometimes misinterpret some forms of human social interactions that it does not understand, such as children rough-housing or play fighting.

The Great Pyrenees possess a unique personality and its temperament towards people is very loving and affectionate in a very independent way. It has very little desire to run around and jump up on people, but rather will many times simply push their heads or bodies towards you to encourage a pet. They are very effective at soliciting attention from you at times using their bodies and pets to attract your attention. At other times, they are quite content to lay in your yard in a location where they can keep you in view.

The Great Pyrenees is also very adaptable to different climates. Although they prefer cooler climates, they can adapt to warmer ones, although extremely hot climates should be avoided. On warm days, it is common for the Pyr to dig holes in order to lay in the cooler earth. On warmer days, the Pyr will become less active and will usually prefer to rest until it begins to cool down. With cooler days usually comes increased activity. Snowfall and cooler weather usually sees the Pyr becoming more playful and it is not uncommon for an older Great Pyrenees to bound around like a 6 month old puppy during the first snowfall of the year.

Great Pyrenees also make effective watch dogs and will loudly announce the presence of any visitors or unusual traffic. Although they will many times put on a loud show for visitors, it is very unusual for a well trained Pyr to take a genuine aggressive action aside from barking unless specifically provoked or challenged. Typically, once the visitor has entered your yard, the well socialized Pyr will cautiously approach, many times with tail wagging and may continue to bark until it sees you are aware of the visitors presence. Any unprovoked aggression towards humans should be strongly discouraged as it is considered a serious fault.

**Intelligence & Training**

The Great Pyrenees is a highly intelligent and very perceptive breed. It is capable of sensing even the most subtle mood change in both humans and animals. It is this trait, among many others that allowed the Pyr to excel as a livestock guardian dog, as they were required to sort threatening from non-threatening animals. It is highly trainable, however the breeds strong independence may at times require extra training and proper socialization. Simply put, it is NOT the sit, stay, roll-over, fetch type of dog and will usually pass on such activities as in the Pyr's mind, it does not see the point in such tasks and sees it as a waste of energy.

Most Great Pyrenees can be trained for most routine things, such as sit, stay, come as well as agility work and carting, however it is rare to see a Pyr that will respond instantly to its owners command, regardless of how well trained it is. If the owners desire and the Pyr's desire conflict, it may take a small re-enforcement, such as a gentle pull on the leash.
Physical Characteristics

The Great Pyrenees is an elegant, well proportioned animal, that with its full winter coat, appears to be larger than it actually is. The breed varies in size from 27-32" for dogs and 25-29" for bitches, although some Great Pyrenees have been known to grow much larger, some as large as 36"+. Physically, it was bred for strength and endurance and for this reason, it will usually conserve its energy until it needs it. The breed is naturally nocturnal, preferring to sleep during the day and be active at night, patrolling the yard or property. The breed requires a moderate amount of exercise, which can usually be satisfied with a number of hours outside and an enjoyable walk. The Pyr has a heavy, primarily white double coat, that consists of a soft undercoat combined with a thicker outer coat. The double coat provides a waterproof barrier from wind, rain, snow, sun as well as also providing protection from the teeth of predators. The breed will shed the undercoat once a year in the spring, which will require some extra attention to ensure it is raked out to avoid mats. The breed coat also possesses dirt resistant qualities, allowing it to shed dirt from its coat very easily once dry, returning it to its usually white appearance. Great Pyrenees are sometimes, but rarely all-white, with most having some degree of grey, badger or beige. Coloration tends to be stronger during puppy-hood, gradually lightning during maturity. Once of the breeds trademarks are double spurs, or dew-claws on the back legs, which are complete with 2 extra toes. It also has a single set of dew-claws on the front legs. These claws do not come into contact with the ground and so require periodic trimming to avoid becoming ingrown.

Is a Great Pyrenees Right for You?

That depends. The Great Pyrenees is far from an ordinary dog. It is definitely not a sit-stay-roll-play dead over type of dog like the Jones' have across the street. It was bred for a specific purpose, and as such, along with ownership comes a number of unique responsibilities. Before making any decision, you will need to weight the pros and cons very carefully to ensure that a Great Pyrenees is a fit for your personality and lifestyle. Every year hundreds of Great Pyrenees are given up or abandoned because their owner didn't do the proper research. Be sure to read our “Finding your Pyr” section to find out more about the ins and outs of these magnificent animals and see if its a match for you.

Next: Great Pyrenees Breed Standard
Great Pyrenees Breed Standard

A breed standard are an important tool used by breeders and in the show ring. It is a set of pre-determined standards or guidelines that describes the ideal specimen of a particular breed. It is this standard that breeders use to try and perfect their lines. It also aids judges in the show ring who face the difficult task of choosing a winner from several outstanding specimens. The standard describes the ideal traits, characteristics and traits of the breed, both mental and physical. Although it is somewhat rare for any one given dog to adhere 100% to the standard, reputable breeders are constantly striving to come as close to perfection as possible. The breed standards were written by knowledgeable individuals in the breed to help ensure that unique traits and characteristics of the breed are conformed to. To breeders, it is essentially a blueprint to the perfect dog and it can also greatly aid breeder in choosing the puppy out of a litter than will most likely conform the most to the standard. These chosen puppies, although not guaranteed to conform in adulthood, are often the ones chosen as show or breeding stock.

The breed standard differs slightly from country to country and are usually established by the dominant kennel clubs of a particular country. The differences sometimes reflect geographical differences that have caused a slight difference in development of the breed, and they also can reflect a particular country's preference over a single aspect of the breed. Breeders will typically adhere to their local standards.

The major world-wide standards are the North American Canadian Standard (CKC) and the American Standard (AKC), as well as the European Kennel Club Standard (TKC) and the French Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) Standard. A number of other foreign standards exists that are variations of one of the central standards. Click on the country of interest below to view the corresponding breed standard.

Note: The American standard is outlined in this printout. Please visit the www.greatpyr.com website for the Canadian, British and French standards.

American Great Pyrenees Standard (American Kennel Club)
AKC Group: Working Group
**General Appearance**

The Great Pyrenees dog conveys the distinct impression of elegance and unsurpassed beauty combined with great overall size and majesty. He has a white or principally white coat that may contain markings of badger, gray, or varying shades of tan. He possesses a keen intelligence and a kindly, while regal, expression. Exhibiting a unique elegance of bearing and movement, his soundness and coordination show unmistakably the purpose for which he has been bred, the strenuous work of guarding the flocks in all kinds of weather on the steep mountain slopes of the Pyrenees.

**Size, Proportion, Substance**

**Size**
The height at the withers ranges from 27 inches to 32 inches for dogs and from 25 inches to 29 inches for bitches. A 27 inch dog weighs about 100 pounds and a 25 inch bitch weighs about 85 pounds. Weight is in proportion to the overall size and structure.

**Faults:** Dogs and bitches under minimum size or over maximum size.

**Proportion**
The Great Pyrenees is a balanced dog with the height measured at the withers being somewhat less than the length of the body measured from the point of the shoulder to the rearmost projection of the upper thigh (buttocks). These proportions create a somewhat rectangular dog, slightly longer than it is tall. Front and rear angulation are balanced.

**Substance**
The Great Pyrenees is a dog of medium substance whose coat deceives those who do not feel the bone and muscle. Commensurate with his size and impression of elegance there is sufficient bone and muscle to provide a balance with the frame.

**Faults:** Dogs too heavily boned or too lightly boned to be in balance with their frame.

**Head**

Correct head and expression are essential to the breed. The head is not heavy in proportion to the size of the dog. It is wedge shaped with a slightly rounded crown.

**Expression**
The expression is elegant, intelligent and contemplative.

**Eyes**
Medium sized, almond shaped, set slightly obliquely, rich dark brown. Eyelids are close fitting with black rims.

**Ears**
Small to medium in size, V-shaped with rounded tips, set on at eye level, normally carried low, flat, and close to the head. There is a characteristic meeting of the hair of the upper and lower face which forms a line from the outer corner of the eye to the base of the ear.
Skull and Muzzle
The muzzle is approximately equal in length to the back skull. The width and length of the skull are approximately equal. The muzzle blends smoothly with the skull. The cheeks are flat. There is sufficient fill under the eyes. A slight furrow exists between the eyes. There is no apparent stop. The bony eyebrow ridges are only slightly developed. Lips are tight fitting with the upper lip just covering the lower lip. There is a strong lower jaw. The nose and lips are black.


Teeth
A scissor bite is preferred, but a level bite is acceptable. It is not unusual to see dropped (receding) lower central incisor teeth.

Faults: Overshot, undershot, wry mouth.

Neck, Topline, Body

Neck
Strongly muscled and of medium length, with minimal dewlap.

Topline
The backline is level. Body--The chest is moderately broad. The rib cage is well sprung, oval in shape, and of sufficient depth to reach the elbows. Back and loin are broad and strongly coupled with some tuck-up. The croup is gently sloping with the tail set on just below the level of the back.

Fault: Barrel ribs.

Tail
The tailbones are of sufficient length to reach the hock. The tail is well plumed, carried low in repose and may be carried over the back, "making the wheel," when aroused. When present, a "shepherd's crook" at the end of the tail accentuates the plume. When gaiting, the tail may be carried either over the back or low. Both carriages are equally correct.

Forequarters

Shoulders
The shoulders are well laid back, well muscled, and lie close to the body. The upper arm meets the shoulder blade at approximately a right angle. The upper arm angles backward from the point of the shoulder to the elbow and is never perpendicular to the ground. The length of the shoulder blade and the upper arm is approximately equal. The height from the ground to the elbow appears approximately equal to the height from the elbow to the withers.

Forelegs
The legs are of sufficient bone and muscle to provide a balance with the frame. The elbows are close to the body and point directly to the rear when standing and gaiting. The forelegs, when viewed from the side, are located directly under the withers and are straight and vertical to the ground. The elbows, when viewed from the front, are set in a straight line from the point of shoulder to the wrist. Front pasterns are strong and flexible. Each foreleg carries a single dewclaw.
**Front Feet**
Rounded, close-cupped, well padded, toes well arched.

**Hindquarters**

The angulation of the hindquarters is similar in degree to that of the forequarters. Thighs--Strongly muscular upper thighs extend from the pelvis at right angles. The upper thigh is the same length as the lower thigh, creating moderate stifle joint angulation when viewed in profile. The rear pastern (metatarsus) is of medium length and perpendicular to the ground as the dog stands naturally. This produces a moderate degree of angulation in the hock joint, when viewed from the side. The hindquarters from the hip to the rear pastern are straight and parallel, as viewed from the rear. The rear legs are of sufficient bone and muscle to provide a balance with the frame. Double dewclaws are located on each rear leg. Rear Feet--The rear feet have a structural tendency to toe out slightly. This breed characteristic is not to be confused with cow-hocks. The rear feet, like the forefeet, are rounded, close-cupped, well padded with toes well arched.

**Fault:** Absence of double dewclaws on each rear leg.

**Coat**

The weather resistant double coat consists of a long, flat, thick, outer coat of coarse hair, straight or slightly undulating, and lying over a dense, fine, woolly undercoat. The coat is more profuse about the neck and shoulders where it forms a ruff or mane which is more pronounced in males. Longer hair on the tail forms a plume. There is feathering along the back of the front legs and along the back of the thighs, giving a "pantaloons" effect. The hair on the face and ears is shorter and of finer texture. Correctness of coat is more important than abundance of coat.

**Faults:** Curly coat. Stand-off coat (Samoyed type).

**Color**

White or white with markings of gray, badger, reddish brown, or varying shades of tan. Markings of varying size may appear on the ears, head (including a full face mask), tail, and as a few body spots. The undercoat may be white or shaded. All of the above described colorings and locations are characteristic of the breed and equally correct.

**Fault:** Outer coat markings covering more than one third of the body.

**Gait**

The Great Pyrenees moves smoothly and elegantly, true and straight ahead, exhibiting both power and agility. The stride is well balanced with good reach and strong drive. The legs tend to move toward the center line as speed increases. Ease and efficiency of movement are more important than speed.
Temperament

Character and temperament are of utmost importance. In nature, the Great Pyrenees is confident, gentle, and affectionate. While territorial and protective of his flock or family when necessary, his general demeanor is one of quiet composure, both patient and tolerant. He is strong willed, independent and somewhat reserved, yet attentive, fearless and loyal to his charges both human and animal.

**Faults:** Although the Great Pyrenees may appear reserved in the show ring, any sign of excessive shyness, nervousness, or aggression to humans is unacceptable and must be considered an extremely serious fault.

Official American Kennel Club standard of the Great Pyrenees. Effective August 1, 1990

Next: Great Pyrenees Grooming
Great Pyrenees Grooming

The Great Pyrenees has been bred for centuries as a serious, working dog. It quietly goes about its business with determination and no complaints. The breed in its natural habit, high in the mountainous region of the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain, looks quite a sight differently than it is commonly seen in shows in North America and Europe. Its coat yellowing, matted and unkept, the un-groomed Pyr has sometimes fooled even those familiar with the breed into thinking it is not really a Great Pyrenees.

Indeed, the difference in appearance between the working Pyr and the well kept Pyr is quite astounding. The heavy double coat, while giving the impression of being high maintenance, can actually be well maintained through regular brushing at least a couple times a week. The outer coat is naturally dirt and mat resistant, however the undercoat will mat if not properly cared for, especially during the annual molt, where it will shed most of its undercoat to prepare it for the warm summer months.

Basic Essentials

Slicker Brush

The slicker brush is one of the most important grooming tools for the Great Pyrenees' thick double coat. It comes in different shapes and sizes, but all have curved or hooked wire bristles that will help remove dead hair, tangles and foreign objects (dirt, grass seeds etc.) from the wooly coat of your Pyr. The Pyr is a large dog and so for best results you will want to get a larger slicker as well as ensuring you obtain a quality one. Cheaper ones will wear out quickly as the bristles will snap off. A quality large slicker will cost you between $5-10, depending on the brand.
**Soft Brush**

The soft brush can come in handy for finishing work, helping to gently brush out dirt and some dead hair. It is very useful for brushing out sensitive areas, such as the dog's underside as well as the face and head. It also helps in fluffing up the coat after a bath and good brushing with a rake and slicker. Typically, the Pyr will enjoy this brush as it gives a soft massage to the coat during use. This brush can be cleaned easily by simply running a rake through the bristles, which will catch all the dead hair. A quality soft brush cost less than $8 and will have soft, year stiff nylon bristles. Some brands also offer a slicker or other brush on the reverse side, however these tend to wear out faster than ordinary brushes.

**Rake**

The rake is another essential tool for any Pyr owner. It allows you to easily remove dead hair as well as untangling many simple snarls in the undercoat. Serious mats however should be removed with a mat slicer or in serious cases, cut out from the coat. The rake will become more important during the annual molt or shedding of the undercoat in spring to early summer. A good raking, once or twice a week, combined with a slicker will keep the coat in tip-top shape and tangle free. The rake also comes in handy as a quick way to clean the dead hair out from your other brushes. Typically a good quality rake will cost you $6-$8 and if taken care of will last for years.
Bristle Brush

A bristle brush, or pin brush is optional, however it can be useful for helping to remove dead hair from the coat, as well as light tangles. It also helps to soften out the coat during use as well. A quality bristle brush will have straight wire bristles, usually with a small nylon cap on the end of the bristles. These can be most useful on the heaviest parts of the coat, such as the mane, and sides of the body as well as the feathering on the back of the legs.

Nail Trimmer

The canine nail trimmer is also a must for any Pyr owner. They generally come in 2 different types. The first is the shear type, as shown in the illustration. These generally work the best with the Pyr's thick, tough nails. They use a garden shearing type action to clip the nail. They are a must for the dew claws as well, that do not come into contact with the ground and require trimming at least twice a year or more. The dew claws, especially the dual rear ones are prone to curving around and becoming ingrown into the pad is neglected. A good nail trimmer will cost about $8. For best results, the all metal ones are more durable than the less expensive plastic handled ones. The second type of nail trimmer is the guillotine type. These are usually spring loaded and a sharp blade will slice the nail. These typically work best with smaller dogs due to the thickness of the claw.

Optional Grooming Tools

In addition to the essential above, you may also want to invest in a number of optional tools, especially if you are planning on showing your dog. These include things such as canine toothbrush and paste, ear cleaning swabs or wipes, dog tear remover, scissors, shears etc.
**Bathing Supplies**

A quality canine shampoo and conditioner is required occasionally as well, more often for those that show their dogs. There are a great number of specialized canine shampoos on the market, some better than others. Never use human shampoo or dish soap as this will dry the coat out. The one exception to this is Ivory white dish or bar soap, which can be used in a pinch as it is 99% pure. A quality canine shampoo should be PH balanced. For best results, however use a quality dog shampoo, available most anywhere that sell pet supplies. There are a number of different types on the market, you will likely want to invest in a couple of them.

**Types of Shampoos and Conditioners**

**General Dog Shampoo:** This is your everyday shampoo for most all uses. Some contain different additives such as moisturizers etc. Generally, most people experiment with a couple different brands before they find the one they like. Sometimes this will be the least expensive brand.

**Whitening Shampoo:** This is a special type of shampoo that will help in reducing yellowing of the coat and make it appear whiter. The shampoo is actually a bluing solution, similar in principle to bluing white clothes. Because of the way the human eye perceives colors, adding a slight blue tinge to a light colored surface will give the appearance of a brilliant white. With this shampoo, it is important to rinse the coat out well, as bluing shampoo left in the coat for too long can leave a noticeably blue stain that may be difficult to get out.

**Deodorizing Shampoo:** This is rarely required for a well groomed Pyr. The natural oils in the coat also offer natural deodorizing, provided the dead hairs and other foreign objects are removed from the coat.

**Flea Shampoo:** This is special shampoo that is generally used to help reduce fleas. These do not typically work well with Pyr's due to their thick coat. Flea problems can be more effectively combated using special vet strength flea solutions. This is covered in our health section.

**Special-use Shampoos:** There are a number of special shampoos on the market, such as oatmeal, organics ones etc. Generally, you will not realize a noticeable difference with these to justify their higher cost.

**Rinse-out Conditioner:** This is a special canine conditioner that is designed to keep the coat moisturized and conditioned. It can be used immediately after shampooing.

**Leave-in Conditioner:** This is a special conditioner, usually in a spray, that is designed to give a extra bit of luster and moisture to the coat. This is often used in shows to add body to the coat and help repair split ends.
Basic Grooming Guidelines

Armed with your arsenal of basic grooming equipment of slicker brush, rake and soft brush, you are ready to do battle with your Pyr's coat. In reality, the coat is quite marvelous to work with, if maintained regularly. Many owner find brushing to be enjoyable and your dog will definitely enjoy the time as it is the canine equivalent of an all body massage. There will always be occasions, where it will appear daunting, such as when your Pyr happily emerges from the tall grass, cover head to foot in grass seeds, however in most situations, the coat can easily be maintained. The coat will shed small amounts year round, with an annual spring molt that will see nearly all of the undercoat release over a small period of time, usually a week or two. The very first brushing of your dog or puppy may be more difficult as the dog becomes accustomed to it. For best results, if possible begin brushing your dog when it is still a puppy and allow it to become familiar with it.

Step 1: Rake your Way to a Well Groomed Pyr

Begin your grooming with your rake, gently using it in a comb-like movement from the neckline to the base of the tail, including the sides of the body. If you have a spray leave-in conditioner, this can be used beforehand to help release any tangles. When using the rake, be careful to apply gentle pressure, too much will agitate the dogs sensitive skin. If unsure, rake the palm of your hand to find the correct amount of pressure. If using too much and the action is uncomfortable on your hand, it will also be uncomfortable for your dog. Avoid using the rake on the dogs underside, ears and face, which have less hair and are more sensitive. The rake will pick up the dead hairs from the undercoat. Generally, 4-5 strokes will clean most of the hair from the undercoat. During molting season however, this will take considerably longer and you will likely need to rake the coat out for 10-15 minutes, during which time you will collect a large amount of hair. This will need to be repeated every few days during molts to ensure no mats develop. If a concern, collect the cast off hair in a shopping bag or container to avoid the "snowfall in June" motif for your yard. A great many people highly value Pyr hair and spin it into beautiful sweaters and other garments as it is much warmer than wool and very unique in its texture.
Step 2: Slickers Up!

The slicker should immediately follow the rake and will remove the dead hairs from the outer coat, as well as most foreign objects, such as dirt, seeds and grass. Start from the neck and slowly making your way to the tail. With your hand, gently lift on the dogs coat in thicker areas, to ensure that the slicker is reaching deep into the coat. Special attention is often required on the dogs hind quarters, tail as well as the mane, which are thicker and more prone to snarls. As with the rake, the slicker can cause discomfort in some areas, such as the dogs underside and feathering on the forelegs, so use gentle pressure in these areas.

Step 3: Soft brush your way to a clean finish

For most brushing sessions, the soft brush, or in the alternative pin brush will finish off the dog. In the same motion as the slicker, the soft brush will add some body to the outer coat and will also collect any of the dead hairs in the outer coat that the slicker missed.

Basic Bathing Guidelines

Your Pyr's coat comes complete with a natural dirt resistant quality than allows it to shed dirt once dry. However over time, the coat will become yellow due to dirt deposits and it may require an occasional bathing. This of course can be substituted for a dip in a nearby stream or river. Care should be taken to avoid over-bathing, which will reduce the dirt resistant qualities of the coat. Generally, once a month or less, not including the odd special occasion will suffice for most owners.

Bathing a Pyr is no different than a regular dog, aside from its large size means it takes somewhat longer, usually 30-45 minutes. Be aware the first bath may be somewhat difficult as your Pry will not particularly appreciate it. However after the first couple times, it will learn to tolerate it more. Methods of bathing can differ depending on your situation and equipment. Some people use the bathtub or shower, some prefer using the outdoor hose and others have a fully equipped outdoor bathing tub. Most Pyrs if using a hose or spray, you will likely want to enlist a helper to help hold the dog, or leash it to a firm object as Pyrs have been known to pace or move around when subjected to a hose or spray. If possible, use lukewarm water, never hot.

If you are planning on using a whitening shampoo, this can be used following the regular shampoo. Ensure you only leave the whitening shampoo on the dog for less than 5 minutes to avoid blue staining of the coat. You also need to ensure that you rinse very well to ensure you haven't missed any.

Pyr's sometimes love to get dirty and even the most conservative of Pyr's will need the occasional bath to restore their snow-white luster.
After the final shampoo has been completely rinsed off, wet the dog down again and follow up with a canine conditioner. This will help moisturize the coat, remove snarls and help to repair split ends. Leave the conditioner on for a few minutes, rinse completely and towel dry. Once towel dried, the coat can be allowed to air dry for a normal effect or blow dried for a full bodied coat effect.

General Periodic Care

**Nail Trimming:** All Pyr's will need periodic nail care to avoid problems. A trademark trait of the breed are double dew claws or spurs on the hind legs that also come complete with two extra toes. The dew claws do not come into contact with the grown and as such need to be trimmed. A neglected dew claw will eventually curve around and become ingrown into the paw. It also has a higher chance of becoming snagged on something and torn. A broken nail can breed extensively and it may be difficult to stop the bleeding. To avoid these potential problems, trim your dogs nails at least twice a year. If your dog does not get much activity outdoors, you may need to trim the regular nails as well to avoid them getting too long.

**Eyes:** Some Pyrs have weepy eyes that may leave a reddish-colored discharge. Over time, this can discolor the coat around the eyes if left unattended. This can be removed with a cotton swab moistened with dog tear remover. Some long neglected stains may require repeat treatments to completely remove the stain.

**Ears:** The ears should receive regular cleaning to avoid potential problems. Regular cleaning once a month will remove dirt, excess wax as well as helping to reduce the potential for problems, such as ear mites and infections. For best results, use dog ear wipes, that come in a bottle similar to baby wipes. Wipe the inner ear and clean out the excess wax and dirt, being careful not to go too far into the ear canal. A clean and healthy ear should have little to no odor. Strong, offensive odors indicate a potential problem, possibly mites or an infection which will require a visit to the vet.

Ear wipes make cleaning your dogs ears quick and easy. They allow you to clean, deodorize and disinfect all at the same time. Be sure to keep in a cool place to avoid having them dry out.
**Teeth:** Periodic cleaning of the Pyrs teeth will also help to avoid potential problems and ensures you pyr will have pearly whites for them to show off to all those around them. A medium bristled toothbrush or a special dog toothbrush will fit the bill. A non-flavored or lightly flavored toothpaste will work the best as Pyr's usually dislike having their teeth brushed and will so even more if it is accompanied with strong tasting toothpaste. Some owners also use baking soda, which offers a natural deodorizing and also a natural scrubbing action that can help clean the teeth better than toothpaste alone. A good brushing at least twice a year or more, with a vet cleaning or checkup once a yet will ensure that you Pyr keeps its teeth and gums health well into its senior years. Signs of trouble are yellow plaque deposits on the teeth and puffy gums or bleeding around the gums when brushing the dogs teeth. A quick trip to the vet can help these problem nicely.

Regular once a month brushing of your dog's teeth will remove excess plaque and will help to avoid future dental problems and will help ensure your dog keeps its teeth into its golden years.

Next: [Great Pyrenees Feeding](#)
Great Pyrenees Feeding

**General Feeding Introduction**
Ah, feeding time at the Great Pyrenees coral. The Great Pyrenees is a big dog and you will need to take out a second mortgage to afford the food bills right? Actually, pound for pound the Great Pyrenees has a very moderate appetite, which is far less than other large breed dogs. This can be attributed in part due to their calm disposition and temperament and also to their lower than average metabolism. These greatly aid in keeping the monthly food bills manageable. In fact, many owners find that their Pyr eats less than a medium sized Golden Retriever would eat. Roughly, an adult Pyr will consume approximately 1.5-2 40lb bags of food per month. Puppies will require somewhat more during their development and first year to year and a half of growth. Individual appetites can vary somewhat from dog to dog and some Pyr's have been known to tell you how much they want you to feed them. They do this by governing their food intake themselves. Not all Pyr's will do this however and some will consume anything that is put before them. Seasonal activity also affects food intake. In the hot summer months, Pyrs will prefer to quietly lie in the shade or in a nice, deep hole that they have excavated in your yard and will generally not be very active until the evening cool down. This will cause their summer appetites to be less than average. They are far more active in the cooler months and accordingly, their food intake will be at its peak.

Feeding your Pyr is no different than any other dog. You will need to feed it a well balanced and quality food that will aid it in developing and maintaining good health and shiny coat. A quality dry feed is all that is required, with the occasional treat. Some owners recommend a raw feed, however generally this does not offer a balance of vitamins and nutrients and you will be better off giving your dog dry feed. You should avoid frequently feeding moist canned food, these contain a much greater amount of sugar which can cause plaque buildup and eventual dental problems. They can also cause your Pyr to become finicky and refuse to eat less appealing types of food. The occasional canned food treat can be mixed into dry feed to make it more appealing. Dry food can also slightly be moistened to increase its appeal.

A quality dry feed, with adequate water is all that your Pyr requires to keep it in top form.
**Required Feeding Supplies**

**Feeding Bowls**

You will need to acquire at least 2 large quality feeding bowls for your Pyr. One for food and one for water. These come in many shapes and sizes and generally are available in stainless steel, ceramic or plastic. The different compositions have pros and cons to each. Stainless steel bowls are inexpensive, durable, easy to clean and less prone to bacteria growth, however they are lightweight and prone to sliding around, which may present a problem if feeding your dog indoors on a smooth surface. Plastic bowls are also inexpensive and less prone to sliding around, however they are prone to breakage become brittle during cold weather and are also prone to scratches and gouges, which can harbor bacteria. Ceramic bowls are heavy and slide resistant and easy to clean, however they can easily be broken or chipped, which also can harbor bacteria. We generally recommend stainless steel feeding bowls in most situations. These also are available with rubber bottoms, which make them more slide resistant. Ensure that you purchase the large sized bowls. Automated feeding stations are not recommended as Pyr's are very intelligent and resourceful and will quickly figure out how to take them apart, which can lead to over-indulgence.

**Food Bin**

A food bin is an inexpensive and wise investment, especially if the dog food is kept in a location that your dog has access to. Remember, your Great Pyrenees is highly intelligent and resourceful with keen senses. They will very quickly determine the source of the tasty food they get everyday, and will help themselves to an unscheduled meal if allowed to. Food bins are designed to hold an entire 40lb bag of dog food and it will help keep it cool, fresh and free of contaminants. Most important of all, it will help keep your Pyr from an unhealthy and unwanted all you can eat episode. Many of the quality bin brands will come with a latch to secure it closed.
**Types of Feed**

There are 3 main types of commercial dog feed on the market. Classified within these primary types are a great number of different brands, all with pros and cons. The general rule of thumb, that you get what you pay for does not apply for commercial dog food. Purchasing the most expensive feed does not mean it is the best, in fact in many cases it can be inferior to more moderately priced food. Sometimes it will be required for you to try and few different brands before you find the one that best suits your needs and your dogs. Ideally, you are looking for a feed that is well balanced, offers all of your dog's nutritional requirements, is fairly low in preservatives and is affordable. Once you have finalized your choice, it is recommended that you stick to one brand as alternating brands can cause digestion problems and loose stools.

**Dry Food:**
This is the most common type and is best suited for everyday feeding. It should provide virtually all of your dog's nutritional requirements. Dry feed also helps to keep plaque and tartar growth to a minimum. There are many different brands of dry food on the market. As the great Pyrenees is a large breed dog and grow very quickly, you will need to ensure than the type of feed you purchase is suitable for large breed dogs. Many of the brands offer a special "large breed formula", which are intended to help minimize muscle and joint problems. If your dog is under 24 months of age, you should also be selecting a "large breed puppy formula", which help regulate your Pyr's growth spurts, so as to minimize growing pains. If you Pyr is over the age of 8, you can also select a quality "large breed senior formula", which contain extra nutrients to help with age related problems such a bone and joints. Most dry feeds have a prolonged shelf life, usually a year or more and should be stored in a cool, dry place.

**Semi-Moist Food:**
Semi-moist food is moist, contains up to 40% moisture and usually comes is resealable packages. Pound for pound, it is substantially more expensive than dry food and has a limited shelf life. It needs to be kept in a cool, dry place to avoid evaporation. Semi-moist food is very palatable and can be mixed with regular dry feed for an occasional treat. It does contain a much higher degree of preservatives however and some dogs may have digestion problems while using it, resulting in loose stools. If you intend to later switch to dry feed, it is generally not recommended to feed semi-moist food for prolonged periods as it may cause your dog to become finicky.

**Canned (Moist) Food:**
The third type of dog food on the market is canned dog food. Like dry feed, canned food comes in many shapes, sizes and brands. Although it has a long shelf life, once opened it will dry out and spoil quickly, even if refrigerated. Canned food is far more expensive than regular food, but can be mixed with dry food for an occasional treat. Containing up to 75% water or more, some brands are low in preservatives, however higher in sugar content, which will lead to an increase in tartar and plaque if used frequently.
**Home Prepared Meals:**
Some owners prepare their own meals for their dogs. This can offer some advantages and many disadvantages, especially if improperly prepared. Great care must be taken to properly prepare balanced meals and a nutritionally sound diet. If your chosen diet is not properly balanced, your dog's health will suffer. We strongly recommend you consult with your vet before making a decision to go this route to ensure you develop a proper strategy and diet plan. This is definitely not a aspect of your dog's development that you want to depend on trial and error. Home prepared meals are more costly than many other types of feed, however if well-balanced meals are properly prepared, it can help ensure that you meet all your dogs nutritional requirements.

**Feeding Guidelines**

**General Puppy Feeding (>18 months of age)**
Any responsible breeder will not release puppies to their new home prior to 8 weeks of age. Breeders that release before this should be definitely avoided. Between 8-10 weeks of age, the puppy will be ready for its new home and to experience the world that awaits it. At this time, the puppy should have been fully weaned for at least 1-2 weeks and on a dry food diet. From the time to bring him home to at least 12 months of age, his diet is critical. Improper feeding or diet will result in a poorly developed adult dog, so ensure that you offer it a well balanced and healthy feed to ensure proper muscle and skeletal development. From the day you bring him home to approximately 3 months of age is the most critical time. For best results, choose a high quality large growth puppy formula. This will meet all his nutritional requirements and regulate his growth cycle. The actual feeding amount can vary greatly with each dog, depending on his size, weight, age and activity level.

From 8 weeks-12 months is the most critical time to ensure you feed your puppy high quality, well balanced meals that meet all their nutritional requirements. This is definitely not the time to begin experimenting with different feeds.

**Great Pyrenees Puppy Feeding Cycle**

**8 weeks - 3 months old:**
Feeding 4 times daily, each moderate portions, dry food (large breed puppy formula) can be mixed with warm water or moist food. You can begin with a 1 1/2-2 cups of dry feed per portion. This will help allow you judge your particular dogs requirements. If he completes his meal quickly with no problems, you can begin slightly increasing the portions. On the other hand, if he doesn't complete the meal, decrease the portions. Always have plenty of water on hand as well.
3-6 months old:
Continuing with the large breed puppy formula, the daily portions should now be increased in size, but decreased in frequency. 3 medium portions per day, morning, noon and night. Typically add 1/2-1 cup to your previous portions and use the same guidelines to determine your dogs needs. Always have plenty of water on hand as well.

6-12 months old:
Still continuing with the large breed puppy formula, the portions should now again be increased and the frequency decreased to 2 feedings per day, morning and night. Always have plenty of water on hand as well.

Young Adult Feeding (12-24 months of age)
12-18 months old:
By one year of age, you dog will have a achieved a good majority of his adult growth of height & weight. The daily feedings should be reduced to once daily and the portion increased. Always have plenty of water on hand as well. Use the same guidelines as before to determine the dogs needs.

Typically by this age, your dog will consume approximately the same as a highly active medium breed dog, such as a collie or retriever. Some dogs will eat as much is put before them, so use caution not to overfeed, which will lead to obesity. A healthy pry at this age, should be lanky and lean, not fat or skinny. You should be able to feel the rib cage by running your fingers long its body, but they should be be obvious to the naked eye from a distance. A small amount of tuck is normal, but it should not be excessive, such as a border collie. A small difference in height at the back compared to the front is normal at this age.

At one year of age, you now have a choice. You can continue him on large breed puppy formula to 18-14 months or you can switch him onto adult feed. If you will be putting him on home prepared meals, and you have a well balanced diet and recipes, you can begin anytime after 12 months of age. Be sure to closely monitor his development, including height, weight and energy levels. Excessive weight gain, loss or lack of energy indicates a problem, possibly due to an improperly balanced diet. Be sure to check his teeth regularly as well, for plaque and tartar buildup. Rapid buildup is usually an indication or excessive sugar in the diet. If any problems develop, switch him onto adult formula.

After 1 year, your Great Pyrenees will have achieved a majority of its adult height & weight. It is normal for a young dog's gait to be clumsy at this age and its hindquarters may be slightly out of proportion with its front quarters. This should balance itself out by 18-24 months of age. Your dog will continue to grow gradually, with full adult height and weight is achieved by 3 1/2 - 4 years of age. Typically, it begins to achieve mental maturity by 24 months of age, by which time, its guardian instincts will begin to emerge.
Adult Feeding (18 months - 8 years of age)

Feeding your adult Pyr is the same as the transition from young adult to adult feeding. Once a day feeding, healthy portion with plenty of water. Best times for feeding will be early morning or late evening, especially during the hot summer months as a Pyr will typically have little interest in meals during hot periods of the day. Dry feed is the best to minimize dental problems. Check teeth at least twice a year for tartar or plaque deposits, more often if feeding moist food. Ensure you use a quality well-balanced feed that is designed for large breed dogs. Some feeds are marketed for all sizes of dogs, others are not. Read the packaging and ingredients carefully. If it does not mention that it is designed for large breeds or all size dogs, assume that it is not.

As with your puppy feeding guidelines, once you have found a quality feed that meets all your dogs needs, as well as your budget, stick with it. Dog's are not like humans and are creatures of habit, they do not need variation in their diet, in fact it can be unhealthy and cause digestion problems and loose stools. Additionally, avoid the temptation to feed your dog scraps from the table or leftovers, which can also unbalance the dog's diet and be a cause of numerous problems from excess gas to obesity.

The adult period in your Great Pyrenees life begins after 18 months of age. This period is accompanied by a rapid slowdown in its growth cycle, where it will slowly fill out over the next 2-2 1/2 years. During this time, its natural instincts will begin to develop, although it will still retain a very puppy-like behavior in many respects. By this time, you dog should be fully trained in obedience and basic commands, as well as fully socialized with both people and other animals. Typically, by 4 years of age, your dog will be fully developed, both physically and mentally.
**Senior Feeding (8+ years of age)**

The Great Pyrenees unique slow metabolism helps them live considerably longer than most other dogs their size. 10-12 years is the average life span, with some living up to 14 years or slightly longer. The onset of your dog's senior years is a gradual process that usually begins sometime after 8 years of age. you will notice a gradual slowdown and marked decrease in activity. Where your dog used to bounce up to you when called, it will begin to come much slower. As with the puppy years, your Great Pyrenees golden years brings about changes that require increased vitamins and nutrients in order to help minimize bone, joint and muscle problems. This can be achieved through use of specially designed "senior formula" feed that will meet your aging dogs changing needs. Additional food and vitamin supplements can also help if your Pyr is having difficulty getting around or shows an onset of arthritis. Combined with regular vet checkups, this will help ensure your Pyr sticks around for as long as it can.

Your Pyr's golden years will begin sometime after 8 years of age and will show a gradual, but noticeable decrease in activity and energy levels. The senior Pyr requires additional vitamins and nutrients to help minimize age related problems, such as bone, muscle and joint problems. Hearing and eyesight related problems can also occur as your Pyr reaches the end of its life span. Increased vet checkups and a healthy diet can make a big difference as well as special vitamins and supplements available from your vet. These can help increase your older dog's mobility and energy levels.

Next: [Great Pyrenees Training](#)
Great Pyrenees Training

Introduction to Proper Training, Obedience and Socialization

As we addressed in previous chapters, the Great Pyrenees is a large sized dog and is a dominant breed. They possess strong guardian instincts and a strong desire for a proper pack structure. Because of this, it is absolutely essential that you begin basic training and socialization from the day you first bring your new dog home. Failure to do this will very likely result in later problems that will be much more difficult to correct down the road.

It is very important to remember that the Great Pyrenees was bred for a specific purpose, as a livestock guardian dog, and as such is not an ordinary dog. You must never allow yourself to forget that, and must ensure that you keep your Pyr controlled at all times, on leash when walking and behind a fence when at home. It will only take one altercation with a neighbors dog to remind you of this fact if you forget, so to ensure good neighborly relations, ensure your Pyr knows his boundaries. Most Pyr's make poor candidates for off leash types of dogs and even if yours is tolerant to other dogs and animals, they can many times develop selective hearing when off the leash and out of reach.

There are 3 types of training that you will be involving yourself in.

Basic Control Techniques:
These are essential techniques to properly control your Pyr and allow him to understand his place in your family. This should begin from the first day you bring him home.

Basic Training:
These are the basics, the sit, stay, come commands. Teach these early, and often for best results.

Socialization:
This is critical and the most important time of all is between 8 weeks and 3 months of age. During this time it is essential that you familiarize it with other people, children and other animals, including dogs, cats and any other animals that it may encounter later in life. Proper socialization helps ensure that you dog will become accustomed to all these strange creatures and learn that there is nothing to fear from them. Failure to properly socialize can result in fear aggression and possible biting incidents. However, proper socialization will almost always pre-empt any such behavior. Socialization is easy, and fun and can be accomplished with 2 or three walks a week where there are a lot of people and other dogs. Socialization also involves new experiences, such as vehicle rides, strange noises and visits to different places.

Obedience:
This is advanced training and can help master the basics as well as more advanced commands. It is usually done in a class situation, with other dogs. This is optional, however can be very helpful to help socialize your puppy to multiple dog situations. This is very important, especially if you plan on showing your dog down the road. Its a fact that dogs learn from seeing what other dogs do. Although Great Pyrenees are highly intelligent and will likely understand and pick up on a new command almost immediately, its independence will weigh heavily on its overall success. Quite simply, if what you want and what your Pyr wants do not match, it will resist. This may require some extra training and can also be minimized with plenty of positive reinforcement. When the dog performs as requested, give it lots of praise and reward it. This will help ensure things go much smoother.
Introduction to Proper Control

As the Great Pyrenees is a dominant breed of animal, it has a strong sense of pack structure and unless taught otherwise, will naturally attempt to assume the dominant role in your "pack". This is bad and can lead to aggression against family members. It is however, very easy to prevent and usually can be learning from one or 2 lessons.

Signs of challenges to your dominance is growling, snarling, food aggression, stare downs and other obvious signs of aggression. Some Pyrs are less dominant and do not require a solid setting of the ground rules, while others may require a lesson or two. It is essential that all members of your family, including your children are seen by your dog as its "Alpha". This can begin during play, feeding and other interaction with your dog. The dog should understand that any member of the family can touch its food, toys and other playthings and even take them away at any time. It should also understand that toys and food are on your schedule, not its. Growling, or any other forms of aggression towards the family must be dealt with immediately in a firm, yet gentle way. Great Pyrenees are known to be very sensitive to human contact and physical discipline by striking the dog should be avoided as it can result in the dog becoming hand shy.

Proper Control Techniques

The first weeks that you have your new puppy can be critical. You have the opportunity to head off many potential behavioral problems before they start.
**Food & Family Aggression:**

Do not let your dog dictate about food, either the type of food or the feeding times. If your puppy refuses a meal, pick up the food bowl and put it away until the next feed. A healthy puppy will come to no harm from missing one meal. If you have this battle for a couple of days, you will have cured this problem. If you allow it to persist, you will have much more difficulty curing it later. Your puppy must learn to eat at feeding time and not when he or she feels like. From a very early age, litter mates work out a very strict hierarchy with one another, sorting out who is the boss of their pack, so do not make the mistake of thinking your puppy does not understand what is involved. Always feed your dog AFTER the rest of the household has eaten, do not give your puppy tidbits when you are eating.

Once a day, at feeding time, place the food bowl down and let the puppy get started on it, then quietly remove the food, while praising it for 30 seconds, then replace the food bowl. As pack leader, you have the right to decide when and what will be eaten and it is your right to remove the food at any time if you wish. If the puppy growls when you approach the food, tap him or her on the nose and say "No!!" and remove the food for a few minutes. Continue this until the puppy no longer growls when you reach for the food. Then allow all the other members of your household to repeat the procedure to ensure that the puppy does not act aggressively towards any member of the household. Failure to do this can cause dominance problems with other members of your household. The puppy must learn that aggression towards members of the family is never acceptable. If you have a particularly dominant puppy and it snarls or snaps at you, another way to make them understand is to roll the puppy over on his or her back, kneeling over the puppy and carefully hold it still until it stops squirming. Once it stops squirming it understands that you are in control and you can release it. You can repeat this with other members of your family if necessary and repeat if required. This is the canine equivalent of a submission. You should avoid this technique if your have a "soft" or shy puppy as this can sometime reinforce the shy temperament.

**Chewing & Toy Aggression:**

Never allow your puppy to chew on your fingers, this is a sure way to cause much bigger problems in the future. On the first occasion this happens, simulate a dogs deep throated growl. A growl from you, the pack leader will stop this behavior. Do not move you hand away quickly, the puppy will think you are teasing and the chase instinct is to grab.

Toys always belong to you. You allow your puppy to play with them on your terms, they should be kept on a high shelf, out of reach of the puppy. It is vital that the puppy understands that playing is at your invitation and that you always win the toy in the end. Tug of war games will teach the puppy to challenge you for supremacy. Although this can be cute with a 25-30 pound puppy, it will be a different story with a 120-130lb full grown dog. At the end of playing, you must take the toy from the puppy. If the puppy is reluctant to give up the toy, or acts aggressively, place your index finger and thumb on either side of the bottom jaw and open the puppy's mouth and remove the toy, growling deeply at the puppy if there is any sign of resistance. This technique will help reinforce your dominance over your puppy.

Do not allow your puppy to run off with an object. If you suspect that this may occur, attach your puppy to a short, light line and then you are back in control. A puppy that believes that it can have its own way simply by staying out of your reach can be difficult to train later. If your puppy does not come back voluntarily, lightly pull on the line towards you. When the puppy comes towards you, give it plenty of praise. If does not matter that the puppy had no choice, what mattered is the puppy did come to you.
**Required Training Supplies**

Some essential are required for the challenging training and socialization stage. These include the basics, such as crate, collar, leash and can also include some more advanced training aids and tools, which will be discussed later.

**Training Crate or Kennel**

This is a very important tool that will go a long way to helping house train your dog and also will help you keep your sanity. This will be your dogs hidey-hole while he is unattended in the home or sleeping. It will ensure that your dogs stays out of mischief and elimination in the house while you are not looking. As Great Pyrenees grow very quickly, it is best to buy once and allow your dog to grow in to it. A good crate should be wire steel composition, at least 32” high by 29” wide. This will allow most adult dogs to stand up and turn around. A good crate will cost in the neighborhood of $75-250, depending on brand and features. Many brands are portable and can be folded up for trips. A good one will also have a removable bottom tray, very handy for cleanup.

**Regular Collar**

A good quality dog collar is also essential. If your dog is a puppy, it is likely that a medium thickness nylon collar, 16"-20" long will do until the dog is a young adult. If the puppy's neck is too small, you can punch an additional hole in the collar. Remember, he will grow into it within weeks. Once your dog is a young adult, you should invest in a quality heavy weight collar, either nylon or leather. A thick leather collar is more expensive, but it will last for years and is more durable than nylon. If your dog is to see some duty in the field as a guardian dog, you will likely want to invest in a heavy duty spiked leather collar, designed to help protect yours dogs vulnerable neck area from predator's teeth. The regular collar is the everyday collar that remains on the dog.
**Dog Leash**

Your dog leash will be one of your best friends. As with the collar, the best option is to invest once in a high quality leash that will last for years. These come in many compositions, such as nylon, leather, steel chain, rope-style and hemp. You will want a heavy duty one as an adult Pyr can easily snap a light weight one. The leash should be comfortable in your hand and also durable. Keep it out of reach when not in use to avoid it being mistaken for a chew toy. In general, we do not recommend using retractable leashes with Great Pyrenees as their strength can easily break it. Additionally, halti's or gentle leader harnesses also do not work well with Pyr due to their tendency to walk beside or behind you, rather than in front as these are designed for.

**Training Collar (Prong or Pinch)**

Training collars come in 2 general varieties, pinch/prong and choke. The pinch collar, also known as prong collar is often misunderstood by those not familiar with it, due to its rather barbaric look. Looks aside, it is a very effective training tool and is also preferred by many trainers over choke collars, which are known to cause long term neck damage and muscle strain. Prong collars do not have this side effect and work by delivering a light pinch to the neck when your dog is resisting your direction. It should be stressed that it is a temporary use collar, for use when walking and should never be used for tying your dog. Pinch collars are also very adjustable as they come with removable links for resizing to your dog's growing neck. The pinch collar can make walking your dog a breeze and it will also make it far easier to hold your dog in a control position should you need to. Proper use of a prong collar can reduce time involved for leash training by 50-75%. It can also be helpful in walking and controlling the very dominant Pyr.
Training Collar (Choke)

A choke collar is another type of training collar. It works by applying pressure to the dog's neck when resisting your direction. Although less expensive than prong collars, it is not as effective and has been shown that long term use can cause neck and muscle damage. As with the prong collar, a choke collar is a temporary use collar and should never be used to tie your dog.

Basic Leash Training

Beginning to train your dog to walk properly on a leash is something that should begin within the first week of first bringing your dog/puppy home. It can be done using a regular collar and leash, although proper use of a training collar, such as pinch/prong collar will greatly reduce the time required to train the dog. The Great Pyrenees have a much higher than average tolerance to pain and as such, regular collars are less effective than with other breeds of dogs. It should be remembered that the Great Pyrenees is a very independent breed and will definitely initially resist your efforts to take him for a walk. If your dog is a puppy, you can begin anytime after 8 weeks of age, the sooner the better. For puppies, keep the walking sessions brief, 20-30 minutes and then allow the puppy to rest for a short time. By 3 months of age, your dog should have no problem going to a 1 hour or longer continuous walk.
The first time on the leash will be somewhat challenging and many times dramatic as your puppy will resist the efforts. A training collar will help greatly at this point. It is critical that you do not give in to your puppies' wishes, as doing so will be reinforcing the negative behavior. Attaching the leash to the collar/training collar, begin walking forward gently pulling the puppy in a forward direction. He/she may walk voluntarily for a short duration and will then abruptly put on the brakes and will try to sit down and resist the walk. At this point, gently pull up on the collar with the leash and continue moving forward. When the puppy attempts to resist you, give it a gentle tug in a forward direction in addition to coaxing his by voice until it begins to move forward. Give him a light praise as he moves forward. Do not pull aggressively, your goal is ensure the puppy understands and also to help the process be as enjoyable as possible, which aids in the training process.

It will be necessary to correct the puppy numerous times through slight forward tugs, until the puppy understands clearly that he MUST follow your lead. If you are using a pinch/prong collar, the gentle pulls forward may be accompanies by a small yelp, do not be alarmed, this is normal and is not injuring the puppy, but rather simply applying a small pinch to the neck as a correction for the cease in motion. As the training sessions progresses, you will notice a decrease in resistance to the leash. Typically this takes 2-3 hours using a training collar and significant longer using a regular collar. Once the puppy clearly understands that resisting the walk is not an option, you will have very little problems in the future.

If the puppy is young, allow it to socialize with other people and dogs on the walk, always checking with the other dogs' owner first to ensure it is not aggressive. Allow children and people to pet it. This helps make the walk a more enjoyable experience for your puppy, thereby reducing the training period and also helps properly socialize the dog with people and other animals, which will greatly reduce the chances for aggression problems later in life.

Although somewhat draconian in appearance, properly used, a pinch/prong collar will significantly reduce the leash training period. It is much more effective than a regular collar and does not cause long term muscle/neck damage as choke or chain collars do. It is expandable by adding/removing links and will also be very effective in helping to control the dominant Pyr later in life if you encounter another dog while on a walk.
Basic Socialization

Dog are social animals and learn just about everything from one another in their pack. (including you, their pack leader). From the day they are born they are constantly learning, from their litter mates, their mother and other animals/objects around them. They learn proper dog-dog social skills, placement in the pack and basic interaction skills with dogs and other animals. For example, the overly bold puppy that ventures too close to its mother's food bowl is gently, but firmly corrected by its mother and it quickly learns that such behavior is inappropriate. Once you bring your new dog home, it is no different and an absence of socialization and proper control will definitely lead to negative behavior problems later in life, when they will be far more difficult to correct.

The most critical time for socialization is between 8 weeks and 3 months of age. During this time, it should be well introduced to other people, especially those it is not familiar with, new experiences, different noises, as well as other dogs and other animals. Proper socialization begins at home, with controlled and supervised introduction to any other animals in your home. This helps it to develop interaction skills with other animals and to learn what is not appropriate behavior. Introduce to everyday to new noises, clatter pots and pans together, dishes and make other loud noises. This helps to prevent noise shyness with your puppy. Then begin socialization with other dogs and people on your walks together. This will also help it to develop proper social skills and will ensure that it does not fear people or other dogs, which can lead to unwanted aggression. Allow people and children to pet and play with the puppy and also allow other dogs to interact with it, after getting permission from the other dogs owner. The well socialized dog will know how to act with other people, and animals and will ensure that your dog grows up to be a happy, trustworthy and confident member of the family.
Housebreaking

House breaking is essential if your new dog is going to be spending any amount of time indoors. To exist in a home, your dog must be trained not to eliminate indoors, but rather to alert you that it needs to be let out. The easiest way to accomplish this feat is through proper use of an indoor training crate. This is a wire kennel that will server to train your dog as well as giving it a place to sleep when unsupervised. A good crate will cost anywhere from $60-$250 depending on size, manufacturer and features, so ensure that you purchase one that will fit your dog when fully grown. Most of these can be folded up to take on trips or stored away when not in use. As a general rule, make sure you purchase one that is no smaller than 32" high X 29" wide. This will allow most adult Great Pyrenees, with the exception of abnormally large males to stand up, lie down and turn around in.

Dog's have an instinctive desire not to soil the area where they sleep. As such, a training crate will allow you to contain your puppy, which will naturally whine and bark when it needs to eliminate. Puppies less than 3 months old have a very small bladder and need to be let out every 2 hours on average. Once 3 months of age, they will be able to hold it a couple of hours longer. By 6 months of age, they should be able to contain themselves for the night. This means that for the first couple of months with your puppy, you need to expect to let it outside every few hours. Do not neglect its whines and allow it to eliminate in the crate or you will set a negative behavior pattern that will be more difficult to cure. When you let the puppy out to eliminate, it should be praised for holding itself. You must also learn to distinguish between the puppy whining from simply being contained in the crate from the puppy whining that it need to relieve itself.

A crate, or wire kennel is a great training aid for housebreaking. It will also serve well to keep your dog out of mischief when indoors unattended. As Great Pyrenees puppies grow very quickly, ensure you purchase a crate that will be large enough to be used for your dog when fully grown. Typically, a crate no smaller than 32" high X 29" wide. This will service most sized adults, with the exception of abnormally large males. If it is your budget, you can aquire a 36" high kennel to ensure your dog will not outgrow it.
During the training process, there will unquestionably be incidents. These usually occur after play or when unsupervised. If the dog eliminates indoors, you should firmly, but gently tap it on the nose with your finger, tell it NO! in a firm voice and immediately take it outside. This procedure will ONLY work if you physically catch the dog in that act of eliminating and it must be done immediately, or it will have no effect. Never strike the puppy with your hand or any objects as this is sure to cause hand shyness.

For best results, ensure that you take the dog outside shortly after meals and water breaks. This will help minimize the chances of an indoor incident. A young puppy will typically have to relieve himself 6-8 times per day on average.

When allowing the puppy to play in the house, it should be confined to a small area or room in the house, which is covered in newspapers to catch an accidental elimination. Again, when the puppy eliminates on the newspaper, scold it firmly but lightly and immediately take it outside and praise it when it relieves itself outside.

Some people have had success in training their dog to eliminate on command. This is done by using a short keyword just as the dog is about to relieve itself, followed by praise afterward. With repetition, the dog can be taught to quickly eliminate on command.

The house breaking process takes time, so you must have patience, be persistent and offer plenty of praise on good behavior. Accidents in the house are not intentional acts, rather the young puppy is not yet able to control its bowel movements. Light scolding allows it to recognize its mistakes, while praise reinforces desirable ones. Positive reinforcement allows the puppy to adjust easily as it feels loved and wanted, rather than alone and rejected.

**The Basic Come Command**

The "come" is something that will be used often. If your dog is a puppy, it is likely that you will have quicker success if you begin short lessons beginning from the day you bring your new puppy home. To your puppy, the first few days will be filled with puppy enthusiasm and curiosity. Most puppies will have a natural instinct to approach when coaxed, especially if you kneel down or sit closer to its level. This immediately puts the puppy at ease and it is likely to come bounding over once you have attracted it attention. Generally, positive reinforcement works the best. Some people use a treat or biscuit to help kick start things, however these should be used sparingly or it will backfire on you later once you try to take the treat out of the equation. Instead, substitute with plenty of praise and love.

The time involved to master the come command depends on the individual dog, the training methods and the duration. Remember, dogs have limited attention spans for repetitive actions, so keep the training sessions brief, but frequent. The strong, independent nature of the Great Pyrenees pays a large role in the process as well. This is why it is essential to keep things positive, because if your Pyr really does not want to do something, it will quickly develop a case of selective hearing. Never use the come command to scold the dog, as this will greatly retard the learning process because you will be associating negative actions with the command for your dog. If there should be a need to scold the dog, always go to it.

During the first few sessions, try and keep the training confined to relatively quiet areas, free of distractions, such as other dogs, or children playing. Such distractions seriously impair the training process as the dog's mind is on other things, rather than focused on you. Some dogs will learn quickly off leash, while some others will be a bit more stubborn and require a long length of rope to encourage them to come.
Begin by walking into the middle of the area that you will be using for the training session. Coax the dog or puppy to follow you, then allow it to sniff around for a couple minutes. During this time, slowly begin to distance yourself from the puppy. Then call its name and issue a firm but friendly "come" command, while facing the puppy and kneeling or sitting. If the puppy comes bounding over, be sure to give it plenty of praise and vigorous pets. If the dog does not come, re-issue the "come" command, and clap your hands together or slap your hands to your thighs to get its attention. If you are successful, repeat the process after a few minutes, each time slowly increasing the distance between you and the dog.

If the off-leash approach is not working for you, acquire a long length of rope, generally 50 feet or more. Repeat the same process, except this time once the command is issued, give the puppy a light tug on the rope towards you. If necessary, pull the dog all the way towards you. Either way, once the dog comes, regardless of if it came voluntarily or not, be sure to give it plenty of praise, as the most important thing at this point is that it came to you. Then repeat a few more times and end the session.

Once the dog is coming on command in controlled situations, begin introducing the dog to places with some distractions, such as children playing or other dogs, noise, food etc.

**The Sit Command**

The sit command is also an important command that will be used regularly throughout the life of your dog. For many Great Pyrenees owners, it is a very critical command as it allows those with dogs with very dominant personalities to be more easily controlled in certain situations, such as another dog approaching. The dogs great size can also at times intimidate certain people and children and a dog in the sitting position is far less intimidating to these types of people. Additionally, A dog in the sitting position is relaxed and far less likely to be pulling on the leash.

Teaching the sit command to a Great Pyrenees is no different than any other dog with the exception of its independent nature may delay the action for a longer period of time after the command is given, as opposed to a highly trainable breed, such as a retriever. It is most easily taught while the dog is still young. Needless to say, it is far easier to train a young puppy to do something it might not want to do then it would be to train a fully grown adult dog. The sit command can be accomplished with an occasional treat and plenty of praise. Begin by taking the dog to quiet area, such as a backyard or quiet park, that is relatively free of distractions. Have the dog on a collar and leash.

If you choose, you can use an occasional treat to help kick start the training, however regular treats should be avoided. With the dog in a standing position, place a treat or a biscuit in your hand and make a fist. Place the closed fist with treat inside in front of its nose, so that it may smell it and is aware of its existence. Gently move your hand up and overtop the dog's head towards the rear of the dogs back. The dog will naturally move its head up towards the treat and will naturally assume the sitting position in order to maintain its balance once its head move back far enough. Just before the dog is physically sitting, issue the sit command and reward the dog and give him praise once complete. If the dog is hesitant to sit, gently push down on its rear with your hand until the sitting position is achieved. This exercise will take a number of sessions until your dog has mastered it.
The Down Command

The down command is also a common command. While no more difficult to train a dog instruction-wise, most Great Pyrenees owners encounter much more difficulty with this command. This is primarily because the down position is by its very nature a submissive position and generally speaking the Great Pyrenees is far from a submissive animal. Many particularly dominant Pyr's will resist all efforts to place it in a down position, especially if there is another dog nearby. This resistance can sometimes be countered by making the down command training into a game for your dog. This can be done by playing a short game of touch tag with your Pyr and then quickly crouching down on your hands and knees in a playful motion. Many dogs, especially young ones will assume the crouching down command in front of you.

Next: Great Pyrenees Health Care
Great Pyrenees Health Care

Like any animal, the Great Pyrenees has a number of possible health problems, however in comparison to most other breeds of dogs, they are relatively few. This is likely in part to the fact that the Pyrenees has been allowed to evolve over many hundreds of years in comparison to mere decades like most other modern breeds of dogs. The single largest way to head of many potential health problems is through regularly scheduled vaccinations.

Health problems can be categorized as Infectious Diseases, Parasites and General Diseases.

Infectious Diseases

An infectious disease is one that is acquired from another animal or dog. Some are more common than others and many can be prevented through regular vaccinations. Some are also more serious than others and can lead to the death of your dog if not handled properly. Fortunately, many of today's modern vaccines will inoculate your dog from a number of common canine diseases. This is why it is important to ensure that you are buying a puppy from a responsible breeder. If possible, always ask to see a copy of the mother's health documents, which will allow you to see how often and when she was vaccinated. If the breeder is at all evasive in regards to questions regarding vaccinations, it is often better to pass and locate a more suitable breeder.

Parvovirus

Also referred to as "Parvo", this is an often fatal viral infection common to puppies and elderly dogs, although adult dogs are also at risk. It is often passed on from mother to pups and is most common in mothers that have not been properly vaccinated. Regular and timely vaccinations can reduce the chances of this greatly. Puppies should have been vaccinated at least twice before they are 8 weeks of age. Parvovirus comes in two forms, a gastrointestinal infection that can attack the stomach and intestines and also a myocardial form that affects the heart muscles.

Coronavirus

This is another virus common to unvaccinated puppies and adult dogs. Coronavirus can cause listlessness, weight loss, diarrhea, vomiting and excessive thirst. Again, regular vaccinations can reduce the chances to an absolute minimum.

Distemper

This is one of the more serious and often fatal viral infections. Canine distemper can be passed on from other animals. Related to the human measles virus, it can cause serious seizures and other neurological problems. Regular vaccinations can greatly reduce the chances of an infection. Distemper kills over 80% of puppies infected and 50% of adult dogs.
Rabies

Rabies is the most serious of all common infections. It is passed through the saliva from other animals, including dogs, cats, bats, raccoons, squirrels and many other common mammals. There is no cure for Rabies once the symptoms begin presenting themselves, however it can be treated in the early stages and it can also be vaccinated against. Be sure to get your dog vaccinated for rabies and keep it up to date. Rabies can be passed to humans and once symptoms are seen, it is almost always fatal.

Bordetella/Kennel Cough

This is a bacteria that is common to kennels and other places where large numbers of dogs get together, such as obedience classes. Most reputable kennels and classes now require proof of vaccination. Bordetella can cause potentially serious respiratory infections. Once infected, it can be treated, however recovery is slow. Generally, if there is any chance that you will be boarding your dog or taking to a place with a number of other dogs or traveling, get it vaccinated.

Canine Hepatitis

A canine version of the hepatitis virus, it is not transferable to humans however it can cause significant damage to your dog’s liver and can also be fatal. This can also be vaccinated against.

Parasites

Parasites are organisms that feed off your dog. Some can be regional and even seasonal. Some are more common than others. Parasites can be passed from other animals or from just being outside. Most can be dealt with fairly easily.

Worms

There are five common types of worms that feeds on dogs, these include roundworm, tapeworms, hookworms, whipworms and heartworms.

- **Roundworms** are most common in puppies and are transmitted via eggs in the dog's feces.
- **Tapeworms** are transmitted via ingestion of an infected flea, rodent or rabbit.
- **Hookworms** can be transmitted via eggs in the feces and also through skin penetration by the hookworm larvae or through a puppies drinking of an infected mothers milk.
- **Whipworms** are transmitted through dog's feces.
- **Heartworms** are transmitted through infected mosquitoes carrying larvae and is the most serious, causing significant damage to the pulmonary arteries. All of these are treatable and are also preventable through specialized dewormers available from your vet. Many of the dewormers on the market will protect against multiple worms, with the exception of heartworm, which usually requires a specialized treatment.
**Fleas**

Fleas are the most common canine parasites. They can be difficult to spot in the dense cost of the Pyr, so it is often better to assume that your dog is infected and treat it accordingly. Flea collars and shampoos can have some very temporary effect, however the most effective prevention is through special flea medications available from your vet, which can in many cases eliminate the problem. An out of control flea problem can quickly spread to your home, where they can get into your carpets and can be difficult to contend with. Flea infections are most common in the spring to summer months and they are vary in intensity from region to region.

**Ticks**

Ticks are also another common parasite that feeds on canine blood. They are more common in some parts of the country than others and can be year round problems in warmer climates, while being mostly a seasonal problem in others. Ticks are known to be carriers of many dangerous diseases, including Lyme Disease, Rock Mountain Spotted Fever, babesiosis, and ehrlichiosis. Ticks can be picked up in many places, including long grasses and fields. They can often be difficult to spot until they have gorged themselves on blood. The best offense is a good defense and there are a number of effective treatments that can minimize the chances of your animal becoming infected. If ticks are a problem in your area, the best bet is to consult with your local veterinarian on the best course of action.

**Mites**

Mites can also be a problem in many areas of the country. There are five common types of mites that can cause potential problems for your Great Pyrenees. Each type has a specific treatment, available from your veterinarian.

- **Chyletiella** mites live on the surface of your dog's skin. They are the cause of a skin flaking condition known as walking dandruff
- **Demodex** mites live in the hair follicles and sebaceous glands of your dog. An infection causes a reddish patch around the infection, accompanied by hair loss and commonly referred to as red mange or demodectic.
- **Scabies** mites will burrow under the skin of your dog and lay its eggs, which causes irritation and sarcoptic mange.
- **Chiggers** are mite larvae that can be picked up by your dog, often found in grassy or wooded areas. The larvae's saliva can cause irritation and swelling which can be long lasting.
- **Ear mites** cause an ear infection that is often accompanied by significant dark earwax discharges. Ear mite infections can cause significant irritation and a sometimes painful condition.
**General Diseases**

**Bloat**

Bloat is a serious gastric disease, known as Gastric Dilation Volvulus Syndrome or GDV. Bloat is not as common in Great Pyrenees as most other large dog breed's, however it is still seen. Bloat causes the dog's stomach to become bloated with air and then the stomach twists so that nothing can flow from it to the small intestine. This affects the small intestine and blood vessels and can cause death in a number of hours. Survival will depend on the severity and how soon you seek immediate veterinarian assistance. The cause of bloat is still not fully understood, however it can be minimized by breaking your dog's meal in 2 or 3 parts and always providing access to water to prevent gorging itself on water as well as avoiding feeding within an hour of vigorous exercise.

**Heat Stroke**

Heat stroke can occur to any mammal exposed to direct sunlight and heat for to long a period of time. As a long coated breed, the Great Pyrenees is no exception. Definitely avoid shaving your dog as this can actually increase the risk of heat stroke as the dog's coat helps to insulate it against the heat. The best way to prevent heat stroke is to provide plenty of fresh water, along with a cooler, shady spot or shelter. Be aware that heat stroke can occur within minutes if the dog is confined in a small enclosed space, such as the interior of a vehicle, so always avoid this.

**Cancer**

Cancer tends to be the largest killer of older Great Pyrenees and it is also known to occasionally affect younger dogs as well. Bone cancer tends to be the most common type of cancer. There is no current cure for bone cancer, however sometimes amputation of an infected limb can delay the death of your dog, however it almost always re-presents itself later in life.

**Skin Problems**

Skin problems tend to be the most common afflictions of Great Pyrenees. These usually tend to be allergies or other forms of skin irritation from other causes. This often cause skin eruptions, and some hair loss in affected areas at times. Many times the Pyr is allergic to fleas and their eggs, in which case it is import that you stay on top of the flea situation through flea treatments available through your veterinarian.

**Ear Infections**

Ear infections can often be caused by allergies as well or a foreign body or substance in the ear which is causing irritation. There are two types of infections, an inner ear infection and an outer ear infection. Excessive scratching, head shaking or signs of pain can be a indication, as can inflammation or a foul smelling discharge. Outer ear infections can often be treated by cleaning the ear well and applying a topical ointment. Inner ear infections often require antibiotics available from your veterinarian.
**Hot Spots**

Hot spots are a common type acute skin irritation known as moist dermatitis. This tends to be an area of skin which the dog has scratched, licked or chewed into a spot that is inflamed, oozing and devoid of hair. The size of the hot spot can greatly increase quickly if left untreated, as well as causing secondary bacterial infections. Hot spots are generally caused by an allergy or an infection, which must first be treated to prevent it from reoccurring. The hot spot inflammation itself can be treated with dermal mediation or spray.

**Hip Dysplasia**

This is a serious degenerative and crippling disease affecting large breed dog's. It is a heritary disease, making it up the utmost importance to ensure that the dog's parents have been cleared of the disease. Hip Dysplasia can vary in severity from mild to severe. Mild cases will cause pain which can sometimes be treated with special medications. More severe cases will many times require expensive surgery or euthanasia to spare the dog great amounts of ongoing pain. Avoiding allowing your dog to become overweight can help to minimize its onset.

**Arthritis**

Arthritis affects the vast majority or senior Great Pyrenee's and cause stiffness of the joints and inflammation, causing a painful condition. There is no cure for this, although it can sometime be treated by a veterinarian to minimize its effects on your dog. Arthritis varies in intensity and it can be crippling in more severe cases. Generally, allow your senior dog plenty of rest, as well as limiting vigorous exercise and preventing it from becoming overweight.

**Panceostetis**

This disease causes lameness, most often in young dogs between 5 and 15 months of age. It can sometime rotate from leg to leg and generally only lasts one to 2 months and then will usually go away on its own.

**Patellar Luxation**

This condition causes the dog's patella, or kneecap to become displaced, causing pain and lameness. This tends to be temporary, although it can be persistent and reoccurring. More serious cases will require corrective surgery.

**Osteochondrites Dissecans (OCD)**

This is a degenerative condition, usually affecting young dogs which causes cartilage in joints such as the hip, shoulder, elbow and other joints to become exposed to the joint. More serious cases will require surgery.
**Dwarfism**

This condition is rare in the Great Pyrenees and is generally recognized by the experienced breeder early in development. It causes a dwarfing condition which stunts the dog's growth.

Next: Finding your Pyr and Ownership Considerations
Finding your Pyr and Ownership Considerations

Initial Considerations

A Great Pyrenees is far from an ordinary breed of dog. It was bred for a very specific purpose and as such has a unique personality, characteristics and traits. It is important to consider all of the aspects of the breed prior to making the decision to adopt a Pyr. The Great Pyrenees is a dominant breed of dog and as such will require a firm, yet gentle hand and proper socialization and training. A Pyr is not a suitable choice for all individuals, nor is it a suitable choice for those unwilling or incapable of providing the proper amount of training, socialization or exercise.

Important Pre-Ownership Considerations

The decision to own a Great Pyrenees is a serious consideration and is not to be taken lightly. A Great Pyrenees is a very unique breed of dog and as such, there are unique responsibilities that go along with ownership. You must seriously weigh all the breeds traits before making a decision. Every year, hundreds of Great Pyrenees suffer from broken homes because their owners failed to consider all the factors before adopting them. Proper research will allow you to get a heads up on the breed to allow you to evaluate if it is the right breed for you.

1. Size
   The Great Pyrenees is a large breed of dog, with males varying in size from 27" to 32" at the shoulder or larger and females being slightly smaller at 25-29" at the shoulder. They typically grow for 3 1/2-4 years. It will grow rapidly, with a 8 week old puppy generally weighing between 25-30lbs. By 3 months of age, your Great Pyrenees will be the same size or larger than a full grown Golden Retriever. By a year and a half, your Pyrenees will have obtained a great percentage of its height, and will typically weight well over 100 lbs. The dog will then slowly grow, mostly filling out over the next 2-2 1/2 years. They mentally mature between 1 1/2-2 years of age and it is at this point that its dominant instincts will begin to emerge.

2. Dog Dominance
   Great Pyrenees, by nature are a dominant breed and will generally not tolerate any aggressive animal or dominant dog that does not submit to it. The adult Great Pyrenees will typically seek to assume the dominant role with other other dogs or animals you have. For most non-dominant breeds of dogs, such as labs, retrievers, collies etc, you should not have any problems as the other dog should allow the Great Pyrenees to assume the dominant role. In fact most Great Pyrenees will get along well with most non-dominant breeds and will also not hesitate to protect it if necessary. They tend to be very tolerant with other dogs that they are familiar with, provided the other dog has no desire to challenge it for dominance. However, if you own another dominant breed, such as Rottweilers, Dobermans, Pit Bulls and some Terriers etc., a Great Pyrenees may not be a good choice as it can lead to heartache later if the dogs are not able to co-exist. Dominance for the most part takes place at maturity and 2 dominant dogs can co-exist without incident for many years before problems begin. At the very minimum, mix the genders of dominant breeds with a male-female pairing.
Some females will tolerate other females, others won't, especially if they are not altered. For best results, have one or both of the females altered. Altering early by 6 months of age will also help reduce problems as well. Same sex pairings of two male Great Pyrenees is sheer madness and will likely end in tragedy expensive vet bills and heartache if the other dog refuses to submit to it, which is typically unlikely with two male Pyrs.

3. **Territory**
The Great Pyrenees has very strong pack instincts and as such, should at all times be contained, preferably behind a tall fence. Un-contained, the Great Pyrenees will in all likely hood roam the neighborhood and establish a very large "territory" to protect, which may conflict with some of your neighbors and their pets. Within a fenced yard, the Pyr has established boundaries in which he will call his or her own. They are however easily housebroken and can make suitable indoor pets as well in many cases. The Great Pyrenees will adapt and protect most all forms of livestock including cattle, sheep, llamas, alpacas, fallow deer, horses, miniature donkeys and many more if properly socialized around them. They are however less tolerant of aggressive fowl, such as roosters and Geese. This is also instinctive and by the same token, they will also not allow any birds of prey such as eagles and vultures, crows, magpies to approach its flock. Aggressive fowl should therefore be contained in areas that the Pyr does not have access to.

4. **Barking**
Great Pyrenees are barkers and will often bark at anything out of the ordinary. Many Pyrs will also bark simply to announce their presence to the neighborhood. Again, this comes from instinct, where Pyr's patrolled hundreds if not thousands of acres. The Great Pyrenees would commonly bark to announce their presence to potential predators to reduce confrontations and threats to their flock. Because of this, a Great Pyrenees might not be a suitable match if you live in the city and your neighbors would be annoyed at excessive barking. Many Pyr owners bring the dog in at night, which usually ends the barking sessions.

5. **Shedding**
The Great Pyrenees is blessed with a thick, primarily white double coat. Expect heavy shedding, especially in the spring. Residual hair on your clothing is an occupational hazard for Pyr owners but most owners quickly get used to it. If you are obsessively clean or object to the thought of white hair on your clothes, in your house, car and virtually everywhere you live, then a Great Pyrenees is not the breed for you.

6. **Human Dominance**
The Great Pyrenees' dominance is a key element to its thought process. In its mind, it is king of all it surveys and will naturally establish itself as the pack leader of any other animals, unless strongly convinced otherwise. Human aggression however is very rare with the Great Pyrenees, provided that it is properly trained and socialized. In fact, it is a serious show fault for a Great Pyrenees to show intentional aggression towards people. However, improperly trained, it may also attempt to establish itself to be a dominant member of the family, which can quickly lead to serious behavior problems. Human-dog dominance can easily be resolved in early stages of development. If left un-addressed to maturity, it will take some training and work to establish the correct dominance in your family. The dog should understand that all members of the family are more dominant
than he or she. A sometimes common mistake is for a single member of the family to assume to dominate role, in which the dog is left to assume that he or she is above all the other members of the family. Dominance issues are easily worked out in most cases during feeding, play and daily routines. A properly trained dog will not show any aggression towards any member of the family. All members of the family should be able to play with its food while eating, as well as take the food away at will without any signs of aggression. Any growling or snapping is an immediate indication that some work is required right away. Once the dog understands its role in the family, there is minimal chance of further aggression against its family. The Great Pyrenees is known for its enormous tolerance of small children and is known to actually adjust its temperament and play depending on the age and size of the child. The well trained and socialized adult Great Pyrenees will allow the toddler to crawl all over it and play with its nose and ears, while taking a more active role in play with older children. Great Pyrenees tend to be very protective around small children as well as will often place themselves between a child and someone it does not know.

7. **Walking**

Great Pyrenees are large and very strong and so when on a walk, a leash is an absolute must. This will keep your Pyr under control. As they are also very independent, unleashed, its likely your Pyr will bound off after an animal or dog if it determines it to be a possible threat or it may just up and decide to take some time to itself to check out the roses or neighborhood, despite your intentions. A Great Pyrenees outside of its established boundaries many times will develop selective hearing and may temporarily choose to rebel against you for a few minutes or instigate a game of chase me. Many a Pyr has lead their owners on a merry chase at some point in their lives, so to avoid frustration, bring the leash. You should also avoid allowing young children to walk them alone if there is a chance that your dog may come into contact with another dog as the child may be unable to hold your Pyr back if it decides to challenge the other animal. While extreme dog aggression is somewhat rare, many Great Pyrenees will be more tolerant with other dogs unless directly challenged or attacked. However, it is important that all people considering Pyr ownership understand the traits to avoid having to give it up later, due to lack of research prior to ownership.

8. **General Care**

Great Pyrenees ownership also requires consideration of daily care. They must be brushed regularly, at least twice a week, more during shedding season to maintain a healthy, unnested coat. The Great Pyrenees has a double coat, consisting of a soft, downy undercoat, which it sheds once a year, as well as the outer coat. Although the outer coat does not mat, the undercoat will if not brushed out regularly, especially during shedding season. The coat has natural dirt resistant qualities that help it stay clean. An absolutely filthy and wet Great Pyrenees will amaze you by being clean and white again shortly after drying off, as most of the dirt simply falls out once dry. Over time however, the coat will become slightly yellowish, which will simply require an occasional bath to restore their snow-white appearance. In Europe, it is common to retain the shedded undercoat in order to spin it. Great Pyrenees hair offers many times the insulating quality of wool and it also has a softer texture. To keep the coat maintained, a simple rake and slicker brush will suffice. The claws also require some occasional maintenance as well, especially the front and double rear dew claws, which do not come into contact with the ground and can curl around and grow into the paw pad if left unattended. Dew claws should be inspected regularly and trimmed at least once a year.
9. **Food**

Fortunately, food requirements for the size of the Pyr is fairly manageable given its large size. An adult Pyr will generally consume roughly the same amount of food as a medium sized dog. The Pyr's calm nature and slower metabolism causes a relatively small appetite for the breed. Typically, an adult Pyr will only require 1-1.5 40lb bags of dog food per month. Other dogs of comparable size can consume more than double this amount.

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**Consider Adopting a Loving Great Pyrenees Rescue Dog**

Before making a decision, you should also decide on what interests you the most, a puppy or adult dog. Both have advantages and disadvantages. If your Pyr is to be a pet, we recommend giving some serious thought on welcoming a wonderful adult Great Pyrenees into your home. Every year, hundreds of Pyr's are placed in shelters and rescue organizations for a variety of reasons, such as owners moving, unable to properly care for the dog or sometimes because the owner fell in love with a cute, fluffy puppy without doing the proper amount of research into the breed. There are a number of Great Pyrenees rescue organizations across North America and Europe than specialize in the breed and helping displaced Pyrs to find loving and responsible homes.

Adopting an adult dog has many advantages in addition to completing the life of a loving Great Pyrenees deserving of a stable and responsible home. Most adult dogs have their mature personality, eliminating the guess work on how they will be when they mature. Some come pre-trained and house-broken. It also allows you to avoid the puppy stage. Most specialized rescue organizations can also help you determine your needs so as to best match you with a loving Great Pyrenees that best suits your lifestyle.

There are currently a great number of adoptable Great Pyrenees throughout North America that are loving and deserving of a good home. The Great Pyrenees search utility on our website at [www.greatpyr.com](http://www.greatpyr.com) allows you to search for adoptable Great Pyrenees by state or province.

Please also take an opportunity to contact some of the following Great Pyrenees rescue organizations. These are organizations specializing in the Great Pyrenees and can offer you a great deal of information on the breed and help you locate a suitable pet. Many also offer information and photos of their available Pyrs on their web sites.

- Appalachian Great Pyrenees Rescue
- Carolinas Great Pyrenees Rescue, Inc.
- Florida Great Pyrenees Club Rescue
- Grand Canyon State Great Pyrenees Club Rescue
- Great Pyrenees Alliance of the West Rescue
- Great Pyrenees Assoc. of S. California Rescue
- Great Pyrenees Club of America Rescue
- Great Pyrenees Club of Puget Sound Rescue
- Great Pyrenees Rescue of Central Illinois
- Great Pyrenees Rescue of Greater Chicago
- Great Pyrenees Rescue of Northern California
- Great Pyrenees Rescue of Nebraska
- Great Pyrenees Rescue of Oklahoma City
- Indiana Great Pyrenees Rescue
- Miles High Great Pyrenees Club Rescue
- Michigan Great Pyrenees Rescue
- NorthEast Pyr Rescue
- Oklahoma Great Pyrenees Rescue Association
- Penn-Dutch Rescue Network
- Texas Great Pyrenees Rescue
Adopting an Adult Great Pyrenees from Another Source

Adopting an adult Great Pyrenees from another source that may not be familiar with the breed, should be approached with caution. Not all Great Pyrenees are suitable for all adoption situations. For example, the working Pyr, or livestock guardian dog that has spent its entire life in the field with the flock with little or no human socialization is usually a poor choice for a pet as it can be extremely challenging to properly socialize and train it. Some other sources, such as shelters, SPCA etc may offer little or no backgrounds on the dog. As well, the Great Pyrenees that has been improperly trained or improperly socialized would be extremely challenging and likely unsuitable for a family situation. Use caution in these situations and always get as much background information on the animal as possible before making a decision.

Decided on a Puppy?

If you have decided that you are looking for a puppy and are prepared for the challenging task of housebreaking, training, obedience and socialization, you will now need to decide on what type of puppy and how much you are prepared to spend. There are generally 4 types of pure stock Great Pyrenees.

Pet or Companion Stock
If you are looking for a Great Pyrenees that will be primarily a pet or companion for you, then most likely you will be delighted with a dog designated as pet/companion stock. These are generally the least expensive of the registerable Great Pyrenees. The actual decision on what qualifies them as pet stock varies from breeder to breeder. Some breeders that show their animals and have a good knowledge of the breed standard will select one or more out of a litter as choice stock and the rest of the litter will be set as either pet or livestock guardian stock. Some breeders only sell pet/companion animals. Be aware than most all reputable breeders that sell pet/companion animals will require alteration and will more than likely require that you sign a contract outlining certain responsibilities, including alteration. Pet stock animals that are eligible for registration with the AKC/CKC/TKC/FCI or other organization can be registered as non-breeding animals only, which does not allow registration of any offspring.

Show Stock
If you are intending or possibly intend to involve yourself in the fiercely competitive sport of showing your dog, you will likely want to spend a bit more and acquire a show stock animal from a reputable breeder. Show stock animals are animals that are selected from a litter by breeders that generally show their animals and are well familiar to the breed standard. These are generally puppies that most closely conform to the breed standard. Typically, show stock animals will cost 2-3 times more than a pet stock animal and their designation means only that in the breeders opinion, the animal has the best chance at becoming a show animal. There is no guarantee than a Great Pyrenees sold as show stock will have the same qualities upon reaching adulthood and it does involve a good deal of speculation. Generally a show stock animal will also be registerable with the AKC/CKC/TKC/FCI or other organization as a non-breeding animal unless you have also negotiated with the breeder for possible breeding status.
Breeding Stock
Breeding stock animals are available from selected reputable breeders only and typically represent the highest in quality and conformance to the breed standard. These are usually animals that also meet the stringent requirement of show stock and also bear all the traits that make them a suitable animal to breed. They usually fetch a premium price of 2-3 times or more than that of a companion animal. These are animals that bear little or no apparent genetic defects or abnormalities, both physical and mental that could be possibly passed down to their offspring. Many animals sold as breeding quality are required to pass OFA and other certifications later on upon reaching maturity. For this reason, a breeding stock puppy may initially be certified with a non-breeding certificate from the AKC/CKC/TKC/FCI or other organization, which will be upgraded to a full certificate once the necessary clearances are passed. Many of these require the animal to be at least 2 years of age. Many breeders that offer breeding stock animals take their stock and line very seriously and will very closely scrutinize those that request them and will usually only sell to those individuals that meet their qualifications.

Livestock Guardian Dog
If your choice in a Great Pyrenees is primarily designed as a guardian for your livestock, then you will be looking for an animal available from selected breeders. These are selected animals chosen from a litter than are deemed to be best suited to their tradition role of a livestock guardian. Typically less attention is given to conformation to the breed standard as opposed to strong natural guardian instincts and a natural preference to bonding with livestock. Suitable LGD's will generally have a very commanding and dominant temperament and will also possess a natural preference to the flock, rather than people. Many breeders that sell LGD's will not sell them as puppies, but rather keep them until at least 1 year of age, during which time they will be well socialized to a flock situation. This helps to ensure that the dog you aquire will be suitable as a livestock guardian, as not all Pyr's are. For this reason, the cost of a LGD is usually much more than that of a show or breeding stock puppy as it reflects the costs of maintenance until it is ready to go to its new home. Most LGD's have minimal human interaction aside from working in the field and feeding time as it can lessen the bond with its flock and they will spend most of their time with its flock.