

## Your new Lurcher

Due to the numerous possible breed crosses it is impossible to tar all Lurchers with the same brush. We can only generalise when we describe them.

Lurchers are usually fairly sensitive by nature and their relationship with their owners is strong but can be easily shattered with harsh or impatient treatment. They seem to thrive on close, loving relationships and the quickest way to a Lurcher's heart is often through the use of attention and food. Gentle but consistent training, where it appears you are persuading the dog to do your bidding, rather than forcing it is usually most effective.

These dogs have a natural desire to please and want to be liked and loved by people. Joyously praising good behaviour, rather than shouting and yelling each time the dog gets it wrong will soon have the average Lurcher where you want it.

## Exercise

It is a common misconception that Lurchers are hugely energetic with a need for extensive exercise. Lurchers, like Greyhounds are sprinters, their energy is used up in bursts at high speed rather than through long distance running. However if your dog has Saluki blood, he may well be endowed with greater stamina and staying power, so the exercise requirements will need to fit the bill.

## IQ and training

Lurchers are generally intelligent dogs, many having Terrier, Collie or German Shepherd heritage. If this is the case, then they will need appropriate amounts of mental stimulation. This should come in the form of basic obedience training and constructive play such as fetch and retrieve games. As most Lurchers love food, this is an ideal tool to use to reward your dog as you train it. You can also make use of activity balls and Kongs as well as scatter feeding to get the most from mealtimes.

## Home comforts

Inevitably your Lurcher will want a big, soft bed to curl up on when at home and you may be forgiven for thinking that you have actually taken on a lounge lizard rather than a dog. Don't be fooled, Lurchers are prone to being destructive if teething, bored or frustrated, so if you value your soft furnishings, remember to provide an outlet for their desire to chew. Rawhide chews and rubber chew toys should be encouraged, rather than your favourite trainers.

## Food

Lurchers are often scavengers and may attempt to break into the kitchen bin or pull food off shelves and work surfaces. Because they are quite leggy, they can reach a good height when standing on their back legs. Rearranging the storage in the kitchen and getting a dog proof bin is advised. It is worth stating that if your dog does manage to find a tasty chicken carcass lying around, then it is you that should be reprimanded!

## Humans

Lurchers are prone to becoming very attached to their human companions. This can lead to stress and anxiety when left alone which may result in your dog messing, chewing or howling when left. It is imperative that you take the time to slowly accustom your dog to spending time alone, by gradually increasing the time you are apart. Lurchers are very capable of looking depressed or sad, this is because they often have a 'far away' look. It does not mean that they are unhappy, but their eyes are generally geared towards spotting the slightest movement in the distance. Lurchers tend not to bark a lot although of course there are exceptions to every rule.

## Handling and grooming

Lurchers tend to be very people friendly so handling and grooming is not usually a huge problem. As with all dogs, puppies will need to be handled from an early age and on a regular basis. This will help strengthen the bond between you and him as well as ensuring that a trip to the vets will not end in tears. If your dog is happy to be handled, he should also happily accept being groomed. The amount of grooming depends on the coat type and this will vary between dogs, the short, close lying coat type needing minimal maintenance. Those dogs with rough or rough broken coats will need a little more attention and dogs with feathering on legs, tail etc will need regular grooming to prevent matting.

## Lurchers and young children

All young children should be supervised when interacting with any dog. Given the Lurchers natural propensity for stealing food, keep a close eye on him around mealtimes. Don't feed him from the table and do not allow your child to share food with the dog, it may encourage your dog to challenge the child over food at a later date.

The majority of Lurchers are fairly gentle as adults so should not pose a problem with sensible children who can respect a dog's need for space and quiet time. Problems with children and dogs can occur when a child is too young to recognise that a dog has had enough of interacting. It is natural behaviour for a dog to snap or bare it's teeth when upset, another dog would quickly heed this message and cease the offending behaviour.



Young Lurchers can be incredibly boisterous and because of their height, jumping up can be a problem with young children. It would be wise to teach the dog a more controlled method of greeting such as a sit. Ensure that play sessions are not allowed to spiral out of control as it may well end in tears. Sensible children can have a fantastic relationship with a dog that will be devoted to them if they are each taught to be respectful of each other.

## Lurchers and dogs

Before you let your Lurcher off the lead in open areas, it is imperative that you have a tried and tested recall command in place. Practice this in the house and garden where there are fewer distractions before moving on to enclosed areas outside. Reward a good response with treats and praise and try to be exciting and fun. Remember that your dog may well have a strong desire to hunt small prey, such as rabbits, squirrels and maybe even chase foxes when exercising. When out in rural areas be aware of increased likelihood of wildlife and your dog running off.

Lurchers as a rule are chase motivated. This means that movement stimulates their hunting instincts and will cause even the most sedentary animal to explode into life and make off after the quarry at top speed. How much desire your Lurcher has to chase will depend on his breeding and previous experience. It goes without saying that dogs used previously for coursing or hunting will be all the more game. You will need to be vigilant and aware when exercising your Lurcher off lead and be able to exert good levels of control when necessary. The chase will not inevitably end in aggression or kill, as like all hunters, Lurchers need to practise techniques to perfect them. The majority of Lurchers will be satisfied with the chase and a good stretch of their legs. They really do delight in free running and it is a joy to watch. Try to encourage your dog to play with toys as it will help channel his desire to chase and burn off energy that otherwise may be directed into chasing other animals.

Like all dogs, Lurchers need to learn appropriate canine social behaviour as they grow up. This is achieved by allowing your dog to mix with a range of dogs, both adults and youngsters who can provide positive experiences for them. When you play with your dog, introduce a "stop" command that can be used when your dog gets too excited or rough. This can then be used to prevent OTT play with other dogs.

Chase will often be a large part of a Lurchers play with other dogs and that is fine as long as your dog can recognise when to stop and does not become over stimulated so that he starts to nip or mouth the other dog he is chasing. This would be a useful time to use the "stop" command. A good recall command is invaluable and with many Lurchers will be most successful if you call the dog before he has reached full speed, should he make off after something. When a dog is at full throttle it can appear that all the other senses, such as hearing, are non-existent. You will need to be able to recognise the signs that your dog is about to break for it.

Young Lurchers can be extremely exuberant with other dogs. They are often clumsy until they grow into their legs, but it doesn't take long for them to work out that they can outrun most dogs. It is important that they are not allowed to bully dogs that are intimidated or trying to get away from them as this can lead to problems further down the line.

Many Lurchers may be intrigued by small dogs and think of them as fair game. Fortunately, a lot of small dogs are fairly spirited and able to defend themselves but the dog's owner may not appreciate it if you have no control over your dog. Also Lurchers are often quick to team up; if you have more than one, they can egg each other on when behaving badly.

Training your dog will be crucial to inhibiting the development of the hunting instinct. Good off lead control will make walks more relaxing for you and more fun for your dog, leaving you free to enjoy the pleasures of living with a Lurcher.

## Useful contacts

### **Battersea Behaviour Advice Line**

0905 020 0222 (calls cost 25p per minute)

### **Battersea Dogs & Cats Home**

4 Battersea Park Road  
London  
SW8 4AA

Telephone 020 7622 3626  
Fax 020 7622 6451

### **Old Windsor**

Priest Hill Old Windsor  
Berkshire  
SL4 2JN

Telephone 01784 432929  
Fax 01784 471538

### **Brands Hatch**

Crowhurst Lane  
Ash  
Kent  
TN15 7HH

Telephone 01474 874994  
Fax 01474 872855

[www.dogshome.org](http://www.dogshome.org)