

# Think you want a Dane?

Great Danes are absolutely wonderful dogs. They have been my very favorite breed for decades, but they are not for everyone.

This document is to help you decide if a Great Dane is the right dog for you.

## Basic Information About the Breed

Great Danes are not a large breed; they are GIANT breed dogs, referred to as "Gentle Giants". They have a delightful and hilarious character, and require family participation in their life.

Males, on average, stand from 32" to 36" at the shoulder and can weigh from 130 to 180 pounds. European Danes are larger and can weigh up to 225 lbs. Captain Morgan's sire was 220. I have had one of his offspring, Rocky, to follow in his grandpa's size and weight, but do not plan to continue breeding the largest dogs. I use my part European males to gain the musculature they have to bring it into my American style Danes. I have been pleased with the progress made. Having very large Giant breeds can affect their joints and heart. I generally like to keep my Great Dane line in the mid-range.

Females typically stand 28" to 33" tall at the shoulder and weigh from 110 to 140 pounds. In addition to the ability to produce lovely coat colors and patterns, I generally look to my tall, slender, well-balanced, and agile females for breeding.

Danes do not usually reach full maturity until they are 18 to 24 months of age. They grow upward for the first 24 months and fill out over the next 6 months. Growth that is too rapid due to improper nutritional ratios causes issues with their bone growth and joints. For this reason, diet is very important. Puppies should not be allowed to jump from furniture or run on slippery flooring, and too much forced exercise (hiking, extremely long walks, etc.) can be a problem at a very early age. If you see a slip or slide of their paws while walking, it is best to place rugs on the flooring or use rubberized socks for proper traction.

We start our pups on Royal Canin Mother and Babydog food. This is available to breeders only. At 5-6 weeks of age, they are transitioned to Royal Canin Giant Breed Puppy food and will go to their new homes with a 5 day supply. Is this the best diet? In my opinion, No. I believe the best diet is fresh whole food, the same as whole food is best for humans. Unless you consult a veterinary nutritionist, efforts to produce a properly balanced diet for your dog on your own can be disastrous. Dr. Peter Dobias is a good resource for a whole food canine diet to make the best meals for your Great Dane. <https://peterdobias.com/pages/course-rawdiet>. Only a few families are able to commit to this way of feeding. That I why I have chosen kibble. I do not want to start a puppy on one way of feeding that would be too

difficult for the majority of families to continue and cause digestive issues for their new pup. Royal Canin is a good quality kibble that my puppies and adults enjoy. Their food is researched and specifically designed for giant breeds or Great Danes in several sizes and nutritional levels according to age and weight. They also provide diets specific for my females in heat and another diet for my pregnant and lactating females. These differing diets tell me that they research each specific breed and AKC agrees. It is more than just small, medium, and large breed bags of food for puppies or adults. Royal Canin puts thought into each breed's teeth, how they chew, and form the kibble to serve their differences in the size and shape of the kibble. I usually add toppers, Honest Kitchen Bone Broth or Stella & Chewy's freeze dried raw dinner Pattie's and nuggets to add whole food nutrition to their diet. With a greater number of Great Danes on my property, I find this is the best that I can do for my big babies.

Both males and females make wonderful house pets. If you currently have other pets, we can help you decide which Great Dane would be best for your home. Gender is not the only consideration. Allow our certified trainer to give you the best advice to make your final decision. We want happy families. We want happy puppies. We are not here just to sell.

**Great Danes come in 6 AKC recognized show participation colors and patterns:**

*\*We produce the colors & patterns in bold print*

**Mantle** (pattern white base with a large black mantle/coat marked like a Boston Terrier)

**Harlequin** (pattern - a white base coat with torn black patches)

**Black** (a solid black color)

**Blue** (steel blue/gray which is a black dilute)

**Fawn** (sable color with black mask)

Brindle (sable & black tiger striped pattern)

Other colors that are not yet recognized by AKC for show potential although they may be naturally born using AKC guidelines for breeding. An example is the **Merle** (blue grey with darker grey or black patches) and **Piebald** (a mantle that has a spot/spots at the base of the tail or on one side. These are born through AKC standard mantle and harlequin breeding.

MacPac Danes colorations of mantles include **Blue Mantle** (a mantle with a blue coat) or **Sable/Fawn Mantles** (a mantle with a sable coat that may or may not have blue tipped ears and muzzle). We produce harlequins with or without a white collar in different colors as well; **Fawnequin** (a white base with light and/or dark sable patches), **Blue Harlequin** (white base with blue patches), **Merlequin** (a white base with merle patches), **HarleHead** (harlequin marked heads with a piebald body that may have a round black spot around the base of the tail and the body with or without freckles that show through the white coat.

**HarleyPie** (a Piebald head/mantle with a heavily spotted piebald and harlequin patches on the body and tail).

Totally White Danes are often deaf if they lack any pigmentation at all and have occurred when two Great Danes each having a merle gene are bred together. Examples are two harlequins, a harlequin and merle, or two merles. Totally white dogs should never be bred. This is poor breeding by someone who doesn't know what they are doing. Avoid purchasing any puppy from them!

Some Danes, particularly Merles, White with fewer markings, and Harlequins can have blue eyes. Most of them change to golden or brown eyes while very few remain blue. Blue-eyed dogs or white coated dogs are very sensitive to the bright sun which may cause sunburn. They are also more sensitive to medications and vaccinations.

Excellent Great Dane research for all Giant breeds by Linda Arndt is available at this website:

[https://www.greatdanelady.com/articles/vaccine\\_reactions\\_in\\_great\\_danes.htm](https://www.greatdanelady.com/articles/vaccine_reactions_in_great_danes.htm)

Using AKC standard Mantle with Harlequin breeding, the results of pattern is 50% mantle, 25% merle, and 25% harlequin. MacPac Dane's pricing is according to the cost associated with producing a litter of pups and divided by the economics of supply and demand. While our expenses of proper nutrition, appropriate clean housing, and excellent veterinary care for all of my breeding adults and puppies is higher than many breeders spend in their program, the cost continues to increase for us all each year. From any respectable breeder, you should expect to pay \$800 - \$1400 for a Mantle depending on perfection of coat pattern; \$1000 - \$1600 for a Merle depending on solid or mantle pattern; and \$1500 - \$2500 for a Harlequin depending on solid, a white collar, perfection of coat pattern, and rarity of coloration within the patches. If you are paying less, visit the breeder's facilities and make sure that you have not found the latest scam on the internet. AKC Marketplace tries to eliminate them on their site, but still they can be found. They steal photos and information from the AKC breeders, hack the accounts, and steal your money. I've had it happen to me.

### **Amputations and Mutilations**

I won't do it. Dew-claws are important. They help to stabilize the carpus (the wrist) of the lead leg by touching the ground when a dog is in a gallop or canter. The dewclaw digs into the ground providing support to the limb when dogs turn. For this reason, and my resistance to amputate my puppy's digit, all their claws will remain.

Some Danes may have cropped ears (pointed ears that stand up) or natural, uncropped ears (foppy hound type ears). Ears cropped must be done at a very early age. Before making this decision, thoroughly check out whether you wish to have your puppy's ears cropped. This is

an expensive surgery done only for cosmetic purposes in this country. This surgery is both dangerous (puppies can bleed to death during the surgery), and is very painful for the puppy. This surgery is now ILLEGAL in Europe, and many Dane lovers feel it should be outlawed here as well. Be aware that your puppy will have to wear "forms" on his or her ears. You will have to care for the ears and listen to your puppy scream in pain as you clean and rewrap the ears that were cut for cosmetic reasons. For more information on cropping, please visit <http://www.outlawdanes.com/ears.html>.

If cropped ears is a look that you prefer, it is best to find another breeder since older Danes may not be cropped. I will not have a veterinarian mutilate the ears of my puppies.

## **Cost of Owning Great Dane**

**Food:** Danes eat a lot and require high-quality food. Males typically consume 7 - 10 cups of food daily and females 6 - 8 cups of foods such as, Royal Canin, Stella & Chewy freeze-dried raw diets. Adult meals must be served twice a day (morning and evening) rather than all at once to prevent overfilling which may cause bloat. Puppies under 4 months old should be fed three times a day while they are growing rapidly. Once they begin to ignore or eat very little of their noon meal, you can eliminate it and begin feeding twice a day.

**Veterinary Care** is more expensive for giant breeds due to the size which dictates the higher dosages of preventatives, medications, anesthesia for surgeries, and other quantities of veterinary supplies. If you are considering insurance to cover veterinary care, this cost is also elevated. Many people ask me which pet insurance is best. I have never purchased or used it for myself, but have worked in a veterinary hospital where clients needed extra paperwork in order to file their claims. I would recommend that you contact AKC for their insurance program.

**Boarding** a giant breed is typically more expensive since pricing is by size or weight and sometimes it is difficult to find an adequate sized crate or room to house your pet in some facilities.

It is important to factor the cost of owning and properly caring for a Great Dane before you add to your family.

These greater costs for a Great Dane may be considered much less in comparison to a high maintenance dog such as doodles, poodles, and other smaller breeds that require expensive routine grooming at a salon.

## **Great Dane Personality**

Great Danes are very strong dogs. It is advisable that all dogs be given a basic obedience class whether done at a canine obedience school for you and your puppy, or at home. I cannot recommend sending your pet off for weeks to be trained by a professional elsewhere. There are so many reports of starvation and abuse, that I no longer trust this process. The human is the one needing the knowledge to keep the pet trained anyway. Establishing your position as the leader will help create a bond between you and your dog. A basic obedience class should make it possible for you to take your Dane for a walk in the “heel position” and not the other way around! For training, the RCT approach works best for all dogs, especially Great Danes. You can find more information on Suzanne Clothier’s website. <https://suzanneclothier.com/>

Many people believe that because Danes are large, they are best kept outdoors. Nothing could be further from the truth. Danes do best when they are kept as indoor pets and when the family is the core of their existence. Danes are extremely people-oriented and need to be a part of the family. Before acquiring a Dane, please be sure you have sufficient time to spend with him or her. Great Danes crave and need human companionship otherwise they may experience separation anxiety. The time requirement is far more crucial than the amount of space you have. They do not require large spaces. Their favorite place will be by your side and will curl in a ball to be there or spread out over your bed if allowed.

Most Danes are friendly and gentle with people unless they are poorly bred and mistreated causing a change in their temperament. They are good with children (even babies and toddlers) and a variety of other animals. Intuitive and able to sense emotions, they make wonderful emotional support and medical alert dogs. I have several working in these capacities.

They are a vocal breed, and will bark loudly when strangers appear. Thus, they are desirable as a watch dog. While Danes have a deep bark, they will usually be friendly to people welcomed by their family. They will, however, be watchful over their family and alert you if they sense danger.

Adult Great Danes are rather laid back and tend to be couch potatoes. They require minimal exercise, despite their large size. A good romp in a fenced yard or a nice walk twice a day is sufficient exercise for the adult Dane. They do not require a very large home or very large amounts of property to roam. If you have room for a couch, you have room for a Great Dane. A small-to-medium sized fenced yard is sufficient. Puppies, in contrast, are usually significantly more active and require a great deal more exercise.

## **Grooming**

Danes have very short hair and need minimal grooming. A good brushing once or twice a month in the winter months is sufficient for most Danes, while you may need to give them a good brushing weekly during the warmer months when they shed more. A vigorous brushing should take no more than 15 minutes. Danes do not require frequent baths. If kept as a house pet, your Dane should require bathing no more than once a month. You may have to wipe muddy paws in between baths or brush with a pleasant smelling conditioning spray. I enjoy using professional quality iGroom products in my salon.

Nails are often neglected due to dogs dislike of trimming. Overgrown nails on any breed causes the toes to shift to the side when the nails touch the floor instead of the paw pads. Misaligned toes cause misaligned metacarpals/tarsals, carpals/tarsals, and upper joints. One thing leads to another. When the bones are misaligned, the ligaments and tendons are as well. Jumping and running as all dogs do can cause a tear and the need of a very expensive surgical procedure with the aftercare lasting for several months. So let's talk about nail maintenance. While your puppy has been growing at MacPac Danes, their paws are frequently handled and a Dremel with a diamond bit nail grinder has been used weekly to bi-weekly after a bath, to file the tips of their nails. I introduce this early to have your puppy become familiar with grooming and keep their mom from suffering from numerous scratches while they nurse. I do not clip their nails in my salon. I have not found clippers that do not cause unnecessary painful pressure on the nail quick while trimming thick adult nails. Most people are fearful of clipping the quick causing bleeding. Therefore nail filing is best for Danes. I use a large professional Dremel with Groomer's Best small Diamond nail bit for puppies and the large size for adult nails. This set is expensive, but have a lifetime guarantee. If you are uncomfortable or unable to complete the task, a quick trip to a groomer or your veterinary office once a month will keep your pet's nails a good and healthy length at a reasonable cost.

Teeth should be kept clean by brushing, enzymatic wipes, flushes, or chews that help to remove tartar and keep plaque from forming. If plaque is allowed to build up, a professional dental cleaning is expensive and requires that your Dane be intubated and anesthetized for the procedure. Any such procedure comes with a risk of injury or even death. Allowing plaque and tartar to remain on the teeth is dangerous with the dog breathing in bacteria with each breath. This can lead to heart and lung diseases.

## **Great Dane Health**

Like all pure-bred dogs, Danes are susceptible to a variety of health problems. For this reason, MacPac Danes uses Embark Genetic testing for Breeders and participates in the continuing studies to pinpoint specific genes responsible for the common issues. This helps us to better the breed and hopefully eliminate or greatly reduce the potential for these

diseases. In my breeding history, I am aware of only a few issues in all of my adults and their offspring.

1. Captain Morgan was my alpha male harlequin breeding dog who would become extremely stressed while a female was coming into heat. When a female was allowed to rest between litters and kept separated from all other breeding males & females, Morgan would stop eating, pace the fences, bark, and whine until his voice was completely hoarse. This would go on for weeks. This lack of eating and stress caused him to bloat. He was taken to an emergency hospital and surgery had to be performed due to his stomach twisting during transport. His recovery was going well until the vet tech reported crackles in his lungs developing two days later. He died due to “pneumonia” or what is my suspicion, improper medical care. I believe that Morgan’s IV fluid rate was never adjusted back to a maintenance rate from the original dehydration/surgical rate and he drowned from excess fluid build up in his lungs. No other MacPac Dane has had a problem with bloat or torsion. This was the result of complications in breeding and the added problems within a breeding program. All breeding dogs are at a much greater risk of problems. That is why it is important to spay and neuter your pets and leave the hard and emotionally devastating work to professional breeders. All male breeding dogs regardless of breed are at a higher risk for prostate cancer due to being intact. All breeding females regardless of breed are at a higher risk for cancers: mammary, lymphoma, and osteosarcoma. I anticipate this at some point with my hard-working girls and it breaks my heart to think. That is why I retire them earlier than most breeders.
2. I have had one harlequin head piebald to develop an allergy to something environmental at the new owners home within the first 6-months of ownership. After determining the cause and addressing the issue, this pup is doing well. With his coat being mostly white, it could be a part of that sensitivity issue mentioned by The Great Dane Lady, Linda Ardnt, or a seasonal allergy due to what was growing in the environment. A single seasonal Cytopoint injection is the best way to eliminate the effects of seasonal allergies. Remember to reintroduce the natural good bacteria in the gut after any medications, preventatives, or vaccinations. I use Purina Forti-Flora and have sent a couple of packets home with your pup to use after their 9-weeks vaccines.

### **Potential Health Issues**

1. Bloat (or gastric torsion), is a life-threatening condition in which air gets trapped in the stomach and/or intestines and the stomach or intestines can turn on its axis cutting off the blood flow to the organs. Symptoms include a swollen abdomen, retching without being able to throw up, restlessness, excessive salivation, and a painful or firm abdomen. If you see any of these symptoms in your Dane, get to a vet immediately. A costly surgical

procedure, called a gastroplexy, may prevent torsion in 99 percent of cases, however it does not prevent bloat which can still occur if not properly fed (smaller more frequent meals as mentioned above). Stress or too much vigorous exercise after eating can also cause bloat.

2. Cardiomyopathy is a form of heart disease. More common in older Danes, cardiomyopathy can be helped a great deal with medication. This is a life-threatening disease, particularly if left untreated or undiagnosed. Symptoms include exercise intolerance.

3. Osteosarcoma, or bone cancer, is another life-threatening disease. Almost all dogs who develop bone cancer will die within a year. Symptoms include limping and a painful lump felt on a bone, usually a leg. Treatment includes radiation and possibly chemotherapy as well as amputation. In addition, there is exciting new research using the drug Fosamex that shows promising results. You may wish to visit the Irish Wolfhound Club of America's Osteosarcoma Study page to learn more [www.iwclubofamerica.org/index.html](http://www.iwclubofamerica.org/index.html). While this study deals with Irish Wolfhounds, the results will apply to Danes as well.

4. Hypothyroidism seems to affect females more than males. In this disorder, the thyroid does not secrete enough hormone. The symptoms include dull coat, weight gain, and dry, flaky skin. This disease is easily treated with an inexpensive medication and the dog can live a long, normal life.

5. Wobbler's Syndrome and Von Willebrand's Disease (VWD) are both fairly rare. Wobbler's is a lesion in the neck which affects the dog's ability to walk and the dog seems "wobbly" (hence its name). Wobbler's can be treated surgically, although surgery is expensive and often does not help. Acupuncture can help make the dog more comfortable and prolong his or her life. In addition, some exciting new alternative treatments, such as gold bead implantation are on the horizon.

6. VWD is a rare blood disorder that sometimes affects Danes and is much like Hemophilia in humans. As with Hemophilia, VWD can be controlled but may require big changes in the dog's normal routines. In addition, blood transfusions may be necessary.

7. Hip Dysplasia is a disease common in many large and giant breed dogs. To oversimplify, it occurs when the hip joint doesn't fit well in the socket. Symptoms include painful hips and limping. Today, with medication and surgery, dogs with hip dysplasia can be helped and dysplastic dogs are no longer routinely put to sleep.

8. Epilepsy (seizure disorder) can occur in Danes. This disease is characterized by grand mal or petit mal seizures. The grand mal seizures can be quite frightening to observe, although they usually are not life-threatening they just look that way!. petit mal seizures may look only like the dog "spaces" or "blanks" out. Seizures can also be caused by toxins,

electric shock, as well as damage to the kidney and/or liver. If your dog has a seizure, take him or her to the vet immediately to determine its cause. If your dog has a seizure make sure that if you have other dogs, get them away from the dog having the seizure. Also make sure you stay well clear of the dog's head and mouth or you be accidentally bitten. Be very careful as he/she comes out of the seizure until you know your dog's reaction. Some dogs can become aggressive when coming out of a seizure. The dog does NOT recognize you or his/her surroundings. They are frightened and confused and may bite in fear. So be careful about approaching your dog until you are certain of her/his reaction to you. Once the dog has "come out of" the seizure, her or his personality will return to normal.

The Irish Wolfhound Club of America has a great deal of information on seizure disorder. [https:// www.iwclubofamerica.org/index.html](https://www.iwclubofamerica.org/index.html). Most of this information can be applied to Danes.

## **Disadvantages of Great Dane Ownership**

Before acquiring a Great Dane, you need to be aware of the possible disadvantages of owning one.

First is the issue of cost as mentioned previously, Danes are more expensive to feed and care for than smaller dogs.

Second, because Danes are so tall, they can easily "counter surf" and steal anything left out on your kitchen counters. Danes have been known to steal everything from steak to cookies to entire loaves of bread. This also means that Danes can reach higher in closets to steal your good shoes, and higher in areas where they may reach toxic substances you may think you have placed safely out of reach.

Third, because Danes are tall and tend to wag their happy tail often and furiously, they can easily clear a coffee table of trinkets. Anything that can be broken or spilled should be kept well above "tail level". Danes sometimes hit their tail on walls or other hard, unyielding objects and split their tail open. It can bleed profusely. They will usually continue wagging the tail, spraying blood everywhere and making your home look like something from a horror film. This doesn't happen often, but can and does happen on occasion.

If you do not take your Dane to a basic obedience class, he or she may pull and tug on a leash. These dogs are very strong and can end up taking you for a walk. Contrary to the old wives' tale "You can't teach an old dog new tricks", dogs of any breed can learn at any age. Often Great Danes end up at a rescue because the owner "can't control" the dog. This is something that a good basic obedience training can cure in a hurry.

Danes are extremely sensitive and will react negatively to harsh corrections. So any class or instructor should be familiar with Danes and focus on positive reinforcement with minimal use of harsh corrections and harsh vocal commands. Danes have a shorter life span than do many other breeds. In general, larger breeds die at a younger age than do smaller breeds. The average life span of a Dane ranges from 8 to 10 years, though some may live to be 12 or older.

If you decide a puppy is right for you, please resist buying from a puppy mill or an inexperienced person. Resist the urge to check the local newspaper and get a puppy "out of the paper". Resist the urge to buy a puppy because you feel sorry for him or her. You are actually only encouraging these people to breed more puppies and continue adding to the already overwhelming problem we already have. Be sure you ask questions about the incidence of genetic diseases in the line. You must be responsible in studying about the breed and know what genetic problems you may encounter in a puppy you purchase.

Also look at the parent's looks and behavior—that's what you'll have in a couple of years. If you can't live with that, don't buy a puppy. Also make sure the breeder is responsible enough to take the puppy back if you cannot keep the puppy at any time. Do not add to the burden of shelters and rescue groups by buying from breeders who will not take their puppies back. I realize you intend to keep the dog, but things happen—children develop allergies, you lose your job, etc, and you may not always be able to keep the dog as you intended. Bad breeders will not be there for you if you have problems.

Don't be surprised if the breeder is as choosy about you as you are about them. They should be. If they aren't, they likely don't care where the puppy goes. Beware and go elsewhere.