



The Italian Greyhound, Is It Right For You?

In the past few years the popularity of adopting retired racing greyhounds has raised interest in the IG among those who desire a smaller pet. The big greyhound is a relative and the IG's streamlined form is similar. Both are in the sight hound family and built for speed; but the resemblance stops at much more than the size difference. Some people wanting the look of a greyhound see the little IG as a scaled down version of the highly advertised retired racing "couch potato". Living with from one to 18 IGs at a time for the past nearly 50 years, I know that isn't the case.

Like most small dogs, the IG is a bit more difficult to housetrain than larger breeds. His lack of protection from the elements, extremely short coat and minimal fat layer, makes him dislike cold, wet or wind, complicating matters. Persuading him to ask you to let him out to do his business can be frustrating. An easier method is to provide means for him to relieve himself without having to ask and wait. A doggie door, potty pads or a litter box work more easily. Since the IG is small and houses are large (at least in HIS perception) he may behave indoors in the same way he does outside. He will run, leap and scamper—because he can. He will be as anxious to play active games indoors as he is outside, flying from one piece of furniture to another and onto tables and countertops. He can be trained to tone it down; but his instinct is to enjoy a much higher activity level indoors than most people would believe. He loves to snuggle and will enjoy quiet time with his humans, but this will usually happen only after his need for physical action has been satisfied.

Outdoors the IG loves to run and romp and often to chase small animals. He does not understand that he is little, so he must be protected from the dangers that can befall a creature of his size. These include unruly larger dogs, wildlife, risk of running into busy streets while chasing real or imagined prey and especially the chance of becoming lost while engrossed in the chase. He should not be allowed to run in unfenced areas. Although not as fragile as he looks, his long, slender legs make him more susceptible to fractures than most other breeds, which is something to keep in mind around small children and/or larger dogs.

The IG is a very loving, devoted companion but can be very stubborn regardless of his diminutive size. His mindset is that of a true sight hound. He is a very special little creature, amusing, imaginative, charming, trainable if positive methods are used, and demanding of interaction and affection almost to the point of neediness. He requires relatively little grooming but regular dental attention is necessary. What time is not spent brushing and trimming must be used for play, training, socialization and sharing love with this charismatic breed. Acquiring your IG from a responsible, knowledgeable and supportive breeder is a vital first step.