

National Mutt Day: A Pawsitively Special Celebration

Discover the heartwarming story behind National Mutt Day and how it aims to spotlight the unique charm of mixed breed dogs. Join the celebration and explore the multitude of ways to honor your special mutt.

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- December 2 is National Mutt Day, a full 24 hours devoted to paying homage to these unique creatures
- Started in 2005 by animal welfare advocate Colleen Paige, National Mutt Day is intended to 'shine a light on the problem of abandoning mixed breed dogs'
- National Mutt Day is also celebrated a second time each year, on July 31
- About 53% of dogs in U.S. household are mixed breeds, and mutts also make up the majority of dogs at animal shelters
- You can find a mutt to fit any fancy, from a cuddly lap dog to an athletic hiking buddy; after all, every mutt is unique

December 2 is National Mutt Day, a full 24 hours devoted to paying homage to these unique creatures. Started in 2005 by animal welfare advocate Colleen Paige, National Mutt Day is intended to 'shine a light on the problem of abandoning mixed breed dogs.' Mutts are so special that they deserve more than just one day to shine, which is why National Mutt Day is also celebrated a second time each year, on July 31.¹

Also known as National Mixed Breed Dog Day, there are many ways to celebrate your mutt on this special day, from going for an extra-long walk after dinner to surprising her with a new toy to enjoy. If a mixed breed pup has stolen your heart, you're not alone — about 53% of dogs in U.S. household are mixed breeds.²

Most Dogs in Shelters Are Mutts

Mixed breed dogs are a special crew. They come in all shapes and sizes, and usually have unknown ancestry. While one study found that mixed breed dogs are more trainable than purebred dogs, it also found mutts to be less calm and more likely to show problematic behavior.³

However, this could simply be due to the fact that the majority of dogs in animal shelters are mixed-breeds, which also tend to be older when they're adopted. This stressful time spent in a shelter, and possibly living on the streets before that, may alter their behavior or personality until a devoted owner can help to sort things out. According to the study, published in PLOS One:⁴

"Mixed-breeds are highly overrepresented in shelters (e.g. 80%) and among stray dogs relinquished to shelters (75.2%), partly because puppies from unintended litters relatively frequently end up in a shelter or on the street. However, unintended litters rarely occur between dogs from the same breed.

Thus mixed-breeds, which were adopted at an older age likely originated from shelters or from the street, where they lived in a completely different environment than dogs raised by their owners. The results of numerous studies provide strong evidence of a link between exposure to stressors associated with shelter life (like social and spatial restrictions), and the prevalence of undesirable behaviors in later life."

But don't let this turn you away from adopting a mutt from your local animal shelter. Many mixed breed dogs are well-behaved with wonderful temperaments — and extra unconditional love to share when you give them a chance.

There's a Mixed Breed Dog for Everyone

Mutts have a mix of attributes, and unmatched cuteness. After all, every mutt is unique. And while it's not a good idea to **choose your dog based on looks alone**, if you're set on finding a small dog or a large one, or a dog with a certain coat color, age, gender or breed mix, you'll find it all at your local shelter.

Further, because mixed breed dogs have much higher genetic variation than purebred dogs, they're often assumed to be healthier and more fit, with less susceptibility to disease — a phenomenon known as hybrid vigor. Not only may mixed breed dogs be less likely to have inherited genetic diseases, but they may live longer than purebreds.⁵

You can find a mutt to fit any fancy, from a cuddly lap dog to an athletic hiking buddy. And if you're interested in competitions, know that mutts can compete, too, in agility competitions, United Kennel Club (UKC) events, dock jumping and a wide range of other canine-centered activities.

Mutts are also just as capable of purebred pups to train as service dogs — and the PLOS One study suggested they may be even more trainable.⁶ And because many people adopt mutts when they're a little older, most are already housetrained when you bring them home. Mixed breed pups are, of course, every bit as valuable as purebred dogs — but they cost far less upfront. Adoption fees don't typically go over a couple of hundred dollars, while a purebred dog can easily cost thousands.

Wondering What Breeds Make Up Your Mutt?

If you have a mixed-breed dog, it's fun to speculate about their lineage. Is their drive to dig up your flowerbeds due to a terrier connection? Does she howl because she's part beagle or husky? While you may be tempted to guess your dog's breed based on looks alone, this often doesn't tell the whole story about the makeup of your pooch's DNA.

If you're curious about your mutt's lineage, dog DNA tests can provide some clarity — as well as important health information. Certain diseases, such as hip dysplasia, mitral valve disease and cranial cruciate ligament rupture, are more common in certain breeds. Being aware of genetic diseases that affect your dog can help you make proactive choices that may protect their health long-term.

There are a number of dog DNA tests on the market, but be aware that they're not always accurate. If you're curious about your dog's genetic make-up, there's little harm in trying out a canine DNA test, but investigate the company you choose to buy from and realize there's always some margin for error. It may give you some insight into your dog — or it could be way off base.

Get Out and Celebrate Your Mutt

If you're lucky enough to share your life with a mutt, today's a special day to take some time out for your special pup. Along with giving your dog what she wants most — to spend more time with you — you can get involved by donating your time or resources to animal shelters in your area. Every little bit helps, and the many mixed breed dogs waiting for homes deserve all the love they can get.

Another way to help out? If you have the resources and the inclination, consider opening your home to a mixed breed dog at a shelter. You'll be saving one mutt's life and, in return, experience the joy and companionship of a mixed breed pup in yours.

Sources and References

¹ [National Today, National Mutt Day](#)

² [DVM 360 March 5, 2017](#)

^{3,4,5,6} [PLOS One February 21, 2017](#)
