

A Dog Is a Man's—No... the Runt Can Be a Man's Best Friend

Who doesn't want an adorable furry best friend? Fifty seven percent of households around the world own pets, and of that, 33% of them own dogs (Dale). Clearly, dogs are the favored pet to have, and who can blame them? Dogs are man's best friend for a reason. They are loyal, smart, loving and fun. And just as much as a human loves their dog, the dog loves their human, too. So how do you decide which furball gets to go home with you? Is it the one with the pretty blue eyes? Or the one with an energetic spirit? Or what about the one that has a big smile and wagging tail? Most people aren't thinking, *let's get the tiny dog that's labeled the runt of the litter*. But why not? What's wrong with getting the *runt* of the litter? The runt of a dog litter can be the best dog to adopt.

There are many reasons that the runt of the litter can be the best choice. They can be just as loyal as any other dog and even be more cuddly and sweeter than others. Many people believe that the runt of the litter will be more aggressive than the other puppies. However, this is not true. The runt, in fact, can be more submissive and a nicer dog to have. Runts are often not the alphas, which is not a bad thing. Not wanting to be the alpha creates a strong bond with their owner, who, in their eyes, is the alpha. This bond can mean they are more loyal to their alpha than other dogs who view themselves as the alpha. Sixty four percent of households stated that their runt was more submissive which created a better bond and pet (Aaron).

Although runts can be smaller and less capable than the other puppies, not all the myths about them being bad or not as good as the other puppies are accurate. Runt puppies can grow just as well alongside other puppies. They may start out small, but it doesn't mean they will always stay that way. Another question that is commonly asked is if the runt of the litter is harder

to train. The answer is no, runts can be trained just as well as any other puppy (Farricell). Runts may start out not as strong, but they can be just as capable as any of their litter mates.

Though rewarding, adopting the runt of the litter can provide its own challenges. While adopting this companion can provide both the physical benefits of owning a pet along with the mental positivity scientifically associated with owning an animal, runts are proven to display health problems and are more often a burden than their siblings. It is important to remember that accompanying runts are often general defects, parasites, severe weight issues, and a considerably higher risk of death at an early age (Evans). However, it is these imperfections and severities that demand human intervention. Adopting a runt is not simply adopting a pet, it is taking in the life of a possibly troubled animal. Though they may be a handful at times, taking care of the runt can be extremely rewarding in that one is both providing themselves with a bonded companion as well as potentially saving the life of a “best friend.” The co-dependence of dogs and humans is a legitimate thing, as we tend to rely on our pets almost as much as they rely on us. We provide them with food, water, and shelter, while they return the favor with support, companionship, and love. These qualities, may just be enhanced by adopting the runt, as one has done more for it than simply provide it with care taking. Thus, the runt of the litter, while at a disadvantage, can very easily have the biggest heart of them all.

The runt of the litter, though small, can be mighty. The world's tallest dog was a runt! Freddy was the last puppy along with his sister to be adopted, because he was the runt. Freddy the Great Dane shows that the runt of the litter can be just as rewarding as any other dog (Tietjen).

The runt of the litter may be small in size, and may have the possibility of health problems, but it has the biggest heart. From personal experience, the runt of a litter of six

puppies, born on June 7th, 2020 changed my world. My pup has the biggest heart in his little ten-pound body. He is the most loyal and brave, top-of-his-agility-class, little Aussie, and he is my best friend. The runt of the litter can surprise you; you never know what you could get or what could happen, but what you do know is that it will be great. Don't let the myths get to your head. Many runts are never chosen because of the label put on them. In some situations, these dogs do not have happy endings. Next time you're looking at puppies, don't pass over the little guy or girl. You never know — they could be your best friend.

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