



Watchdog, bunny-chaser,
fond friend:
Introducing the
original, individual
French Bulldog.

BY
CHERIE
LANGLOIS

The Fr conne

Every afternoon, a dog keeps solemn watch at the window of Jan Grebe's home in Roeland Park, Kan., ears perked as she listens intently for the approaching enemy. The rumble of a truck, the flash of a uniform — be it postal worker, UPS man, or FedEx driver — and this muscular canine leaps into action as fierce household protector. Is it a German Shepherd Dog, a Rottweiler, a Doberman Pinscher? No, it's 4-year-old Carma, French Bulldog and super-watchdog.

"Carma only weighs 20 pounds, but she sounds like a big, vicious beast and sets up such a ferocious din it would scare anybody away," laughs Grebe, president of the French Bull Dog Club of America. "It's actually kind of good, because she's my alarm system. Then she carries on like a crazy thing until they leave and her job's done."

Seems pretty tough for a companion breed designed to sit on the laps of English lace makers during the late 1800s, don't you think? Except Carma has a little secret: If those delivery folks actually entered the house instead of fleeing, Grebe says they would find themselves not attacked, but severely licked around the ankles in happy welcome. Now that's a Frenchie.

From flea magnet to funny friend

It's true: "The French Bulldog originated as a lap warmer and flea magnet," says Grebe, who has lived with Frenchies for 30 years. Huh? "If you had one on your lap, its higher body temperature would attract the fleas away from you," she clarifies. After the industrial revolution prompted English lace makers to emigrate to France, packing their miniaturized Bulldogs with them, these people-oriented flea lures became favorites of Parisian street walkers.

"You had these ladies of the evening with these cute, friendly dogs that were wonderful conversation starters, didn't require much exercise, and would sit quietly while their owners entertained," says Grebe, adding that it didn't take long before American tourists fell for the compact *chiens* and transported them home.

Sad but interesting factoid: A brindle Frenchie named Gamin de Pycombe went down with the Titanic.

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Sometimes described as “a clown in the cloak of a philosopher,” the Frenchie’s serious expression masks a mischievous and comical nature, says Allen Weinberg, a Beverly Hills, Calif., breeder of champion French Bulldogs since 2003.

“Frenchies enjoy a good time, and though notoriously stubborn, they’re adaptable and adept at knowing when to play or when it’s time to just sit on the couch watching television.”

Grebe says Frenchies love to be the center of attention. “Usually they’re just sweet as pie, and very seldom will you find a Frenchie that acts standoffish,” she says. “But they’re also fairly laid-back and quiet — not given to constantly looking for prey or digging out of the yard.”

Both Grebe and Weinberg note that Frenchie males in general tend to have clingier, more devoted dispositions than females. But they also observe that Frenchies of either sex show plenty of individual variation in personality. Pat Kosinar, secretary of the FBDCA and a longtime owner who volunteers



French Bulldog

Country of origin: France.

Original use: Companion and lap dog.

Group: Non-sporting (AKC); Companion Dog (UKC).

Average life span: 10 to 12 years.

Color: Brindle, fawn, white, and brindle and white. All colors acceptable except solid black, mouse, liver, black and tan, and black and white.

Coat: Short, smooth, and moderately fine single coat.

Grooming: Run your hands over the coat daily to keep it glossy; brush, cleanse ears, and clean facial skin folds once a week; trim nails about every two weeks; brush teeth at least weekly; bathe when dirty.

Height/weight: About 22 pounds to an upper limit of 28 pounds. No height standard.

Personality: Variable, but generally laid-back, affectionate, adaptable, mischievous, comical, and stubborn.

Trainability: Moderate.

Activity level: Varies, low to moderate.

Known health problems: Spinal conditions such as premature disc degeneration or abnormal vertebrae; brachycephalic syndrome (including elongated soft palate and cleft palate), luxating patellas (slipping kneecaps), allergies, difficulties with anesthesia.

Good with children? Varies, but generally yes, with proper early socialization and supervision.

Good with other pets? Variable, but typically good with other dogs and cats when socialized early and properly introduced. Males may show aggression toward other males. Exercise caution with small pets as some Frenchies possess a high prey drive.

National breed club: French Bull Dog Club of America, Pat Kosinar, secretary; pkosinar@sunflower.com; www.frenchbulldogclub.org

Rescue: French Bulldog Rescue Network, www.frenchbulldogrescue.org

More info: DogChannel.com/frenchbulldog



in Frenchie rescue, agrees: "Some are more active and energetic than others. We have one in foster care right now whose foster mom says he's exhausting her other Frenchies. They want to relax by the TV, and he wants to play all of the time."

As for her own Frenchies, affectionate Hugo, 8, has zero prey drive, likes children and snuggling beneath the covers with Kosinar, and objects to going outside when the weather gets nippy. He actually makes her carry him outdoors.

On the other paw, 12-year-old Nicki can't tolerate kids, prefers to sleep on her own side of the bed with Lila, 4, and relishes rabbit-chasing woodland walks. And what about treat-motivated Lila, also an avid bunny hunter? "She's just a big, able, active Frenchie who enjoys doing rally with me — until she decides she wants to do something else!" Kosinar says.

Personality differences aside, sociable Frenchies thrive on human companionship, Weinberg stresses. For this reason, he prefers to place puppies in situations where people either work from home, take their dogs on the job, or have non-traditional schedules. "A working family with two 9-to-5'ers doesn't make the best environment for a Frenchie," he says. "Even a daily visit from a dog walker won't be enough to keep one happy."

Frenchie health

An increasingly common product of puppy mills and inexperienced backyard breeders, Frenchies have zoomed up in popularity in recent years, Grebe reports. Sadly, Kosinar says this has led to more unfortunate Frenchies landing in rescue each year for reasons ranging from behavioral issues to the owner's inability to meet medical costs.

These fairly sedentary, shorthaired dogs may seem like easy pets because of their minimal exercise and grooming needs. But Grebe likens starting canine ownership with a Frenchie to a newbie gardener beginning with delicate orchids, mainly due to health problems — and subsequent veterinary expenses — that can accompany this breed's dwarf build and flattened face. "Even the best-bred Frenchie in the world can have

ASK THE BREEDER

- **What are the objectives of your breeding program?** A reputable breeder will have the intention of improving this breed's health, temperament, or physical conformation in some way, says FBDCA secretary Pat Kosinar.
- **Do you have pups available right now?** Be wary of an affirmative answer, says breeder Allen Weinberg, as the demand for quality, well-bred Frenchies far exceeds the supply.
- **Can you give me advice on how to protect my Frenchie's back and prevent breathing problems?**
- **Has this puppy been temperament tested and socialized with children and other canines?**

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health problems that start at \$3,000 to treat — and the sky's the limit," Kosinar warns. "But acquiring a carelessly bred Frenchie will ensure you need an even heftier bank account!"

Frenchie health concerns center around breathing and back issues, Weinberg says. "They're highly susceptible to heat and cold, and they shouldn't go jogging, hik-

ing, or do anything else that requires extreme physical exertion. Some Frenchies do excel in agility and other competitive sports, but they're the exception, not the rule. These dogs also shouldn't jump on or off furniture, and jumping down stairs can be a concern due to their weight distribution and the fact that they often have degenerative disc disease."

With Frenchies Carma and Doochie, Grebe takes care to stroll them outdoors during cooler weather and stick to indoor, air-conditioned play when temperatures ratchet up. "We have doggie doors to the fenced backyard so they can come in when it's too warm," she says. "I've known people who put their Frenchies outside on a hot day, forgot to let them back in, and their pets died." Another danger to consider: pools, ponds, etc. pose a drowning hazard to these muscular, front-heavy dogs with little stamina.

If you have the time and financial resources to meet this breed's needs — and don't mind rooming with a dog likely to snore — then a Frenchie might be the right canine fit. Whether you reside in a small apartment or crave a close companion to enrich your retirement years, Grebe says, "Frenchies make very good dogs for a lot of people who just want a dog to love." **DF**

Cherie Langlois is a regular contributor to DOG FANCY who currently shares her Washington home with a Poodle-terrier mix, Daisy, and a Coonhound mix, Pippin.



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