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Doggie dumbo a myth says expert

There's no such thing as a dumb breed of dog and ending up with a lemon could simply indicate a bad fit, says a leading dog behaviour expert.

"No breed is dumb. Dogs are bred for different purpose and to generalise that some are dumber than others oversimplifies the issue," says Australian Veterinary Association animal behaviour expert, Dr Kersti Seksel.

"Lots of people talk about 'dumb' breeds, but this probably just means that you've chosen the wrong type of dog to meet your expectations," she said.

Dr Seksel says that breeds were originally developed to meet certain human needs such as herding or guarding and these traits may not suit our modern lifestyles.

"For example border collies herding and rounding up sheep in the country is a desirable trait but herding and rounding up the kids in the back yard may not be so desirable," said Dr Seksel.

"Unfortunately this is a growing issue, and these choices lead to thousands of dogs being surrendered to shelters every year," she said.

According to Dr Seksel intelligence is hard to define in humans and even harder in animals.

"For some the ability to learn quickly is regarded as intelligence, but it may also be regarded as a desire to please which is not what everyone wants from their pet," she said.

"It's true that experts talk about specific breeds as 'smarter' because of their obedient nature and their ability to obey commands. However this isn't the only form of intelligence that potential dog owners should consider.

"You may find that dogs that don't respond to some cues have other talents and display a more independent nature.

"For example, working dogs like collies are great problem solvers, and Huskies may display a more independent spirit which suits some owners but not others," she said.

Dr Seksel says that what really matters is the temperament of the individual animal and how he or she interacts with you and your family.

"What is most important if you are looking at different breeds of dogs is to pick one with characteristics that suit you," she said.

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The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the national professional association of veterinary surgeons in Australia. Founded in 1921, the AVA today represents 5000 members working in all areas of animal science, health and welfare.