

Top Ten Reasons NOT to Get a Toller

These are not little Golden Retrievers!

10. Shedding and Mess - Tollers do blow their coat seasonally, and they are dogs who like to swim and roll and wallow. They are not a dog for the fastidious or the allergic.

9. Watch Your Cat - Many Tollers do just fine in households with cats or other animals. They do have a strong prey drive, however. If you don't want your cat chased, this may not be the dog for you. The chasing will be all in fun, but it is likely to happen.

8. Don't Expect Me to Protect You - Tollers are generally wary of strangers, but if you want a dog to serve as protection, look elsewhere. While they are excellent natural watch dogs, and their barking may be more than enough to scare away a burglar, these dogs are not cut out to protect. They may not lead the burglar to your silver, wagging all the while like a Lab or Golden, but they also aren't likely to go for his leg.

7. The Scream - Many Tollers have a penetrating scream which they produce to indicate excitement and eagerness. To the uninitiated, this can sound like the dog is being fed into a wood chipper; it's high pitched, frantic and loud. Not all Tollers scream, but many do. If you are unable to teach quiet manners, or live in a neighbourhood where dog noise will get you in trouble, or just don't like dogs who make noise, this is not the breed for you. The scream is usually a reaction to an exciting stimulus (water, a toy, a ball) rather than a constant behaviour, but it can be annoying.

6. Drive - Tollers are a hunting breed, and are bred to be working dogs. They have a frantic drive to work, and will retrieve until your arm is ready to fall off. Tendonitis in Toller owners is not unusual. This dog is a retrieving fool who will climb trees to get to a bumper stuck there (we have pictures). This may sound cute now, but after the 400th throw, you may change your mind.

5. Not Be Everyone's Best Friend - If you are looking for a dog who wants to be the world's best friend, the Toller may not be for you. Tollers are gentle and kindly and many can be quite outgoing, but if you are looking for a dog with that Lab "I just met you and you're my best friend" attitude, the Toller may be wrong for your [family]. The Toller will greet strangers happily, but generally reserve true enthusiasm for their family and special people.

4. Did You Say No? - If you give a Toller an inch, they will take a mile and come back for another. Tollers are generally too smart to engage in out and out dominance battles. Instead they sense power vacuums, and exploit them. If you are unable to be firm (kind, but firm) about the rules of your household, and to enforce them consistently, you will find that the ruler of your house has four legs and is red. They don't have a mean bone in

their bodies, but they are opportunistic and stunningly smart. If you aren't in charge, they will be.

3. Just Do What I Tell You - Tollers love to work, but they are not always as easy to train as other breeds. They need to be challenged and engaged by their work, or they get bored and stop paying attention. They may also try things a dozen ways before they get around to doing what you're looking for. Patience, inventiveness and flexibility are the rules. If you want a dog who's going to learn by the book, or if you're at all unsure about your ability to train a dog who's a little different from the norm, the Toller may not be for you.

2. Smart, Smart, Smart - It cannot be stressed enough that this is a dog with brains to spare. Keeping all that intelligence focused and busy is a big challenge. These dogs **MUST** be given at least basic obedience training, and many Toller owners are active in several dog activities (hunting, agility, flyball, tracking, competitive obedience) just to keep their Tollers occupied. Even a Toller who is "just a pet" **MUST** have basic obedience training and the chance to use their brains (teach them to bring the paper, have them carry the mail in, teach them tricks) or they become downright obnoxious around the house.

1. VRoom - The Toller is an energetic dog, and needs plenty of exercise. While they aren't quite as hyperactive as some breeds, they do need lots of exercise, physical and mental. If you are looking for a dog who is content with nothing more than a pleasant walk in the evening, go elsewhere. Better behaviour through exhaustion is the rule for living with a Toller. If you don't have time to give this breed at least an hour of exercise a day, every day, with plenty of swimming and fetching, look elsewhere. A Toller with excess energy will find another outlet for his drive, and the results are seldom pleasant.

If you can't keep this dog busy, don't get this dog. More than many breeds, a Toller is a mental and physical commitment. They are not the dog for everyone, and while we love them dearly, we don't want to see them in pounds and shelters. Keep this in mind as you consider choosing a "Little Red Retrieving Machine".