



Mastiff Moment #1: Size Does Matter

We walk down the street and people take a step back when they see him coming. Parents pull their kids away from him with very worried looks on their faces. The word “whoa” has unexpectedly escaped people’s lips. Muscle-bund men have said, “What a cool dog,” even before meeting him. The kids in the *Sandlot* were terrified of The Beast. Thor has scared away real estate agents interested in selling our not-on-the-market property. The propane delivery guy used to walk wide circles around him. Mastiffs were bred to be guard dogs. They are huge and imposing and can be rather scary-looking to the untrained observer. You see, size really does matter.

Let’s consider this size issue for a mastiff moment. There are no doggie doors big enough so the human door is his doggie door. This means we get the honor of personally letting him in and out of the house. He is very polite about it though. He waits patiently by the door to be let out and uses only one long, creepy scratch down the door to be let back in. Every time I hear the scratch a shiver goes up my spine and I expect to hear Jack Nicholson’s voice. Because he is a guard dog, he feels he must guard, that he must check out the safety of his kingdom more than ten times a day. Letting the dog out is part of my current, daily exercise routine; ten or more reps of up, walk, open, walk, and back down.

There are really no dog kennels big enough. I think there are two rules of thumb in determining the proper kennel size for your dog. The first is whether your dog can stand up and his back, or is it his head, does not touch the top. The second is whether your dog can turn a full circle in the kennel. Well, Thor was about nine months old when he stopped fitting in an extra-large kennel. He is such a good dog that kenneling is not really necessary. He will probably never travel on a plane and the vet just puts out in the back yard until I can come pick him.

There is no x-ray machine big enough. Thor hurt his shoulder when he was about a year and a half old. I took him into the v-e-t. We tried to get an x-ray of his shoulder using the same machine meant for Chihuahuas. Eventually, the vet took him over the large animal side of the building. You know, the side meant for horses and llamas. He got the x-ray and our small horse recovered from a sprained shoulder after a few weeks.

There is just about no car big enough to transport him. He out grew the backseat of our Toyota by the time he was a year old. As long as nobody else sits in the back, he will fit on the backseat of our Ford truck. Our truck was paid off and aging, aging well, but nonetheless aging. So we decided we needed to look at buying another car. For several weekends, we shopped around at a variety of car lots considering gas mileages, monthly payments, and resale value. After narrowing it down to two different Subaru, we had to consider the size factor in our final decision. When we opened the back door to our truck and Thor jumped out on the asphalt of the car lot, I thought our salesman’s eyes were going to popped out of his head like a cartoon character. After blinking a few times and regaining his composure, the salesman opened the back hatch of Subaru #1 and Thor jumped in. Slowly, we closed the hatch. Thor’s face smooshed against the window and slobber dripped down the glass; too small to say the least. Subaru #2 worked out much better and the salesmen can now tell people “even a Mastiff fits in the back of this baby.”

Regardless of his impressive and sometimes intimidating size, Thor is one hundred and eighty pounds of pure love. And just think he was the runt of his litter. Mastiffs can get as big as two hundred and twenty pounds. We joke that he needs to have a body to match the size of his heart. He loves his people VERY much, and gets very upset when he does not get enough love back. When a hundred and eighty pounds wants love, he gets love and lots of it, trust me. He sticks his slobbery head between our legs and rubs his face all over us; thus marking his territory with slobber that acts like glue. He helps us put on our shoes by lying on our feet; thus preventing us from ever leaving him. He sits on my head in the morning sometimes with an accompanying dog fart; thus leaving me no choice but to pet him and also reminding me to feed him. And yes, he is big enough to just sit on the bed without jumping. He just plops his big old butt down on the edge just like a human would.

Thor was named after the Norse god of thunder because as a puppy he would run down our hallway and it sounded like thunder. He is definitely a supernatural force to be reckoned with. But now, the propane delivery guy carries treats, no longer walks wide circles, and has discovered that size does matter in the best ways possible.

