



ENTLEBUCHER MOUNTAIN DOGS

The stuff you won't learn in a dog book



Introduction

Hi, I'm Linda and I'm owned by an Entlebucher Mountain Dog called Alfie. For the last six years I've been blogging about his life and adventures over at www.AlfiesBlog.com.

Readers of my blog often email me and ask what it's really like to have one of these tricoloured little mountain dogs, and they want to know if it's the right dog for them, or if what their Entle is doing is normal. I'm by no means an expert on this breed, but I feel passionate about sharing what I've learned so far.

My answer to the first question is usually 'no', and when you read this e-book you'll learn why this wonderful and amazing breed is not the right fit for everyone. For the

right person however, they make the best companion you could ever ask for. (As for the question if their Entle is normal? Who knows - these dogs are all clowning around so it's hard to tell!)

If you're new to the breed you really need to meet several dogs, see them run after a ball, hear them play growl in a tug-o-war and get a feel for the incredible intensity, passion and focus that they place on anything they try their paw at. But until you get a chance to meet one - here's everything I've learned about the breed so far (and that you won't find in any dog book!)

Here's to waggy tails!

Linda

PS. Although this e-book can be printed, it contains many links to videos and further resources that can only be accessed through the electronic PDF version of the book.

This e-book is Creative Commons Licensed. *If you find it useful, please do share with anyone else who might be interested in this topic. You can email it to a friend or use excerpts on your site, as long as you cite the source - Linda Liebrand from www.AlfiesBlog.com and don't sell the content.*

[Creative Commons License. Attribution. Non-commercial.](http://www.AlfiesBlog.com) Linda Liebrand 2017

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Table of Contents	4
The Entlebucher's Behaviour and Personality – Our Experience	5
Brief Breed Overview	6
Leaping, romping and rough housing	7
The Entlebucher is a small dog with a big voice	8
Play growling	9
Entlebucher Mountain Dogs are a bit like small Labradors, Right?	10
What's the Difference between a Labrador and An Entlebucher Mtn Dog?	11
Puppyhood	13
Strong Bond & Separation Anxiety	14
Stranger Danger	14
Social Entlebuchers	15
How Much Exercise Does An Entlebucher Really Need?	16
Exercise and Mental Stimulation – Equally Important	17
Entles need a job	18
Entlebuchers – just how intelligent are they? Hint: Train them or be trained!	21
Intelligence & Training	21
Sense of Self	22
A thinking Dog	23
Train them or Be Trained	24
Attention & Focus	26
What's next?	27
Further Entlebucher Resources	28
Entlebucher Mountain Dogs in the UK	28
Entlebucher Mountain Dogs in the US	28
Entlebuchers in the rest of the world and on the internet	28
Great Articles About Entles	29



The Entlebucher's Behaviour and Personality – Our Experience

I used to think of myself as quite an experienced dog owner. After training my first dog, a German Shepherd for work trials and volunteering many hours at a local dog rescue home, I thought it would be a doddle to train a cute little mountain dog. I was in for a bit of a surprise and as it turned out this breed was a completely different kettle of fish!

This first chapter covers many of the things I wish I'd known about the Entlebucher Mountain Dog's behaviour and personality before we brought our little Alfie home.

Brief Breed Overview

Breeders take pride in finding the right owners for their cherished Entlebucher puppies, and rightfully so. They are not beginner dogs and responsible breeders are looking for people who want to remain highly involved with their dogs. Once you've passed their interviews and you have taken your gorgeous puppy home – you will never have a dull moment again.

In order to develop the calm, wonderful personality and behaviour the Swiss mountain dogs are known for you must start obedience training and socialising early. As soon as adolescence kicks in he may start to test limits so the more you can teach him as a young puppy, the better. Their intelligence and high energy levels are of course great if they are given a job to do such as herding cattle, but if you don't supply enough entertainment, they will find their own projects and chances are slim you will like what they come up with. When you leave your dog home alone, supply him with chew and activity toys to keep him occupied and when you're out and about activate his brain cells with games such as hide and seek or obedience training, agility or flyball.

[Click here](#) to watch Alfie play his favourite game 'find it' on Youtube.



Leaping, romping and rough housing

As your puppy grows up and becomes better coordinated, he will probably start practicing his cattle leaps. This is the same technique they would have used on a cattle in the Swiss alps and having experienced it first hand I'd say it could probably move mountains as well as cows, but it's not quite as pleasant when he tries it on you or your friends.

'If a cow refuses to move, Entles will first nip heels and , if that doesn't work, they'll leap up and slam into the stubborn animal's side' (AKC Gazette, Jan 2011).

The first time Alfie jumped up to kiss me on my mouth I couldn't believe my eyes, how could such a short legged dog jump that high? Now I've realised that it's part of his origin and will require consistent and positive training to be kept within acceptable levels. After all, not all visitors will appreciate a flying, slobbery kiss! Even fewer will enjoy having their heels nipped as the puppy 'herds' them around the house!

You could describe them as bulls in a china store and it's important to keep an eye on them if they're playing near children as they can easily bowl over little ones in their excitement.

[Click here](#) to watch Alfie and his sister Bella play tug-o-war on Youtube.



The Entlebucher is a small dog with a big voice

The Entlebucher Mountain Dog will make a brilliant watchdog who is nearly impossible to bribe away from what he perceives to be his duty. He has a loud, deep bark and sounds like a much bigger dog and this behaviour is sure to scare off any unwanted visitors and alert you to any dangers.

This is of course great if you have someone breaking into your house, but not so much fun when your puppy is going through his fear periods and barks at anything and everything. Other 'dog people' will take this for what it is, but 'civilians' can sometimes

get frightened as they misunderstand the barking as being aggressive behaviour simply because it is loud.

Play growling

Many new Entlebucher Mountain Dog owners, including myself, are quite surprised the first time they play tug-of-war with their cute little puppy and he sounds like a wolf fighting another wolf to the death! We bought our puppy a treat pyramid thinking it would keep him occupied and quiet for a while.

The noise that came out of the dog as he tried to retrieve the kibble from the contraption was unbelievable, it sounded like he was attacking a burglar at the very least. I've had moments when I was certain our neighbours must have thought our dog had turned on us.

[Click here to watch \(and hear!\) Alfie barking at his food bowl over on Youtube.](#)

Entlebucher Mountain Dogs are a bit like small Labradors, Right?

Over at Alfie's blog, I receive lots of questions about the breed. One email in particular stood out, The email was from a real dog lover – someone who's had labradors all his life and he was trying to genuinely understand if the Entlebucher Mountain Dog Breed was the right dog for him.

He asked me about exercise, temperament and how to train them – and he mentioned he'd tried to do some research online but found little information about what it's really like to own an Entle. I thought that by answering his questions on the blog, and comparing the Entlebucher to the Labrador would be a great way to illustrate how unique the Entlebucher breed really is.

I'm not in any way an expert on Entlebucher Mountain Dogs, although it sometimes feels like we have a whole swiss army of tri-coloured mischief makers in the house we only have one – but I'm happy to share our experience. Here's what I wrote on the blog in response to his email.



What's the Difference between a Labrador and An Entlebucher Mtn Dog?

Q1: All of my experience with dogs has been with labrador retrievers, have you ever owned a lab? If so can you tell me what are the biggest differences I will encounter with the Entle?

I have never owned a labrador, my doggie background is a family Golden Retriever when I grew up, and a longhaired German Shepherd before we got Alfie. But I'm quite familiar with labs and we briefly considered getting one when we researched what dog to get three years ago. Back then, I thought Entle's would be a bit like a short legged labradors in terms of temperament and behaviour – but after three years of owning an Entlebucher I've realised this couldn't be further from the truth!

Entlebucher Mountain Dogs are known as the 'der Lachen Hunden' – the laughing dogs, and their positive outlook on life is contagious. In fact, a couple of years into owning an Entlebucher I've started thinking of it less as dog ownership and more of a lifestyle choice!

Entles were originally bred to herd cattle in the Swiss mountains and help out with a range of tasks around the farms, and I think in their hearts they still believe they have a very important job to do even if they live in a city as family dogs, far away from livestock.



Labradors on the other hand were bred primarily to perform as an efficient retriever of game, with a stable temperament suitable for a variety of activities beyond hunting. They are known as gentle family dogs, and because of their aptitude to please their humans they excel as guide dogs for the blind.

How would you convince a cow it's time to move?

Cows are big and heavy animals and not very easy to move if they've decided to stay put, so if you're a herding dog – you would need to be incredibly persistent, brave, strong and stubborn to make that happen.

You couldn't necessarily wait for exact commands before every move so you'd need to be able to judge the situation and make your own decisions.

Over the years that's produced a very strong, fearless and somewhat stubborn dog that has an ability to think for himself. This means the Entlebucher Mountain Dog could be challenging to handle for an inexperienced or non assertive owner.

Entlebuchers never give up if they've set their mind on something whether that's moving a cow, running an agility course or breaking into the trash bin. They listen to your commands – and in my opinion they also use their own initiative to solve problems.

Entlebuchers use their entire arsenal to get their way – including a deep bark that could move mountains, speeding, howling, body checking, nipping and if everything else fails – they turn on the puppy eye look to lure that cookie out of your hand. They quickly become experts in reading your body language and they will use it to get their way – and they have a great sense of humour!

'If a cow refuses to move, Entles will first nip heels and, if that doesn't work, they'll leap up and slam into the stubborn animal's side' ([AKC Gazette, Jan 2011](#)).

Puppyhood

As puppies their instinct tells them that they have to herd everything that moves, including your trouser legs, feet and hands. As you can imagine there's quite a lot of 'base training' to be done before they behave around the house so it's a good thing they look so darn cute those first couple of months because your hands and feet will be

bruised and covered in scratches while you train away their 'cattle leaps', get their bite inhibition sorted and try and stop them from herding and nipping you. This is all pretty standard herding breed stuff – but if you're not used to it, it might come as a bit of a surprise.

I think there's a good reason most articles mention Entles are not a good choice for first time owners – they are incredibly good at getting their way and if you're a pushover then you'll be the one sleeping in the dog basket! If you know your way around dogs and have experience in training them – you will love their goofy puppy runs and quickly channel all that energy into something more useful.

Strong Bond & Separation Anxiety

Entlebuchers build an incredibly strong bond with their prime carer. In reality this means that they will follow you around the house, cuddle up on the sofa with you and follow you into the bathroom if you let them. It also means they really shouldn't be left home alone, or in the garden for entire days while you go to work. They want to be with their people. On walks, as you can see in [the video below](#), Alfie will always look back to check I'm still there. Entlebuchers really are the best companion you could ever ask for.

Stranger Danger

Entlebuchers are generally quite aloof with strangers, and can be selective in who they decide to hang out with – whereas labradors tend to love everyone they meet, especially if they bring treats. When we are out walking and someone leans down to give Alfie a cuddle, he'll generally dodge them and run just out of reach. As with everything else in life, there are exceptions – some Entles love people and goes straight for the belly rub.



[Click here to watch the video](#) where Alfie demonstrates how “You never need to call for your Entle – he is already there”.

Social Entlebuchers

We live in the city so I take Alfie to our local parks all the time. As Alfie is bouncing around with a big smile on his face, enjoying every second of his walk I get complimented on my adorable puppy. He is three years old but because of his enthusiasm and big happy smile people continuously think he is a pup. Often people walk up to me and ask what breed he is, and walking to and from the park we quite literally have people telling us we have such a beautiful dog – Alfie just wags his tail and walks on. He’s used to the attention and he loves it! [Update: Alfie is now 6 years old and starting to turn a little grey, and people still ask if he’s a puppy).



How Much Exercise Does An Entlebucher Really Need?

Q2: Both of my labs are happy with a quick walk around the property at night (about 30-45 min) would this be sufficient for an Entle or would a longer walk be needed? This week we have had sub zero weather every day (very unusual to have it this cold for so long) so the labs have not been out much except a quick run out into their pen to take care of business. I realize that where you are located there is seldom a cold day but how well do you think Entles would handle a week

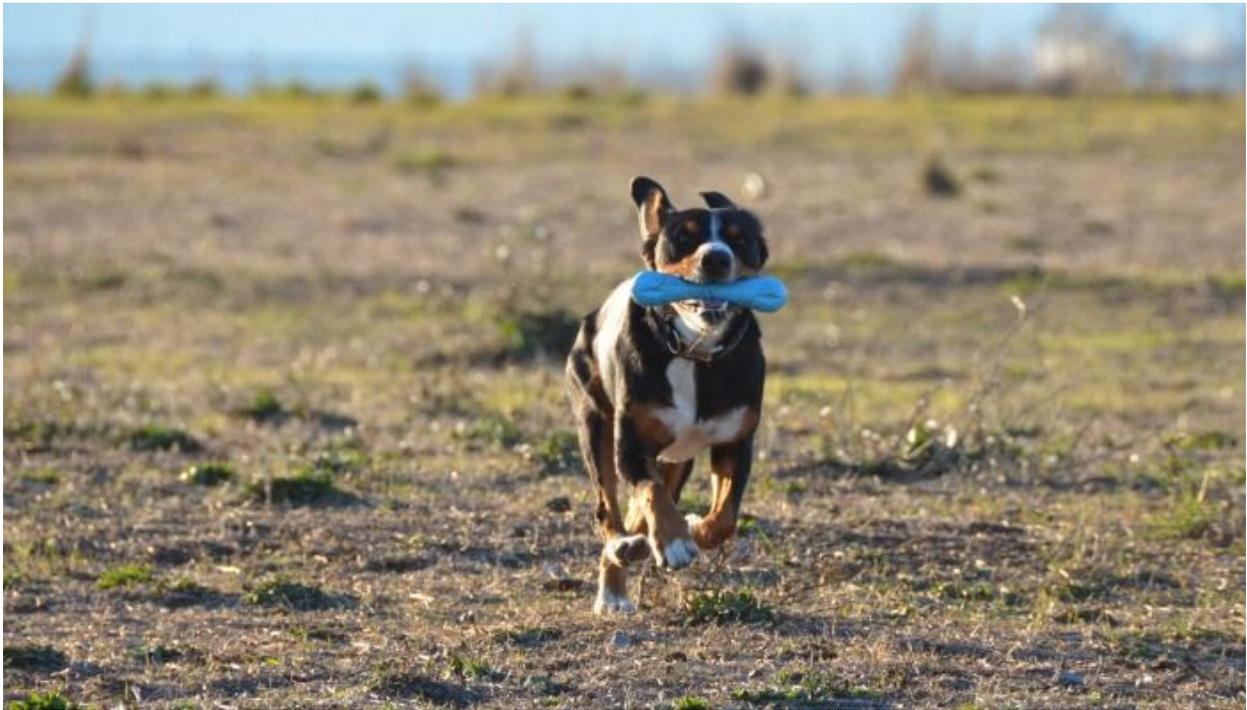
without getting out to exercise (should I get a doggy tread mill for those days that the Entle cannot get out)?

The short answer is that our Alfie would go completely bananas if he wasn't walked for a week. He would bark, nip my feet and pace around the house and turn into a really stressed and bad mannered dog who'd be very unpleasant to be around. Not exercising an Entle (or any other intelligent working breed dog) is a bit like feeding Gremlins after midnight – it brings out the worst in them.

Exercise and Mental Stimulation – Equally Important

I should probably mention here that our Alfie is what would be considered a high energy Entle with a very strong work drive. When we go for an off leash hike he is never seen 'walking' like many other dogs do, he runs for the duration of the entire walk. I would estimate that he covers about five times the distance that I do during the same walk. Leash walking alone would never be enough.

After a walk he would happily continue playing for another hour or so if we didn't tell him to chill. The truth is – I would not be able to actually walk him until he got physically tired – which is why we also play games and build in training during our walks and afterwards.



Entles need a job

Entlebuchers need to exercise their brains as well as their legs to stay happy – which is pretty typical for many working breeds. Unless you can give them an actual job to do, like herding sheep, or guarding a farm then you need to invent things for them to do. If you don't – then chances are they get bored and invent a 'job' for themselves which you won't like.

I take Alfie to agility classes, play puzzle games and teach him fun tricks. He also loves using his nose so we play a nosework game we call 'find it' all the time – both outdoors

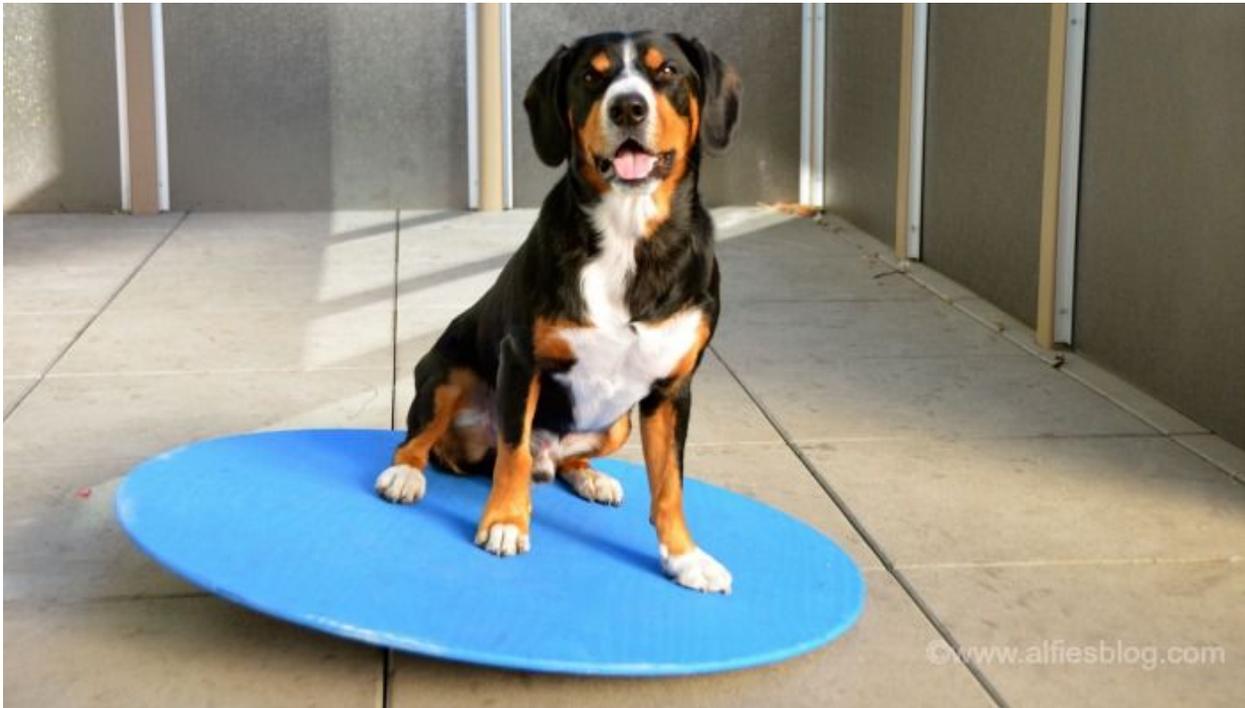
as well as indoors.



‘Urban agility’ - great mental stimulation and fun

The first two years of owning an Entle was a continuous struggle to burn off all that crazy Entle energy, and making him accept that we couldn’t play 24/7. As soon as we would come home from a long walk or training class Alfie would sleep for a couple of hours and then wake up completely refreshed wanting to play some more – completely tireless.

Now he’s three years old he has calmed down significantly but he is still one of the highest energy dogs I have ever met. [Update: At age six, Alfie is still incredibly energetic, but has calmed significantly and requires less exercise to stay happy). We always have to plan our days and activities around Alfie getting exercised and that can be difficult for visiting friends and family to understand sometimes – but luckily Alfie has trained them all well in the art of ball throwing so it usually works out quite well.



Playing on the wobble board to build core muscles

I have heard of Entle's that are happy with 20-30 minutes exercise a day – but if you like us have just one dog, and he is a high energy pooch like Alfie then you need to set aside at least an hour a day for off-leash running or play. I walk Alfie every day come rain or shine. His current routine is a five minute 'potty walk' around the block every morning and evening, plus a longer one hour walk off leash in the middle of the day.

Cold temperatures is not necessarily a problem for a mountain dog, unless we're talking Polar Vortex type weather – as long as you keep moving he'll keep warm enough. A doggie treadmill might be a good idea, but I don't have any experience using them. My gut feeling is that it could burn off some crazy energy when the weather is really bad, but in the long run an Entle would find it boring to use.



Practicing K9 nosework

Entlebuchers – just how intelligent are they? Hint: Train them or be trained!

Intelligence & Training

Q3: What would you think the [Entlebucher Mountain dog's](#) intelligence level is in comparison to a lab? Do they try to please their owner like a lab? How is their focus when being trained, are they easily distracted?

Historically the Entlebuchers saw the cattle into the hills of their native Switzerland, and brought them back home again. Then the farmer sent them off alone to the cheese maker with the milk – that sort of work required a lot of brains and strict work ethics and set the foundation for the Entlebucher’s famous energy, intelligence and work drive.



Focused on the task

Sense of Self

An Entle owner once mentioned that Entle’s have a very strong sense of self compared to other dogs, and I think that’s true, at least for the Entles I’ve met. They are devoted to their people but don’t seem to go to such extreme or silly lengths as some labradors to please their humans – it’s like they like to keep their pride, or dignity intact.

Also, if they are not pleased with what you’ve told them they will give you feedback – our Alfie has an entire vocal range with accompanying facial expressions to share

emotions from disappointment to excitement. He is a very good communicator (there is a reason every blog post signed off by Alfie starts with a Rooo ooo!).



See this face? It says he is not impressed

A thinking Dog

Entlebuchers are incredibly intelligent. As an example, we potty trained Alfie in about a week and by the age of twelve weeks he knew most of the basic doggie commands. Having a clever pooch comes with both pros and cons though, and you have to watch out so the dog doesn't start training you!

Every time I think about the difference between an Entle and other dogs I've encountered I like to draw parallels with when I learned about photography. Just like anyone can get a decent shot with a compact camera or camera phone – most people can reach pretty good results when training the average dog.

The Entlebucher is more like an advanced and expensive D-SLR camera. If you know which buttons to push you can achieve extraordinary photographs, whereas if you don't

know what you're doing then all your photos are going to get blurry. In a similar way Entlebuchers can turn into real Entlebucher Monster Dogs if you don't know how to deal with all their intelligence and energy.

A bored, or under stimulated Entlebucher will be quite happy to invent his own entertainment and I bet it will be something you won't like.

Train them or Be Trained

These dogs are incredibly intelligent and focused on their owner, and when training Alfie I try and look at it as teamwork. Training is something you do with your Entle, not to him – and our Alfie responds a million times better to flattery than being told off.

They really are like little Swiss army knives with the right tool for everything from agility, obedience, rescue work, to herding and some are even therapy dogs. You can teach them absolutely anything you can think of and they will do it with a big Entle smile on their face.

Having a clever dog means you need to really pay attention and think things through beforehand when you train them. I used to own a German Shepherd and if I'd tell him to jump his reply would be 'Sir, yes Sir' and then he'd await his next order. Alfie on the other hand would reply 'Yes buddy', start running and whilst flying through the air demand to hear the rest of the plan'. (No my dogs don't actually talk to me but you get the idea!). These dogs learn so quickly that if you make things too easy they will start questioning your commands, wondering what you 'really' want them to do so you have to stay one step ahead all the time.

When we're training agility that's one of my main problems – I need to focus much further ahead than where Alfie is and know the route 100%. If I hesitate or don't give the next command quickly enough, he is right by my feet complaining about my confusing orders!



One of our first agility lessons – what’s up buddy?

I distinctly remember the first time I realised that Alfie had started training me. One day he kept losing his squeaky toy underneath the sofa – it was too far back and he couldn’t reach it. He looked so sad and miserable I simply had to help him dig it out. Having crawled around the floor three or four times more I caught him actually pushing the toy with his nose underneath the sofa before turning to me for help. The little monster had invented a new game and trained me to play it!



Attention & Focus

I mentioned in my previous post that Entlebucher Mountain Dogs are incredibly focused on their owners. Until you've seen 'that look' in real life you don't know just how intently they focus on their human. When I'm training Alfie in doggie school his attention is 100% on me. He is very food and toy motivated but as soon as he's learned a new 'trick', he is happy to work for praise and attention.

In my opinion, teaching an Entle new tricks and stuff like that is real easy – you usually only need to repeat the directions 1-3 times before they get it. Because they are so stubborn and persistent it's much more difficult to teach them what not to do, (especially if they perceive there is some sort of a reward for their bad behaviour) – don't pull the leash, don't jump up in the sofa, don't steal my food and so on.

The real challenge in training an Entle is to keep up with and channel their energy into positive outlets and not mischief. If you can do that – then you have your dream dog!

What's next?

I hope you have enjoyed this e-book, and feel like you know a little more about the Entlebucher breed now. If you'd like to ask a question or just comment, please [find us on Facebook](#) or [contact me here](#). You can also [sign up for my newsletter here](#) and you'll get my latest blog posts from Alfie's Blog sent straight to your inbox.

Here's to Many Waggy Tails!

Linda

Further Entlebucher Resources

This is a list of Entlebucher Resources you might find interesting. Please note I have no affiliation with any of the websites mentioned above, other than as a happy reader.

Entlebucher Mountain Dogs in the UK

- [The Entlebucher Mountain Dog Club of Great Britain](#). You can also find the club on [Facebook](#).
- [The UK Kennel Club](#)
- Another Entle from the UK who is also called [Alfie, blogs daily](#), and his blog gives you a nice insight into the daily life of living with four Entles and one writer under the same roof.
- [My Blog](#) should give you an idea what it's like living with an Entlebucher in a big city like London, and San Francisco

Entlebucher Mountain Dogs in the US

- [The National Entlebucher Mountain Dog Association](#) is a great resource and they have a fun [facebook page](#) too. If you become a member you can access the membership roster and get in touch with Entlebucher owners near you.
- The Entlebucher forum/ mailing list on Yahoo
- [The American Kennel Club](#)
- The Mountain Dog Blog is another fun blog about Entles

Entlebuchers in the rest of the world and on the internet

- The [Swiss Entlebucher Mountain Dog Club](#)
- General Entlebucher Mountain Dog [Info](#)
- You can follow the adorable [Entle girl Haddie on Instagram](#) from Vancouver, Canada

Great Articles About Entles

- [Watch this PAWSOME video about the Entlebucher breed on Naturally Happy Dog's website](#). They're interviewing Robin from the Entlebucher Mountain Dog club of Great Britain – and you'll see video footage of her Entle Basil, Alfie's sister Bella and her pup Pip.
- This article gives a really good and honest view on the breed: [Entlebucher Mountain Dog Temperament: What's good about 'em, what's bad about 'em](#)
- The [January issue of the AKC Gazette](#) writes in depth about the breed and even mentions the pawsome cattle leaps.

This e-book has been published with the intent to provide education and entertainment, but it is not intended as a professional training manual. The techniques and suggestions are used at the reader's discretion and are not to be considered a substitute for professional intervention. The author shall have no liability or responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused, or alleged to have been caused directly or indirectly, by the information contained in this book. If you suspect that your dog is in need of specialised attention or training, I urge you to seek competent professional assistance. Mention of companies, organisations or authorities in this book does not imply endorsement by the publisher, nor does specific mention of companies, organisations or authorities imply that they endorse this book.

This e-book is Creative Commons Licensed. *If you find it useful, please do share with anyone else who might be interested in this topic. You can email it to a friend or use excerpts on your site, as long as you cite the source - Linda Liebrand from www.AlfiesBlog.com and don't sell the content.*

[Creative Commons License. Attribution. Non-commercial.](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) Linda Liebrand 2017