

Choosing the right pet for you and your family

Adopting a homeless pet can be the most rewarding experience of your life if the right match is made! You must be willing to make a huge time and lifestyle commitment to make this work.

Before you adopt a pet ... think & consider this:

Even though hundreds of homeless pets in our local community need a second chance, just any home is not the answer. Put yourself in the animals place. None of these situations are the answer:

- A pet left for hours alone
- A dog chained up all day
- A puppy or kitten left unsupervised with young children

Ask yourself these very important questions:

Do you have time for a pet?

Puppies require the highest time commitment. They will need constant monitoring so they do not chew up house hold items. They will need housetraining which is a several week to several month process, and they will need training and lots of socialization to prevent them from growing up with behavioral issues. Puppies will need daily time for playing, socializing and exercising. If you can not make such a time commitment, you may want to decide on getting an adult dog. Adult dogs initially require less time for house training and can be left home for longer periods of time, but still require daily exercising, training and socializing.

Kittens require less of a time commitment than a puppy or a dog, but plan on litter box training and having to monitor your kitten so it does not get into mischief. Adult cats are very independent and do not require as much attention as a kitten however adult cats still need time for affection, cleaning the litter box and feeding. If you can not devote an hour to several hours a day, you may want to think about getting a rodent, fish or other animal that does not require daily attention.

Can you have a pet where you live?

Are you a renter? Then it is mandatory you find out what your landlord's rules are regarding pets. A large percentage of pets are turned in to animal shelters because the owner tried to sneak them in past their landlord. Don't add to the problem. Obey your landlords' rules and wait until your situation changes to get a pet.

Can you afford a pet?

Pets require annual vaccines, dental care, and proper nutrition. With good care many pets are living 10, 15, and even 20 years. As a pet ages medical costs may increase. Are you prepared to spend the money required to keep your pet healthy?

Are you going to move soon?

Moving and unable to take their pet is possibly the number one reason owners turn their pets into animal shelters. Don't get a pet if you are unsure about your ability to find future housing that will accept pets if you have to move. Don't fool yourself! It is much harder on a pet to become attached to someone and then given up after 1 or 2 years. Wait till your housing situation is stable before adopting.

Do you have the right home for the pet you want?

Getting a pet to teach your child responsibility is not a good idea. Most children, although their hearts are in the right place, can not be expected to provide the complete level of care a pet needs. Get the pet, if you think it is appropriate for your child, but plan on an adult providing the majority of the pet's training and care.

Are your children old enough for a pet?

Many people adopt pets while their children are too young to handle them with the care and understanding they need. Any child under the age of 5 needs to be supervised every time they interact with the family pet(s). This protects both the pet and the child. Children may not understand they are being too rough with a pet, teasing it, or in some other way provoking it to scratch or bite in defense. Puppies, especially, can overwhelm children. Puppies tend to nip and can scratch or knock over a small child during play. An older, calmer dog is a better choice. Conversely, a kitten under 4 months of age has a very hard time defending itself against over handling, etc. A kitten over 4 months is still plenty playful and a much better match for children younger than 5 years of age. In general, older pets are calmer, more attentive to their owners, and you know what type of personality you are getting. Thousands of older pets languish in animal shelters while adopters walk past them to choose puppies and kittens. We encourage you to think about adopting one of these wonderful adult cats or dogs. They have just as much love to give!