

Responsible Pet Ownership

Slide 1: Owning a Pet – What is your responsibility?

Owning a pet can be a rewarding and enjoyable experience. If you follow the rules of responsible pet ownership, you can help make sure that owning a pet will be a rewarding experience for you, your pet, and your family. Before bringing a pet into your home, make sure you are properly prepared to take care of a pet and that it will fit into your lifestyle.

Slide 2: Avoid Impulse Decisions

There are many different types of pets. The most common pets are cats and dogs, but you can own all different types of animals from birds, ferrets and fish to horses, rabbits, turtles, snakes, and hamsters. Make sure you're picking the right pet for you

But before you get a pet, take time to learn about its needs, and put some serious thought into if and how it will fit into your family and your lifestyle. For instance, some fish live for only a year or two. But some parrots can live for 50 to 75 years. Be prepared to make a commitment to this decision for the life of the pet(s).

Slide 3: Questions to Ask

There are some questions to ask yourself before adding a pet to your home.

- *Why do you want a pet?*
 - Pets are wonderful, loving companions, but make sure you want one for the right reasons, and not because you think owning an animal will "make you cool" or make other people jealous.
- *Do you have enough time?*
 - Pets need affection and attention. You can't leave them alone or ignore them. They need food, water, and exercise every day. Pets are living animals and need appropriate care and love.

Slide 4: Questions to Ask

- *Can you afford a pet?*
 - Pets cost money. Even if you adopt one for free or find one, once it becomes your pet, it will need regular veterinary care, food, toys, and grooming. All of these things cost money. Make sure you can afford a pet.
- *Do you have enough space?*
 - Some pets need more space than others, but all pets need to be able to get enough exercise and be comfortable in their environment.

Slide 5: Questions to Ask

- *Are pets allowed where you live?*
 - Some places have restrictions on owning a pet. Wait to get a pet until you're sure that they are allowed to live with you. And make sure the type and size of the pet you want is allowed where you live.
- *Who will watch your pet when you can't?*
 - Keep in mind that you'll need to find someone who can take care of your pet when you can't be there due to travel, vacation, etc. If you don't have someone who can volunteer, you'll have to pay a boarding fee. Can you afford that?
 - Make other arrangements if caring for your pet is no longer possible. Find a family member or friend who has the time, money, love and resources to care for your pet or find an animal shelter or rescue who will care for your pet until it can be adopted by someone else.

Slide 6: Questions to Ask

- *What will my pet need from me, and can I take care of its needs?*
 - Not only do pets need appropriate and enough food, water, shelter, veterinary care and companionship, they also need both physical and mental stimulation in the form of exercise and play. Be sure to provide both exercise and play that is appropriate to your pet's age, breed, species and health status. Talk to your veterinarian about what kind of exercise and play is best for your pet.
 - Also, while it may not be easy, be prepared to have to make the decision to put your pet to sleep when their quality of life has declined from illness or old age. Discuss this decision with your veterinarian.

Slide 7: What is the Right Pet for You?

There are many different types of pets to choose from, and not all types of pets are right for everyone. Do your research first, and choose the pet that's right for you. For more information on pet selection and pet care, go to avma.org and myveterinarian.com.

Slide 8: Obey Local Leash Laws

Each state, county and town may have their own laws regarding pets. Some areas, for example, may allow dogs, but not certain breeds of dogs. There may be laws about providing proper licensing, identification and leashes to any animal that is taken outside. Before getting a pet, check with the local authorities to learn about the pet laws in your area.

Slide 9: Train Your Pet

A well-trained pet is a good pet and is less likely to hurt other animals or people. Teach your pet basic manners and obedience, and socialize them properly so they know how to behave appropriately around other animals and people. This will help their well-being and the well-being of other animals and people. Talk to a veterinarian about any behavior issues pet may have, and where to find training facilities in your area.

Slide 10: Spay or Neuter Your Pet

Every year, millions of dogs and cats end up in animal shelters because they are unwanted. Unfortunately, there are more dogs and cats than there are homes for them, and allowing your pet to have a litter only adds to the problem. By spaying or neutering your pet, you're being a responsible pet owner and doing your part to prevent pet overpopulation. Spaying and neutering also reduce the chances that your pet will develop certain medical problems, like cancer.

Slide 11: Provide for Your Pet's Needs

Be a responsible caretaker throughout your pet's life. They should have plenty of fresh, cool water and enough food. Pets need a clean, comfortable and safe environment. Keep only the type and number of pets for which an appropriate and safe environment can be provided.

It's also important to prevent your pet(s) from negatively impacting other people, animals and the environment. This includes proper waste disposal, noise control, and not allowing pet(s) to stray..

Slide 12: Provide Veterinary Care

Provide regular veterinary care. It's important to establish and maintain a veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR). Your pet should be examined by a veterinarian at least once or twice a year – this makes it more likely that any health problems will be found earlier, before they get to the point that they are causing your pet a big problem or even threatening your pet's life. In addition, if health problems go undetected, they can be more expensive to treat. And remember to have your pets vaccinated and make sure they are protected from parasites that can make them ill.

Slide 13: Clean Up after Your Pet

Animals poop and pee, too. It's not fun, but cleaning up after your pets is a very important part of being a responsible pet owner. Think about how you'd feel if you stepped in poop. Not good, huh? If you clean up after your pet, you'll be making sure that others don't step in it, either. Plus, pet's waste can spread some diseases and attract rats, so cleaning up after your pet helps keep everyone healthy.

Slide 14: Identify Your Pet

Sometimes pets get lost, but with the proper identification, you can increase the chances of them being found and returned to you. The American Veterinary Medical Association recommends a collar tag and microchip, and encourages pet owners to keep this information up-to-date in the databases by contacting the company that made the microchip.

- A collar tag is a form of identification that you attach to your pet's collar. You can include your name, phone number, address, your pet's name and microchip ID number.
- A microchip is a small, electronic device about the size of a grain of rice and is injected under the skin with a needle. A microchip is a permanent form of identifying your pet and makes it much more likely that you'll be reunited with your pet if it gets lost or stolen.

Slide 15: Be Prepared for Disasters

Fires, Floods, Earthquakes, Hurricanes, Tornados. Disasters can happen at any time, any place and to anyone. Creating a disaster plan for you and your family (pets included), can help keep you safe during an emergency. Assembling an evacuation kit is an essential part of being prepared. For more information and information about creating an emergency kit for your family, visit the American Veterinary Medical Association's Disaster section of the website at

www.avma.org/disaster

Slide 16: Where Can You Find a Pet?

Now that you know what your pet needs and what it takes for you to be a responsible pet owner, you can start looking for the new addition to your family.

Think adoption first. There are many animals that end up in shelters for various reasons at various ages. Check with your local shelters, humane societies and rescues to find a pet that will meet you and your family's needs.

Slide 17: Where Can You Find a Vet?

There are many different ways to find a veterinarian. Ask your friends, family members and neighbors for recommendations. You can also go to myveterinarian.com to search for a veterinarian in your area.

Slide 18: National Pet Week

National Pet Week was founded in 1981 by the American Veterinary Medical Association and is celebrated during the first week of May every year. During this week, raise awareness about being a responsible pet owner, veterinary medicine, and celebrate the importance of pets in our lives.

Slide 19: Any Questions?

The American Veterinary Medical Association provides a lot of great information about pet care. If you still have questions, visit our website at www.avma.org