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BC SPCA -



Thinking of Bringing a Pet Into Your Home? Consider the Following Questions First

Adopting an SPCA animal is a rewarding experience. It is also a commitment for the animal's lifetime, so making the right match is critical. Before you adopt, you need to answer some vital questions. You might also want to find out more about [fostering](#) before a permanent commitment is made.

IMPULSE or COMMITMENT: Why do I want a pet?

Many people like the idea of a pet or can't resist a cute puppy or kitten, but don't think about the changes it will make in their life. Pets are companions. They live with us and depend on us for all of their needs. This is a great responsibility and one that should not be taken lightly. The kind of relationship you build with your pet is dependent on the commitment you are willing to make.



FOR THE KIDS: Pets teach kids responsibility, right?

You will have problems in your household if you adopt a pet under the assumption he is for the kids to take care of to learn responsibility. Getting any pet must be a family decision and a family responsibility. For children to understand the routine of pet care and actively participate in the pet's care, wait until your kids are at least seven years old. Kids are also enthusiastic in the beginning but can tire quickly of the routine of pet care, especially the messy tasks like scooping poop. Remember, ultimately the parent is responsible for the pet. Consider the life span of the animal you choose as well. Are you willing to be responsible for the pet once your children leave home?

LIFESTYLE: What type of relationship am I seeking?

All pets change your lifestyle. If you are planning on having an outdoor dog, think again. Dogs are social animals and crave the company of humans, their "pack." Leaving a dog exclusively outdoors will lead to behaviour issues and undermine the psychological well being of your dog. Isolation is unreasonable. Many people end up banishing a dog to the outside when they underestimate the time commitment to make sure their pet is well adjusted or the dog creates too much work for the guardians.



Cats, too, are social and are safer and healthier if kept indoors providing they have a stimulating indoor environment. If left outside they are victim to cars, other cats and disease. The life span of an outdoor cat is much shorter than that of an indoor cat.

As for small pets they are all to be kept indoors. An outdoor enclosure can be built for them so that they have some exposure to the outdoors but it is not necessary. Remember that store-bought cages are often too small for animals such as rabbits and guinea pigs to live in without plenty of out-of-cage exercise. Always purchase the largest possible enclosure for your small animals.

TIMING: Is this the right time for getting a pet?

If you are planning to move, going to school or are not home frequently, this may not be a good time. Pets need stability and routine to feel secure. Consider your future plans and evaluate if a pet will fit in with those plans. Cats have an especially difficult time adjusting to new environments and often run away from new surroundings unless care is taken to keep them secure until they adjust to their new environment. Getting a pet should never be a spur of the moment decision. Their life is dependent on you.

STABILITY: Are my living arrangements suitable?

All members of the household should be in agreement of the pet you choose. Also if you are renting make sure it is ok with your landlord. Do you have enough space for the pet you are considering? Most animals don't need a lot of room but some will require more than others. Surprisingly some breeds of large dogs don't need as much space as people think while many medium breeds need lots of space. It is the outdoor exercise and play area that are important. If you are in a house you need to have a fenced yard if you get a dog. **Please note that in many of our shelters renters are required to bring in copies of their strata council by-laws in order to be approved for adopting.*

DEDICATION: Will I be a responsible pet guardian?

Spaying and neutering are very important especially for cats, dogs and rabbits. Not only will it control the pet overpopulation it helps prevent illness and behaviour problems.

Cleaning up after your pet is necessary whether it be scooping poop in the park or cleaning a litter box, cage or aquarium. It is important for the health of you and the animals and the respect of your neighbours.

Grooming is also a part of having most pets. Clipping nails of dogs, cats and rabbits is a necessary part of the regular maintenance. Brushing animals with long hair is necessary to prevent tangles. This includes cats, dogs and guinea pigs. Dental care is also essential. Brushing your dog's teeth will prevent dental problems and improve his/her breath.

TIME: Do you have the time for a pet?

Different animals will require different amounts of your time . The amount of activity you do, the amount of time you are home, what to do when you go away are all factors to consider when choosing a pet. You need to provide a minimum of an hour a day of active play and walks for your dog or cat. [Click here for more information.](#)

COST: Can you afford a pet?

The cost of pet care varies but expect the average dog to cost about \$1000 per year and a cat about \$800. This doesn't include the initial one-time costs that include the adoption cost and basics such as leashes, toys and collars. All pets require an annual visit to the veterinarian. There will also be visits due to illness or accidents and preventative care (fleas, heartworm). Check out our estimates and see if this fits into your budget. Don't forget that unsupervised puppies and even adult dogs will inadvertently destroy items such as shoes, TV remote controls, books, couches and other people items. These aren't figured into our totals but we don't know anyone who hasn't had an unexpected replacement expense of some item. Click here for the cost estimate charts for [dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, and hamsters/rats/gerbils.](#)

<http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/adoption/b4pet.asp>