



Helping Canadians Help Animals

Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS)

Fédération des sociétés canadiennes d'assistance aux animaux (FSCAA)

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## Am I ready for a new pet?



Bringing a new pet into your home and your life can be a wonderful experience, but it is also something that should not be entered into lightly as it can bring challenges and changes into your life. A new pet is a commitment for the life of the animal and prospective parents should consider the following questions before adding a furry friend to the family. If you have a particular type of pet in mind, please consider its needs and review the following questions to assess your family's preparedness for a new member of your family.

Are you ready for a new pet?	Yes?	No?
1. Am I prepared for the commitment that it takes to care for a new pet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do I understand this commitment lasts for the life of the pet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do I have the time to devote to caring for and training a new pet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do I have a living space that will allow me to give proper care to my new pet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do I plan on keeping the pet predominately indoors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is my entire family on board and prepared to care for a new pet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Is my family free of any medical conditions/fears that could be aggravated by a new pet (allergies etc, fear of dogs)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. For the health of my new pet, will I ensure that the pet is spayed or neutered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Can I afford the expenses that come with getting a new pet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Will my current and future career/academic plans permit me to provide a good quality of life for my pet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Am I permitted to own a pet where I live?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Am I prepared for the extra dirt and hair in the house that comes along with pet ownership?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. If considering a dog, am I prepared to walk him/her at least twice a day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Am I prepared to cleanup after my new pet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Calculating Results</b>		
<i>Upon reviewing these questions, calculate the number of responses for both the YES and NO column. Each YES shows a sign you may be ready for a new pet, but each NO should act as a warning sign about your preparedness. Each NO response is something that deserves careful consideration and can be a warning sign you may not be ready. Regardless of your results "Please Review the Following to Ensure you are better informed."</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Information for all prospective pet owners

The previous checklist was designed to give prospective parents a general idea about their preparedness for pet ownership. Regardless of the question results, **ALL** prospective pet owners should review the following information before deciding on whether their family is ready for the responsibility of a new pet. Doing so will help you make an informed decision and may help ease future problems for you, your family and your new pet. **Being well informed before getting a pet is part of being a responsible pet owner. This helps reduce the number of dogs, cats and others that are surrendered or abandoned by owners who were not prepared to take on the responsibility of a new pet.**

#### Are you acting on impulse or are you ready for the commitment?

When you bring a new animal into your life you should expect it to be accompanied by changes in your lifestyle and household. If you are not prepared to accept these changes, then you should reconsider. Companion animals depend on their owners to fulfill their needs and this is a tremendous responsibility that prospective owners need to be prepared for. For example, young puppies require constant supervision and need to be taken outside numerous times per day to eliminate. Although the temptation of a cute puppy or kitten may be strong, understanding the commitment that comes with pet ownership can prevent unwanted stress for both the pet and owner.



## ❖ Does your lifestyle allow for a new pet?

### *How much time do I have for my new pet and where will I keep it?*

It is important to understand that training, caring for and exercising new pets will take up a significant amount of time and can have its challenges. Transitioning a pet into their new home can cause stress for both the animal and the owner. Particularly with puppies and kittens you can expect some destructive behaviours such as chewing and scratching as well as eliminating indoors. Although this can be frustrating for the owner, it is something that should be expected and is important to understand. You must be willing to work with your new pet in dealing with these behaviours and accept that some of your household items may be destroyed. Consideration should also be given to the amount of time that it will take to transition the pet into your home and to work with your pet on things such as house and obedience training.



Pets will be healthiest and safest if they are kept predominately indoors. Although with dogs, outdoor walking and play is a necessary way to keep your dog healthy, expelling them to the backyard is not an acceptable solution, because dogs need companionship. When banished to the backyard, they will amuse themselves by digging, barking and may begin showing signs of aggression. Cats are also safer and healthier when kept indoors, as they are protected from cars, other cats and disease. The lifespan of an outdoor cat is significantly shorter than those kept indoors.

## ❖ Will my future plans and ambitions allow me to properly care for my new pet?

You should never base your decision on getting a pet solely on your current situation. You should consider where you and your family may be in the future.

### **Is there a chance that in the near future you may:**

- Move
- Go back to school
- Change careers

The stress of these changes on yourself and your animals should be considered before acquiring a new pet. Cats in particular can have difficulty with such transitions.

## ❖ Are my living arrangements suitable for a new pet?

Where you live can have a significant bearing on whether you get a new pet and what kind of pet you ultimately choose. The accommodations that you provide your new pet need to include adequate exercise space both indoors and outdoors, ensuring a healthy lifestyle for your animal. Of course the amount of space required is dependent upon the type and breed of pet you are seeking, but nonetheless it should be a consideration.

## ❖ What does it take to be a responsible pet owner?

One of the most important things your new pet needs from you is time. Dogs in particular are pack animals and they need to bond, play and share affection within their pack. Cats, of course, need plenty of playtime too. So, as a responsible pet parent, you should be prepared to enroll your dog in obedience training and spend time practicing obedience at home too. You will need to socialize both dogs and cats to all kinds of new people – young, old, with beards, hats, coats, etc.-so you should take your new dog with you wherever you can. You need to establish rules and routines to help your new pet adjust and fit into your family. Pets that lack training and socialization and are much more difficult to live with and are not so well received by friends and family members. Invest the time right away, starting when you bring your furry friend home.

Exercise and nutrition are also important components of a pet's healthy lifestyle. For dogs, they require adequate playtime and a walk at least twice a day. In addition, responsible owners feed their animals the highest quality of food that is within their means and ensure that adequate fresh water is always available. Annual check-ups with a veterinarian are also important for the health of the animal. This includes, but is not limited to picking up after them in the backyard, cleaning a litter box, crate or aquarium and proper grooming.



## ❖ Spaying or neutering your pet

Spaying or neutering your pet is the responsible thing to do. Not only will it prevent your pet from contributing to the pet overpopulation problem but also has health and behavioural benefits.

### **Spaying and neutering**

- Helps in the prevention of particular diseases such as pyometra or mammary cancer in females and testicular cancer in males
- Prevents a female from going into heat, eliminating messes, odour, and unwanted behaviours that occur during breeding season
- Can positively influence an animal's behaviour by focusing their attention on their human families, rather than on marking their territory and searching for a mate. It can also reduce aggressive behaviour
- Plays a major role in addressing pet overpopulation; with the thousands of homeless pets available in shelters across Canada, unaltered dogs, cats and rabbits only add to the problem
- Eliminates the strong odour of male cats
- Makes your pet easier to live with by eliminating a source of conflict with other dogs, stopping mounting behaviours in dogs and howling in male cats



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Adopt a new friend today!**

## ❖ Is everyone ready for a new pet?

Getting a new pet is something that must be a family decision as it will impact the lives of everyone in the home. Whether any member of your family has any allergies to or phobias to a particular animal must be discussed. The age of your children and future plans for children are also important to consider when deciding on a new pet.

When dealing with kids and new pet, it is not realistic to assume that children will be responsible enough to be the sole caretaker for the new pet. Although initially excited and receptive to the idea of caring for the pet, parents should be aware that boredom often does tend to set in, leaving the onus on parents. Children over seven years of age can be included in the pet care, but the responsibility for the pet must ultimately lie in the hands of the parents.



## ❖ Can I afford a pet?

The costs associated with pet ownership vary dependant upon the type of animal. Below is a breakdown of some of annual costs associated with owning a dog, cat, and a rabbit. These figures are only guidelines and can vary significantly depending on the type of animal and where you adopt your new pet.

ANIMAL TYPE	DOG <sup>°</sup>	CAT <sup>°°</sup>	RABBIT <sup>°°°</sup>
Annual Food Supply	\$540.00	\$336.00	\$294.00
Treats	\$96.00	\$24.00	\$50.00
Annual Veterinary Check-up	\$71.00	\$101.00 <sup>^</sup>	\$45.00
Grooming/Nail Clipping	\$130.00	\$234.00 <sup>~</sup>	\$60.00
Licensing	\$24.00	\$35.00	n/a
Vacation (boarding 2 weeks)	\$210.00	\$140.00	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1071.00</b>	<b>\$870.00</b>	<b>\$589</b>

<sup>°</sup> Refers to a medium sized female mixed breed dog

<sup>°°</sup>Refers to a long haired spayed female domestic cat

<sup>°°°</sup>Refers to a domestic Rabbit

<sup>^</sup>Includes anti-hairball medication

<sup>~</sup>Includes annual supply of cat litter

## Other costs related to pet ownership

### Initial Costs

Adoption Fee

Spaying/Neutering

Food and Water Dishes

Collar and Leash

Brush and comb

Litter pan and Scoop

Small Scratching Post

### Other costs

Emergency medical costs

Vaccinations

Bed

Obedience classes

Fencing

Replacement of chewed/scratched goods



[Click Here to See a Public Service Announcement on Responsible Dog Ownerships from Marley and Me Author John Grogan, the American Kennel Club and Marley.](#)

Sources: CFHS, BCSPCA and ASPCA

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