



FACT SHEET

Pet Ownership - You're Responsible

It's not a one-way street. In order for you to enjoy the love, trust and companionship of a pet, you have to be responsible for all the care and attention he or she needs. For as long as you're together.

The commitment starts right at the beginning.

Choosing your pet - Probably the worst – and most irreversible – mistake you can make is selecting the wrong pet for your lifestyle, temperament and environment. If you both don't make a good match, neither one of you will be happy.

You should take into consideration the breed, age and sex of the animal because these factors will, in turn, determine his/her dietary, health, exercise and training requirements. Obviously, there's a big difference between a Great Dane and a hamster. But there can even be a significant difference between the male and female of same species. And did you know cockatoos live longer than 60 years? (You can discover more by wandering through our website or following the links on the appropriately named **Links** page.)

Dog or cat, puppy or kitten? - Many people instinctively feel they're either a 'dog person' or a 'cat person'. But it goes bit farther than that. Take, for instance, the age. Puppies just naturally require more time and attention than adult dogs, especially when they're going through their teething (read: *chewing*) stage. Nothing it can wrap its little jaws around is sacred to a pup at this point. Then there's the matter of house training.

While kittens are more easily and less messily house trained, they also demand more time and patience than adult cats.

Another consideration. If you're away from home for lengthy periods, the isolation and/or boredom will cause some animals to develop behavioural problems. Incessant barking is one of the most obvious (in more ways than one).

The environment - Inner-city terrace house or sprawling country property. Rooms full of priceless antiques or discarded toys. Sole occupant or growing family. Couch potato or fitness junkie. Retiree or workaholic. The possible variances in surrounds and owners go on and on. Clearly, some pets are better suited to certain conditions than others. (You'll find more advice on our website.)

By the way, if you have young children, then they should appreciate the proper treatment of any pets. While instructive, dog bites and cat scratches aren't really the best way to learn what not to do.

Speaking of kids, if yours is an expanding family, you might want to think twice about having a large and/or active dog around infants or very small children.

The monetary angle - Aside from the purchase price, which can vary tremendously between the most exclusive breeder in the country to an animal shelter, there can be the cost of vaccinations, blood tests, etc. in the first few weeks or months. Next comes food, which in the case of dogs, is usually the single major cost. As you might expect, the larger the dog the more they eat. Other costs to expect will be regular veterinary care as well as emergencies, plus supplies such as collars, leads, litter trays, beds, etc.

Still further considerations, which can vary from breed to breed, include specific health problems, energy levels, grooming requirements and so on.

Going on holiday - It a sad fact of life, but many pets end up in shelters just before their former owners head off on holidays or move overseas. Either these people didn't plan ahead or they really didn't understand their responsibilities as pet owners. If you regularly go away on holidays, you have two choices: bring your pet with you or arrange to have someone you trust look after it. If you're staying somewhere that doesn't allow pets, you're down to one option.

Legal considerations

- **Licensing.** All dogs and cats in NSW must be licensed and micro-chipped from the age of six months. See www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/.
- **Confining.** Dogs must be kept inside a secure fence; gone are the days they can roam freely, chasing cars and cats, terrorising schoolchildren and despoiling neighbourhood footpaths. Cats should be kept inside at night, both for their own safety and to help maintain local wildlife numbers.
- **Restraint.** In Pittwater, dogs must be kept on a lead in public areas except in these designated locations: Hitchcock Park in Avalon, Dearin Reserve in Newport, McCarrs Creek Reserve at Church Point, Rowland Reserve in Bayview, South Mona Vale Headland, plus Progress Park and Deep Creek Reserve in Narrabeen. For more complete information, check out www.pittwaterlga.com.au.

In Warringah, dogs can be taken off their lead at Frenchs Forest Showground, Beverley Job Park in Narrabeena, Griffith Park in Collaroy, Flora & Richie Roberts Reserve and John Fisher Park in Curl Curl and Hinkler Park in Queenscliff. You can find out more at http://www.warringah.nsw.gov.au/sections/companion_animals/html/unleashed.html

Some shop and public areas ban pets totally.

- **Cleaning up.** You are required by law to pick up any droppings your pets leaves during your walks, not just along the street but in parks and gardens and on beaches (where they're allowed). The easiest solution is to teach your dog to relieve him/herself before you leave your property. Otherwise, carry plastic bags or specially designed 'pooper scoopers' on your walks.

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