



## Are you ready for a pet?



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Getting a pet should be the start of many happy memories for you and your new arrival. However, it's often easy, at the sight of a beautiful bundle of fluff, to make this decision without considering the commitment of time, finance and care that your new friend will need.

This factsheet focuses on the areas you should consider prior to getting a pet to ensure that they fit in with your lifestyle now and in the future and that you're able to offer them everything they need to lead a healthy, happy life.



### Do you have the time in your life for a pet?

Dogs are social animals and are at their happiest when they have the company of their family group. Your new pet doesn't understand why you need to spend long periods of time away from the home each day and this can cause them to become anxious, bored and insecure, leading to a number of problems. If you are at work for most of the day, how will your dog get access to an outside area to go to toilet? Failing to provide this could result in your dog trying to wait until you get home, risking health problems to your pet and potential accidents in your home.

Some breeds require a lot of physical exercise and so before you fall in love with that little Husky puppy, you will need to consider whether you are in a position to provide it with the right amount of exercise that it needs on a daily basis come rain or shine. Even for less active breeds, daily exercise is a basic requirement that you will need to commit to for their lifetime.



Puppies need even more time and attention, especially in their first year when they need to be housetrained and socialised correctly. Do

you have the time to provide a good training regime to ensure that your puppy becomes a well behaved canine citizen? Often, puppies that have not received this care and attention, find themselves, as adults, in animal shelters as a result of undesirable behaviour through not having had access to a basic training programme.



If you have to spend time away from the house each day but still feel that you could provide a dog with a loving, stable home, you could consider employing a dog walker to ensure that these needs are met in your absence. Maybe you have a relative or a trusted friend who is happy to look after them for a few hours each day? Alternatively, cats and smaller companion animals are often happier to spend some time on their own and so as long as you are still committed to providing them with all of the care and attention they need, this may be a better option. Kittens, like puppies, will need a lot more of your time and so you will need to ensure that you have the space in your life to take on this responsibility.

### **Can you have a pet where you currently live?**

Do you live in an environment that's appropriate for the pet you want to welcome into your home?

Many rental properties don't allow pets at all or have restrictions on the type of pets you can have. If you are considering moving within your pet's lifetime, will you be able to take your new arrival with you?



You will also need to consider whether you live in an environment that is suitable for your pet. How much free space is there? If you have a garden, is it secure? How will your neighbours feel about your new pet?

Although we, as humans, have the world to explore, your pet will spend the majority of it's time in your home and garden. Therefore it is your responsibility to ensure that this environment is suitable and to provide stimulating exercise and play time for your pet to add interest and variety to their life.

### **Can you afford a pet?**

The initial price or adoption fee for your pet is the first of many expenses that you will need to consider. In addition to the food you will need to provide on a daily basis, there are also other costs such as neutering your pet, veterinary checkups and treatment where necessary, insurance, micro- chipping, a licence (in certain countries) and other outlays depending on the type of pet you get such as grooming costs, bedding, cat litter and collars etc.



The love you will receive from your pet will outweigh all of these costs but they need to be considered to ensure that you are able to offer them everything they need, now and throughout their lifetime.

## Is it the right time in your life to get a pet?

Before getting a pet you will need to consider whether this is the right time in your life and in the best interests of everyone in the family, including any other animals you may have. If you already have a pet, how will they get along with the new addition?

How stable are your human relationships? Answering this honestly at the outset will ensure that you can provide a peaceful environment to your pet.

How good is your health? If you have any conditions that may require you to stay in hospital or be away from the home for a period of time, who will look after them?

Do you have young children? Many animals are purchased for children whose faces light up when they see their new friend for the first time. Unfortunately, as children get older, sometimes their focus can move to other things meaning that their loyal pet is often ignored and has lost its initial appeal. Many kittens and puppies also become victims of accidents caused by younger children when playing with their pet unsupervised.



## Are you prepared to deal with all aspects of your pet?

Before you get a pet you will need to consider whether you are happy to accept all aspects of their behaviour, such as your cat deciding to use your sofa as a scratching post. Similarly to children, pets can sometimes do unexpected things and these are often the reasons for many owners taking their pet to an animal shelter as the pet no longer meets their expectations.



## What now?

If after reading this, you feel confident that you can offer a pet a secure, loving home with everything it needs for a happy life, please read our factsheet 'Getting your pet'. If you have decided, after some honest reflection, that you don't have the right lifestyle to welcome a pet into your home, there are many other ways that an animal could benefit from your love.

Why not sponsor a dog or cat in need of your support? We look after lots of animals who were abandoned by their owners or were born on the streets and have no-one else to care for them. Through a small payment each month you can show a dog or a cat that you care without having to take on the responsibility of a full time commitment. You will also receive an update about your pet every 6 months and will know that you have helped to make a big difference for an animal in need. For more information about this please email [enquiries@iapwa.org](mailto:enquiries@iapwa.org).

If you want more 'hands on' involvement, why not volunteer at your local animal sanctuary and offer to take their dogs out for a walk or spend some play time with their cats. If you don't have a shelter near to you, why not help the residents in your community who have a pet but may be unable to provide them with the exercise that they need.

If you'd like to combine your passion for animals with an experience of a lifetime, we also have opportunities available for volunteers to join us in Borneo and help out at our veterinary clinic and sanctuary. For details please email [enquiries@iapwa.org](mailto:enquiries@iapwa.org) or visit [www.iapwa.org](http://www.iapwa.org).