



Getting a Pet



Getting a pet

Getting a pet should be a wonderful experience for you and your family. Once you've made the commitment to welcome a dog or cat into your home, you'll need to consider where you plan to get them from. There are many options available and this factsheet aims to provide you with all of the information you'll need to support your decision.

Where will you get your pet?

Animal Rescue Centres

Animal rescue centres are great options when you want to give an animal a second chance. Many pets are euthanized on a daily basis simply because no one wants them. Most of them are perfectly healthy and would make great pets, but due to overpopulation, over breeding and irresponsible pet ownership, they are stripped of the chance to have a family. The Dogs Trust alone care for over 16,000 dogs a year in their UK centres so there are plenty to choose from! Getting a pet from a shelter also gives you access to the experienced staff who have been caring for them and who will be able to give you lots of advice to help them settle into their new home.



Many pets from these environments will also be neutered, micro chipped and will have received a full health check including vaccinations and treatment for worms and fleas. Some shelters even provide extra services such as free insurance and a collar/lead to take your new dog home in. There are also a number of breed specific rescue centres you can visit if you have a particular breed in mind.

Many councils rehome animals that have been abandoned on the streets and this is another way that you can help to make a difference to an animal that may otherwise be put to sleep.

If you would like information about the nearest rescue centre to you, please email us at enquiries@iapwa.org.

Cat / Dog Breeders:

If you decide to buy a pedigree puppy or kitten the first step is to ensure that you visit a reputable breeder. Although there are many breeders who breed pets responsibly, there are also many that don't and so it's vital to be able to differentiate between the two.

How to recognise a responsible breeder

- A good breeder will carefully screen potential buyers to ensure that the puppy or kitten will be placed in an appropriate home and would never release them from their mother too early simply to encourage a sale.
- They will be knowledgeable about the breed and any common genetic diseases. They will also be happy to provide you with advice about your new pet and to answer all of your questions.
- A good breeder will be able to show you both parents and the area where the animals are bred and raised. This should be clean and well maintained.
- Providing you are a serious buyer, they will allow you to handle the puppies or kittens, on your first and any subsequent visits. This also gives you the opportunity to see how they interact with the rest of the litter and their parents.
- Their puppies or kittens will be alert and healthy. There should be no discharge from the eyes or nose or any sore patches on the skin. There should also be no signs of coughing or any other indicators of ill health.

- A responsible breeder will be able to offer you a health guarantee, even if this is just for a few days, so that you have time to get your new arrival checked out by a qualified vet. Some breeders may also cover your pet for insurance for any illnesses during the first few weeks in your care. They should also have certificates, where applicable, to show whether your pup's parents have been tested for hereditary diseases and all relevant paperwork for vaccinations and health checks etc.



Pet shops

Pets should not be used as products. They are living creatures and should not be kept in windows luring people in like a new handbag at a shopping mall. All pets deserve a loving home no matter where they come from, but please explore other options before buying from a pet shop.

Puppy Farms

Puppy Farms are large scale commercial breeding establishments where many dogs are bred purely for profit and raised without the care and attention they need. Many of the dogs kept in this way are unhealthy and often live in extremely poor conditions.

Once they have been removed from their mother at a very young age, they are sold to 'dealers' or pet shops in order to satisfy the public's demands. A dealer is an agent for a puppy farm. They buy puppies and sell them on, advertising in newspapers and magazines, often masquerading as breeders.

The owners of these establishments don't often care who the puppies are sold to and we strongly advise against purchasing a puppy in this way to avoid contributing to this industry.

For further advice on any area of this factsheet, please contact our veterinary panel at enquiries@iapwa.org who will be happy to advise you.