

your pet is outdoors for any length of time.

- Make sure your pet always has access to water.
- Vaccinate your pet against rabies.
- Never leave a pet alone in a car. Temperatures can rise quickly causing overheating and death.

### Maintaining Good Health

- Plan routine annual check-ups. A veterinarian will check your pet's general health, answer your questions and ensure rabies vaccinations are maintained.

### Rabies

- Rabies is a fatal disease. Dogs and cats are at risk of contacting this illness. Protect your pet and family by vaccinating against rabies.

### Spay/Neuter

- Plan to spay or neuter your pet. Being a responsible pet owner also means not contributing to the pet over-population problem.

### Why?

- It reduces the threat of reproductive disorders, including cancer, in both males and females.
- Advantages for the owner include a decrease in territorial and aggressive behaviours, roaming, injuries and unwanted animals.
- Prevent pet over-population and the birth of additional animals for which homes may not be available.

### When?

- Most veterinarians recommend that female cats and dogs be spayed by six months of age or earlier.
- Male cats and dogs are usually neutered by seven months of age or earlier.
- Speak with a veterinarian about spay/neuter

shortly after getting your pet to determine what is right for your pet.

### Identify Your Pet

If your pet becomes lost, proper identification is your best chance for a safe return.

- A current municipal licence tag is the best form of identification for your cat and dog; and it's the law.\*
- Cats should wear safety/breakaway collars.
- Dog collars should be securely fitted yet comfortable for the dog.
- Take photos; record colour and special markings, breed, weight and age.
- Implanted microchips are available from a veterinarian and are a quick and easy office procedure.
- Know the laws about what type of pets you may own and how many of each species you are allowed to have in your city or municipality.

**\*All cats and dogs living in Toronto must be licensed with Toronto Animal Services and wear the City-issued tag.**

### Animal Centre Locations

146 The East Mall

1300 Sheppard Ave. W.

821 Progress Ave.

140 Princes' Blvd.

(Horse Palace, Exhibition Place)

**Hours:** 10:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. daily

(Closed Statutory Holidays)

**Toronto Animal Services**  
**416-338-PAWS (7297)**

[www.toronto.ca/animalservices](http://www.toronto.ca/animalservices)

# Thinking of Owning a Pet?



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Owning a pet can be a wonderful experience with many rewards. Pets deserve a good home for their entire life. That's your responsibility.

*This pamphlet outlines the responsibilities of pet care and protection. It also describes the questions you should ask before choosing your pet.*

## The Commitment

**Life Span** – You are responsible for a pet for its entire life.

- Cats or dogs – usually five to 20 years depending on the type of breed and size of the animal.
- Hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, guinea pigs and fish – five years or less. Longer for budgies and rabbits.

**Time** – Do not overlook your time commitment!

- How much time do you have each day to provide grooming, companionship and exercise?
- How active is your lifestyle? Do you enjoy jogging rather than strolls around the block? Different breeds of dogs have different exercise levels.
- Animal bedding, kennel and pocket pet cages need to be cleaned on a regular basis.

**Finances** – Buying a pet is not the biggest cost. Long-term expenses add up over the years. Costs include:

- Food and pet supplies
- Veterinarian care and vaccines
- Obedience training
- Licensing
- Vacation care or boarding
- Accident insurance
- Grooming

**Lifestyle** – Active dogs and cats need challenges, training, tasks and regular exercise.

- Will you enjoy taking your dog for a daily walk? Could it become a chore?
- Will the pet be on its own throughout the day? This can be a problem for some dogs and cats.
- Is the size of your home and property big enough?
- Do you travel on business or vacations? Will your pet travel with you or stay in a kennel?

## Get The Facts

- Do research on the needs of different types of pets and breeds. Consider grooming, temperament and exercise requirements and whether these fit with your lifestyle.
- If you choose to purchase a pet from a breeder, take the time to observe both of the pet's parents. Observe temperament and behaviour; these are good indicators of your pet as an adult.
- Include all family members, including other pets, in the adoption process. Have everyone interact with the new pet. Make sure everyone gets along and look out for possible allergies to pets.
- Obtain any available history that describes your new pet's behaviour and health background.
- Ask if the type of pet and breed is prone to health problems associated with genetics, age or body type.
- Check if the type of pet and breed is easy to train and is reported to be good with children.

- Discuss your needs, likes, expectations and commitment with a knowledgeable animal person or veterinarian.

**\*Toronto Animal Services has pets available for adoption. You can check online or drop into one of four Animal Centres. [toronto.ca/animalservices](http://toronto.ca/animalservices)**

## Bringing Your Pet Home

### Diet

- Know the diet and feeding schedule of your new pet. Speak to a veterinarian about a suitable diet.
- Feed in a quiet, protected place.
- Introduce changes gradually. The frequency, amount and type of diet will change during your pet's lifetime.

### Health Care

- Within three days of your pet's arrival home, take it to a veterinarian. Get an initial health assessment, advice on vaccinations and preventive health care.

### Training

- Be sure all members of the household are trained to handle the pet properly.
- Plan to enrol your family and your dog in obedience training classes. Training must be consistent with all family members; get everyone involved, including children.

### Protective Care

- Know and respect local bylaws pertaining to animal care and control. In Toronto, all cats and dogs must be licensed annually.
- Keep dogs on a leash while in public places.
- Obey "Stoop and Scoop" laws.
- Provide a shelter area that protects your pet from sun, wind, snow, heat and cold when