

How to choose that special new addition for your family:

Getting a new pet is a very big decision and one that should not be taken lightly. These days' pets are living much longer and therefore if you are not committed to possibly 15 years of care and attention then you are not ready for a young kitten or puppy. This decision requires adequate preparation, research, and commitment. Pets are becoming family members and as such must fit in with the family lifestyle.

Step 1: Determine the level of energy wanted in a pet, including your time availability for it.

- o What is your lifestyle (very active or more sedate, camping, hiking etc? Do you want to go for walks with your pet- short or long?)
- o What is your home like (acreage vs. apartment)? Do you have a fenced yard?
- o Do you want your animal to go outside or even to live outside?
- o How much time can you spend with the pet and does that change with the seasons (long shift vs. home for lunch; teacher who may be home in the summer)
- o Are you best suited for a cat? Or a dog?
- o Should you consider an adult animal over a young one?

In general a young animal will take more time from you initially than an older adult. Also most cats require less attention and training than dogs.

Step 2: Determine when to get a pet

- o When do you have the most amount of time on your hands to train and bond with the animal?

Step 3: Deciding on a breed – all breeds have their own issues so it's best to know what common problems certain breeds tend to have. Remember that mixed breeds may have less medical problems but their temperament and problems may be less predictable.

- o First discuss your choices with your veterinarian: Who knows breed specific health problems better than your own veterinarian! We may be able to suggest a good breeder for specific breeds of dogs and cats.
- o Talk to others who own pets: Those who own always boast about their breed so it may not be a very objective opinion
- o Talk to specific breed clubs: They have a wealth of information on one breed but not on all
- o Consult breed books: A great place to start for the basics and to narrow down the field
- o Search the internet: So much information can be very daunting and at times misleading
- o Go to pet shows: This gives you first hand interaction with the breed at their best, they can also lead you in the direction of a good breeder
- o Discuss with breeders: There are some excellent breeders out there but you must be careful, always interview the breeder and view the facility, remember a good breeder will be just as picky with whom they give their pup or kitten to as you are to which one you choose.

Step 4: Where to get your new friend

- o Breeder: Select your breeder carefully and read the contract. The health care is between you and your veterinarian and a good breeder will encourage this relationship. Many breeders have a clause that encourages the new owner to get a health examination within 72 hours of getting the pet. This allows you and the breeder to be assured your specific pet did not come with existing health problems.
- o SPCA or other Rescue association: There are many pets out there that have been abandoned and with a little extra care can make wonderful pets. If you don't have the time to train a pup an adult could be a great option. Remember that these pets have an unknown history and may already be bringing baggage

with them so be careful with the one you choose especially if there are children in the house.

- o Pet store/Newspaper: These pets also tend to have an unknown history and come from various sources. They may be prone to more health issues in both the short and long term. If you want a pure bred it is better to wait and go through a breeder to make sure that you get what you pay for.
- o Friend: They should be able to tell you a little about the male and female and any possibly any health problems.
- o Again visit the facility if possible and view the litter before making any decision.

Step 5: Selecting the specific individual

- o It is always best if you can see the pet and how it interacts with other people and other animals/siblings. This is not always possible with the advent of the internet and purchasing purebred puppies/kittens from great distances. Your breeder knows their animals the best and should be able to answer any questions on temperament or health you might have. However, remember the truth is in the eye of the beholder. The person you buy your pet from should be confident in the health status of their animal and encourage you to have it examined right away by your veterinarian (usually within 3-5 days of you picking up your pet).
- o Ask questions of the breeder/seller of the animal. Is this individual (puppy, kitten or adult) dominant or not? Do they like to be handled? How active or curious is this particular individual. How much exposure to people, children or to other pets have they had? What are the temperaments of the parents like (can you see/meet them). Have the parents had any health concerns and what? Can you talk to their veterinarian, who takes care of their animals? Work with your breeder in choosing a pet with a personality that suits you.
- o A runt of the litter is not always best as these animals may have more health problems.
- o Remember you are trying to choose a friend that will best fit into your family. Hopefully a strong bond will develop with this individual that will continue to grow over the next 10 to 15 years, if it is a kitten or puppy.

Always remember that new pets are not great gifts and do not go and look at puppies or kittens before your research has been completed as it is very easy to get drawn in by their charm!

Kitten checklist

Find out:

- o How old is the kitten? Kittens should stay with their litter mates for at least eight weeks.
- o Is the kitten fully weaned?
- o What are they eating? Always stay with the original diet that they have been eating well. You can slowly change to a different or better brand once your friend has settled into their new home.
- o Which filler is in the litter box? Be careful with clumping litters as some kittens will ingest it, which can cause severe problems.
- o How much grooming will be required daily? Weekly?
- o Which a vaccination has he/she had? When?
- o Has he/she been treated for fleas? Worms? Mites? If so what medications/treatments were used? When?
- o Has the kitten been spayed or (for males) neutered?

Look for:

- o lively, curious, and playful
- o friendly affectionate personality
- o clear bright eyes
- o glossy coat
- o sweet smell

Be wary of:

- o evidence of diarrhea (bad odours; check under the tail) or worms (“pot-bellied” look)
- o poor grooming; ratty patchy coat
- o sickly or listless cat; not active or playful
- o nasal or eye discharge

Puppy checklist

Find out:

- o How old is the puppy? Your puppy should stay with their bothers/sisters and mom until 8 weeks of age for important socialization lessons.
- o Is the puppy fully weaned?
- o What is he/she eating? Always stay with the original diet that they have been eating well from the breeder. If needed you can change your puppy to a different or better brand once the puppy has settled into your home.
- o Has the puppy been crated? Has house training begun? Crate training is the fastest and most effective method of house training.
- o How much grooming/bathing may be required? Weekly? Monthly?
- o Which a vaccine has the puppy had? When?
- o Has the puppy been treated for fleas? Worms? Mites? If so what medication/treatment was used? When?
- o Has she been spayed or for a male neutered?

Look for:

- o lively, bright, and playful
- o friendly affectionate and confident personality
- o clear bright eyes
- o glossy coat
- o sweet puppy smell

Be wary of:

- o evidence of diarrhea (bad odours; check under the tail) or worms (“pot-bellied” look)
- o poor rough coat
- o sickly poor health, listless or lethargic
- o nasal or eye discharge