

PET FACTS
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DOGS: In just **SIX YEARS**, one unsprayed female dog and her offspring can reproduce up to **67,000** dogs.

CATS: In just **NINE YEARS**, one unsprayed female cat, her mate and her offspring (producing two litters per year) can reproduce up to **11,606** cats.

Spaying and neutering your dogs and cats can prevent thousands of unwanted and homeless animals from being delivered to animal shelters.

**PET OWNERSHIP
RESPONSIBILITIES**

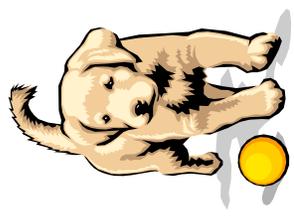


**“Don’t let your Dog
Down.**

You aren’t a dog owner just at Christmas, or on the weekends, or in the afternoon, or when you have spare time. You aren’t a dog owner just when the dog is behaving, or when he’s a cute fuzzy puppy, or when he’s winning awards. When you bring a dog into your family, that dog is yours for life. If you can’t keep that commitment, don’t make it. And once you’ve made it, don’t break it. Your dog’s life depends on you.”

—American Kennel Club
www.akc.org
Be a Responsible Dog Owner
Suggestion 75

COCOPA INDIAN HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT



**PET OWNERSHIP
RESPONSIBILITIES**

PET OWNERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Pet ownership is a huge responsibility and should not be undertaken without a great deal of thought and preparation. Since pets are dependent on humans for food, shelter, entertainment, companionship and health, owners have an obligation to keep them safe from harm and neglect. On its website (www.akc.org), the American Kennel Club recommends families give serious consideration to choosing the *right pet* at the *right time*. Following are some of the Club's suggested areas for consideration:

- **Recognize your financial commitment.** Will you have enough money to support your pet and any of its offspring (adequate food, spaying/neutering, routine shots, medical care for injuries and illnesses and end-of-life issues)?
- **Evaluate your lifestyle.** Do you have the time, energy and long-term interest required for pet ownership? If your child is going to be your pet's primary caretaker, has she/he demonstrated the ability and interest to care for a pet over a long period of time? If not, now is not the time.
- **Make a list of the characteristics** you would like your pet to come by naturally (e.g., size, energy level, trainability and temperament). Do research and ask questions to be sure you select a compatible breed. Be aware of common health problems in the breed you select and know how to prevent/treat them. Do not pick an animal because it is fashionable or a cute puppy or kitten. Pick a pet that will fit into your family long after it has grown up.
- **Consider an older pet.** Raising a puppy or kitten can be very trying. It may be an older pet will better fit your lifestyle, especially if you get one already trained and spayed or neutered. You may be able to rescue a lost, abandoned or surrendered pet and save its life.
- **Prepare your family and home.** Before your pet arrives, buy food, a collar and leash, toys, grooming tools and other necessities. Move breakables or anything chewable (electric cords, shoes, house plants) out of reach. Close off any areas of the house you want off-limits to pets.
- **Establish a schedule for tasks.** Who will be responsible for providing food and water, exercising, clean-up, grooming and trips to the vet? Review your schedule periodically to ensure your pets are receiving the care they need.
- **Set a containment policy.** It is essential you have a method of keeping your pet on your own property. Check fences for spots vulnerable to digging. If your fence is broken, your pet can jump over it or your gate is left open, you must have your pet on a leash at all times it is outdoors. Pets roaming around a neighborhood put the entire community at risk for injury, illness and damage to property or other pets. Dogs are especially dangerous once they form a pack since they tend to become very aggressive in groups and may unexpectedly attack.
- **Find a veterinarian.** Have your pet examined by the vet within a few days of its arrival and set up a schedule for vaccination and check-ups. If your pet is not spayed or neutered, do it as soon as possible. Animal shelters are full of unwanted pets; do not add to the burden by unplanned breeding.
- **Welcome your pet slowly.** Give your pet time to adjust to his/her new home. Show him/her where his/her bed, food and water are — then let him/her explore. Too much too soon will frighten your pet. Slowly introduce family members, friends, visitors and other family pets according to your new pet's temperament. Some take longer than others to become comfortable in new surroundings. Have patience since adjustment could take a while.
- **Set house rules** and make sure every family member enforces them. Consistency is key to having a well-behaved pet.
- **Keep your pet safe.** Make sure your dog wears a collar with an identification tag. This will increase the chances of your pet being returned to you. If your pet is allowed outside, provide a sheltered area. When hot weather arrives, make sure your pet has a shady place to rest and provide plenty of fresh, cool water. Get regular vaccinations and keep your pets free from ticks, fleas and other parasites that can cause disease and discomfort.
- **Train your pet.** Teach your pet from the beginning what is appropriate behavior. By teaching basic commands (sit, stay, come), you will make your interaction easier. Expose your pet to different people and settings regularly and praise him for acting calmly around other people and animals. Prevent nuisance barking.
- **Supervise your pet with children.** Animals naturally protect themselves by biting and scratching. You may think your pet is "good with children" but not all children are good with pets. Know the children who come in contact with your pet. Do not leave very small or unfamiliar children alone with pets. Do not allow children around ill or injured pets. If a child cannot or will not treat your pet appropriately, keep both your pet and that child safe by not exposing them to each other.
- **Establish an emergency contact.** Enlist a family member or friend already known by your pet to take over care in the event of a sudden illness, hospitalization or other emergency. Be sure to leave a list of general care instructions in a safe place and be sure your helper knows where that place is.