

- Pets

Pet ownership is a big responsibility

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GETTING a puppy or kitten is a big decision, and many people don't realise how much work it is.

If you're considering getting a pet, here are some things to think about:

1) It's a long-term commitment. Please make sure you have the time and resources to commit to them for their entire lives. Larger pets tend to have shorter life spans than smaller ones.

2) Everyone in the family must be on board. If your child wants a puppy or kitten, but your spouse doesn't want the responsibility or the messes, ask yourself if this is something you can compromise on.

If not, maybe wait until you're all on the same page before getting any critters on board.

3) If you have a large house and garden, then this is great as your new pet will have plenty of room to run around and play.

However, if you live in an apartment or flat, this can be more challenging.

If you aren't sure how big your kitten or puppy will get, then it is best to overestimate rather than underestimate.

4) Taking care of a pet can be expensive. Pet owners need to pay for food, toys, grooming, and veterinary care among other expenses.

If you plan on getting a dog or cat, you should make sure that you have enough money set aside each month to cover these costs.

5) Do your homework on different breeds. There are hundreds of breeds of dogs and cats. From tiny teacup puppies to giant Maine coon cats, there's sure to be one that suits your personality and lifestyle.

Think about what kind of personality you want in a pet. Do you want them playful? Quiet? Adventurous?

Also, think about the size of your apartment or house – if you live in an apartment, you can't have a large breed dog like a Great Dane because they'll take up too much space.

You may also want to consider how much time your new pet will need from you, some breeds require more attention than others and may not be ideal for working parents.

6) If you have allergies, it's best to get a short-haired cat or dog. If you have asthma, it's best to get a short-haired cat or dog.

Long-haired animals shed more than short-haired animals and this can cause an allergic reaction in some people. However, if you don't have allergies or asthma, there aren't any health concerns related to having a longhaired pet.

7) It's critical to keep your pet healthy by providing regular vaccinations and preventive care throughout their life. Your veterinarian can advise you on which vaccines are appro-

appropriate for your pet based on their age, lifestyle, and risk factors (such as outdoor exposure).

Some vaccines require multiple doses over time; others are given once as part of an annual exam.

Vaccines protect against many diseases common in cats and dogs, including distemper, hepatitis virus infection, parvovirus infection and rabies virus infection (among others).

8) Get to know common diseases. Some of these are hereditary, so they may be passed on to their offspring if your pet has them. This is especially true for cats, which can suffer from feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), feline leukemia virus (FeLV), heartworm, and tapeworms. Dogs can get heartworms and Lyme disease from ticks.

9) Think about spaying and neutering your pet. Both male and female pets can be spayed or neutered after reaching sexual maturity (usually six months old).

Spaying female pets prevent them from going into heat. They will be less likely to develop mammary tumors later in life, neutering male dogs prevents testicular cancer. Spaying or neutering helps keep your pet healthy.

10) Puppies and kittens need lots of attention and care. They can't be left alone for long periods, so consider other options if you work full-time or have other commitments outside of the home.

Dogs need lots of exercise and attention, as well as grooming and training.

Cats are more independent than dogs but still need regular feeding, cleaning out, and playtime.

If you already have an older dog or cat at home, you'll need to consider whether bringing another pet into your home will upset the existing animal's routine or disrupt the household harmony.

If you have been contemplating getting a puppy or kitten, please consider adoption first. There are so many beautiful dogs and cats in shelters all over the country that need loving homes. You can find them at shelters and rescues in your area.

Thousands of animals are euthanised every year because they don't have a home. Opt to adopt, don't shop.