



Animal
Medicines
Australia



Healthy lifestyles through responsible pet ownership

FACT SHEET



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Australians have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the developed world. Our relationship with our pets allows us to access physical, mental and social benefits.

While owners benefit from our relationship with our pets, responsible pet ownership places obligations on owners to ensure their animals receive the care they need for a healthy lifestyle.

Responsible pet ownership requires owners to consider the needs of their pets, and also the health, social, economic and environmental issues associated with keeping a pet.

Responsible pet ownership assists in ensuring that a pet is healthy and can provide many years of companionship and loyalty to you and your family.

SELECTING AND OBTAINING A PET

Responsible pet ownership starts long before your purchase or adopt a puppy, kitten, cat or dog. Potential new owners should consider how they will meet the needs of their pet throughout their lifetime before adopting or purchasing. Puppy preschool and dog training classes can help your new pet learn positive behaviours as well as provides an opportunity for both of you to socialise with others.



SOME ISSUES THAT OWNERS WILL NEED TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:

- **Ensure that you have space for your pet**
Some strata schemes have requirements regarding pets and these need to be considered. Some local governments also

require some pets (especially cats) to be kept inside, or contained to protect the environment and wildlife while other pets (such as turtles) may need a licence.

- **Ensure that your pet suits your family and lifestyle**
Different pets have different needs for exercise, care and attention. Some need lots of outdoor space and exercise while others may only need an occasional short walk. Potential owners should consider their own lifestyle to ensure that any pet complements it. Breed societies and vets can provide useful advice on pet traits to people seeking to obtain a new pet. If you are time poor, a mature pet may be more suitable as they are probably already toilet trained
- **Ownership costs**
Key costs to feed, house and care for your pet may vary depending on the type and size of your pet. Responsible owners should investigate likely costs to ensure they can meet these requirements. Animal Medicines Australia's pet report [*Pets in Australia: a national survey of pets and people*](#) includes information about likely pet costs based on the experiences of existing pet owners.

Potential owners may also consider adopting a rescue pet from a local shelter. Dogs and cats from shelters are vet checked for their health and are wormed, de-sexed and micro-chipped prior to release to their new family.

Conclusion

- Research consistently shows that people with pets are **happier, healthier, and more socially connected** to their communities.
- Our pets provide us with **companionship and loyalty** and look to us to take care of their needs.
- Responsible ownership ensure that our dogs, cats, birds and other pets can **live long, healthy lives** alongside us.

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CARING FOR YOUR PET'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Irrespective of whether you have a dog, cat, rabbit or a bird, responsible pet ownership means taking responsibility for meeting all the needs of your companion animal.

This means ensuring that they have:

- **Food and water, shelter from heat, cold and rain**
If you are cold, chances are so is your pet and a blanket will help keep them warm. If it's hot, leave more water in a cooler area of your home. If it is raining, ensure their shelter does not leak.
- **Regular checks for fleas, ticks or other parasites**
Health checks are important for your pet's health. Regular checks may also prevent parasites from infecting you or your living areas.
- **A worming schedule to protect against internal parasites**
If you struggle to give worming tablets to your pet, ask your vet for advice.
- **Regular veterinary check-ups to maintain and protect your pet's health including vaccinations against diseases**
Preventative healthcare may save you money in the medium to long term in addition to heartache if vet visits are delayed. If you are going on vacation and boarding your pet, the pet hotel will insist on up-to-date health records including vaccination certificates.

Owners should develop a relationship with their vet. A cooperative approach is essential to support the health and wellbeing of your pet.

Just like people, pets can sometime be injured or become ill and treatment by a vet can become expensive. You may want to consider pet insurance to ensure that veterinary expenses can be met.

For many animals, responsible owners can also microchip their pets. Micro-chipping and registering your pet ensures that should they

ever become lost, they can be scanned and returned to their home. This includes ensuring that ownership details such as home address and contact numbers are kept up-to-date. Some owners are now using 'air-tags' attached to collars so that they can locate their pet instantly via an app on their phone.

FOSTERING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

While being conscious of their pet's needs, responsible pet owners are aware of the potential impact that their pet may have on others and take care to ensure that these interactions are positive and rewarding.

Pets may meet neighbours, friends, family members or other animals. Responsible ownership ensures that these interactions maintain the safety and security of your pet and who they are in contact with.

It is important that your pet does not create a nuisance for others otherwise you may find neighbours, strata and the local government asking you to resolve these issues. If this has happened to you, or to avoid this happening to you, talk with your vet about action you can take.

Responsible owners ensure their animal:

- **is under control when in public spaces or community spaces**
Animals that are not under control or not supervised can create a nuisance for other members of the community. Unsupervised pets are also at risk of injury requiring expensive veterinary care.
- **is properly exercised and entertained as to not form destructive or noisy habits**
- **is safe when presented with new, or threatening situations.**
Special care may need to be taken in new situations such as parties or thunderstorms. Responsible owners ensure that the safety and security of their pet is paramount. This may involve securing a pet in a room or yard to prevent them from escaping or hurting themselves.



RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP CHECKLIST



- ☐ Do you have space for your pet?
- ☐ Does your pet suit your family and lifestyle?
- ☐ Can you cover ownership costs?
- ☐ Can you provide your pet with food and water, and shelter from heat, cold and rain?
- ☐ Can you provide your pet with regular checks for fleas, ticks or other parasites?
- ☐ Can you provide your pet with a worming schedule to protect against internal parasites?
- ☐ Can you provide your pet with regular veterinary check-ups to maintain and protect your pet's health including vaccinations against diseases?
- ☐ Can you keep your pet under control when in public spaces or community spaces?

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CHECK ALL THE ABOVE AND BE A
RESPONSIBLE PET OWNER

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