

Adding a New Pet to the Family

There are many different things to consider before adding an additional pet to your family. Here are some tips to think about BEFORE you purchase or adopt another pet:

Cost – If you decide to add a cat or dog to your family, the purchase price of that animal is usually the cheapest expense that you will incur. Puppies and kittens need to be seen by a veterinarian once a month for 3-4 months for health and vaccination check-ups. This is only if they are otherwise healthy and does not include visits for illness or injury. As adults need regular visits each year at a minimum. You also have to think about good quality food, toys, bowls, leashes, litter boxes, county and city licenses, etc.

Time – Pets take a lot of time. They are living creatures and cannot be by themselves for long periods. They need to have socialization and interactions. If you do not have enough time to designate to another dog or a cat, then consider purchasing another type of pet.

Training – The more time you spend with your pet, the better your relationship will become. Kittens need to be trained to scratch in appropriate places and to use their litter box. Puppies need to be housetrained, socialized with other dogs and people, and taught basic manners. If you get another pet, you should be sure that your current pet already has good household manners.

Your own family members – If you have small children, do your research on age-appropriate pets. A 5-year-old child may not do well with a small animal like a gerbil. It is suggested to wait to add an additional pet to your family until your children are out of diapers – that way you are able to focus more on proper care of your new animal than you would with an infant or young toddler.

Adopting from a rescue or humane society – If you are considering a cat or a kitten, please visit your local humane society. Unfortunately shelters are usually overflowing with cats and kittens that are waiting for loving, forever homes. Shelter staff can also give you advice on how to introduce a new cat to your current family of pets. If you are looking for a new dog, talk to shelter staff and breed rescue groups. They can steer you in the right direction in terms of what your family is looking for and what might be the best match for you and your pets.

What to expect with your own children – Many times kids will ask to get a pet. Many times they will love that pet and spend all kinds of time with it for the first couple of weeks. After the novelty has worn off, they may have moved on. You should not expect a child to be fully responsible for a pet. Ultimately, this should be an animal that you are getting for the entire family, and it should be, primarily, the parent's responsibility to care for it. However, you should get the children involved with taking care of the new pet. Engage the children with easy responsibilities (setting out food, for example). If you get a dog or a puppy, have your children attend dog-training class with you, so they can see how to work with the dog.