

## ***Bringing Home a New Dog or Cat - Exciting and Challenging!***

Bringing home a new dog or cat, whether young or older, can be both exciting and challenging. Of course, when considering the addition of a new furry friend to your home, we surely hope you decide to adopt from Pope Memorial Frontier Animal Shelter or from a shelter near your home. Welcoming a new member to your family - cat or dog - can be a big change and requires some adjustments not only for your adopted furry friend, but for you, your family and any pets currently living with you as well. To create a pet-happy and human-happy home, it's well worth taking a little time to make a plan. Consider some guidelines like the ones we've summarized here from the sources listed below.



### ***A First Step...***

One of the first considerations when planning to adopt a new dog or cat is to think about any animals you already have at home. Will the animals accept each other and learn to get along? If at all possible, one best way to find out is to bring your current dog to the shelter to “meet and greet” the potential new four-legged family member. With a telephone call to the shelter staff, this can easily be arranged at a mutually convenient time in a safe and supervised manner. If your current household includes cats, you may want to focus on choosing a shelter dog that is already well known to get along with cats - and many of them do! Again, the staff at the shelter is very familiar with the animals living there. They can easily guide you to those animals that might best fit your family and home.

### ***Pet Proofing Your Home***

Look around your home. Do you see electrical cords lying around that might seem like a nice chew-toy to a puppy or an interesting toy to a new kitty? Are there little knickknacks around that can be accidentally knocked over by inquisitive little paws or easily swallowed which could cause choking? What about rubber bands, paper clips, or other small desk items that can end up on the floor? Pet proofing your home can help prevent mishaps or more serious accidents that might cause harm and lead to unplanned costly veterinary visits.

Before bringing your new furry friend home, examine your rooms and surroundings from what will be his or her point of view. Be especially attentive to easily accessible items that can be dangerous, such as cleaning chemicals, or plants that may possibly have toxic leaves. Place items like this out of reach from

potentially curious creatures. A garbage can with a locking lid may be a good investment to prevent possible messes on the kitchen floor.

Consider a crate for your new puppy or even for an older dog. In addition to reinforcing housetraining, a crate also gives you a safe place to leave your dog during those times when you are unable to supervise him. Dogs also have an instinct to den, so having a crate gives them a place of their own. It can be especially inviting when made comfortable with a pillow and favorite toy.

When it comes to housetraining, even if your new dog - young or old - has learned the basics pretty well, plan to treat him as if he's not housetrained for at least the first week or two. Moving to a new home can be stressful so sometimes past training might need reinforcing. Accidents can happen! As soon as possible, it will be helpful to establish a regular, daily routine for going outside. Set up a routine and stick to it!

### ***Walking – A Healthy Plan for Everyone!***

When discussing plans with your family or household members, consider responsibilities like who will walk the dog in the morning, or during the day, and at night. Be sure that your new friend's collar or harness fits appropriately and that his leash is strong enough to hold him back if needed. Play time that includes some running is always helpful to help him burn off all that excitement and energy! Is there a dog-friendly park nearby or a fenced area where the dog can have some off-leash play time?



### ***Food Changes...Not So Fast...***

Before trying out new brands of food for either dogs or cats, find out what your new friend has already been eating and get some more of the same, at least at first. If you want to change to a different food, do so gradually. A gradual food switch will let your pet adjust and prevent digestive upset.

### ***Kitty Considerations***

All cat lovers know that kitties can have a mind of their own. You make a cozy cat bed for them; they'll sleep on your bath mat. Give them your bath mat and they'll suddenly fall in love with the cushion on your favorite chair. So when bringing home a cat or kitten, it might be helpful and more reassuring to your new family member to cat-proof a small room to start with. Then gradually give your feline friend more space. Let her pick the place that makes her the most

comfortable. If your new kitty wants to hide for a while, give her some space and time. Let her adjust to her new surroundings by exploring them in her own time when she feels comfortable to do so. Cats often don't feel secure in a new environment until they have found all the good hiding places!

### ***The Nose Knows!***

While making these changes, it's important to remember that scent can often be very reassuring to animals. Dogs in particular have a much stronger sense of smell than humans do. If possible, take something along that smells like your pet's former home, such as a towel, blanket, or favorite toy and keep it in a place where he or she can easily find it in his new home.

### ***Being Prepared for Emergencies...***

We all know that emergencies can arise at any time and anyone who has had a pet knows that it's a good idea to become established with a local veterinarian. While all our animal friends at PMFAS - as well as at most shelters - have been vaccinated and spayed or neutered, it's helpful to introduce your new arrival to a vet of your choice. Plan a wellness check within the first few weeks. In this way, your vet can more easily diagnose and treat any problems that might arise in the future. It's still true that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

### ***Let Your Kids in on the Fun...As Well As the Responsibilities of Care***

Your child has most likely been waiting with excitement and anticipation for the day that the new dog or cat comes home. While a pet can be a great way to teach children about responsibility, it's important to be realistic about what they can and cannot do. Young children may be able to help feed a dog or cat and older children may be able to help exercise their new pet. However, an adult needs to assume primary responsibility for the day-to-day care of the animal and make sure that children are given age-appropriate responsibilities in caring for their new furry friend. An adult also needs to assure that the pet is up to date on all vaccines and is provided with appropriate veterinary care when needed.

It's also important that children be taught how to interact with dogs and cats, even if they have been around them before. While many pets can learn to tolerate some poking, prodding, and hugs from a child, it's best to let both sides get used to each other first. Consider getting one of the many available pet care books that are specifically written for children and choose one that is appropriate to the ages of your own children. Some possibilities are listed in the resources below.

Another good tip: wait a couple of days - or more - before you invite friends and neighbors over to meet your new furry friend. Let your new pet get used to his new home and family. Too many new faces and petting hands can be overwhelming.

### ***Maintaining a Safe, Happy Home for Pets and Humans...Resources to Help***

Yes, bringing home a new pet is both exciting and challenging! By creating a safe, nurturing environment for your pet, you and your family will give your new four-legged member the best home possible. And again, when you're considering adding a new pet to your family, remember your local shelter and adopt one of those wonderful animals. The staff and volunteers at Pope Memorial Frontier Animal Shelter look forward to seeing you- and the friendly creatures that temporarily live there look forward to their new "fur-ever" homes!

For specific questions with which we may be able to help, don't hesitate to call PMFAS at 802-754-2228 or email [animals@FASV.comcastbiz.net](mailto:animals@FASV.comcastbiz.net).

Meanwhile, for more information, some helpful resources include the following websites:

- Petfinder, [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com)
- American Veterinarian Medical Association, [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)
- Partnership for Animal Welfare, [www.paw-rescue.org](http://www.paw-rescue.org)
- Your Dog's Friend, [www.yourdogsfriend.org](http://www.yourdogsfriend.org)
- Whole Dog Journal, [www.whole-dog-journal.com](http://www.whole-dog-journal.com)
- Books like Love Has No Age Limit: Welcoming an Adopted Dog into Your Home and other books and articles by animal behaviorist, Patricia McConnell, Ph.D., [www.patriciamcconnell.com](http://www.patriciamcconnell.com)