



# Questions to consider before getting a pet

Article brought to you by Dr Alice Marshall, Registered Veterinarian (NSW VSB)

Pet ownership is a huge responsibility. Pets enrich our lives in so many ways, but we are solely responsible for their food, exercise, housing and health care needs. As their owners, we must commit to caring for them and enriching their lives, too.

Purchasing a pet should never be an impulse decision. Thousands of animals are surrendered each year due to inappropriate choices. Research to ensure you can meet your new pet's physiological, behavioural, social and health care needs.

## How long will my pet live?

Having a pet is a long-term commitment. On average, dogs live for 12 years, while cats can live for 15 – 20 years. Small puppies and kittens grow to large adults with greater appetite and exercise needs – make sure you can provide for them at all stages of their lives.

## What will my pet cost?

Owning a pet includes one-off costs like microchipping and desexing, plus ongoing costs such as vaccinations, annual vet health checks, food, worming and parasite protection, boarding and training. Emergencies, accidents, and vet visits cost additional money. Do some research to make sure you are aware of and prepared for your chosen breed's potential future costs.

## What are my time commitments?

Our modern lifestyles, long working hours and social lives can make caring for a pet difficult. Companion animals have evolved alongside us and need human company. Do you have time to walk a dog every day? Are you home enough to give your cat the attention they crave?

Exercise, socialisation, grooming, feeding, playtime, reward-based

training, and providing company and attention are all important aspects of pet ownership.

## Does anyone in my family have allergies?

Allergies to animals (cats in particular) can be common. Before adopting a pet, make sure your family is not allergic. You can check this by spending some time at a friend's house with a pet to find out.

## Where do I live?

If you have a back yard – is it secure? Is there cover from rain or heat if you are not home? If your dog is kept inside when you are not home, where will it go to the toilet? Will you be able to get home every few hours to let it outside? If you rent, are you allowed to keep pets at your current residence? Do you have plans to move in the future? How will your pet fit into these plans?

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### Can I commit to training?

Training cats and dogs is an essential part of responsible pet ownership and helps pets develop into confident, well-mannered members of your household. If you think of getting a pet such as a cat or a dog, obedience, behavioural, and socialisation training (puppy preschool) is something that you can't miss out on.

If you spend time considering these questions before getting a pet, as well as seeking advice from vets and other pet owners, both your life and the life of your pet will be the better for it.

*This article is for general information only. We recommend that you speak to your veterinarian regarding specific advice and help for your pet.*

