



Talking Points

... continued from June 2014 PawdCast

Fur, Feathers or Scales? What Type of Pet Do You Want?

How much time do you have to put into caring for your pet? From feeding and grooming, to cleaning and giving it attention, the pet you choose may require basic care or something more substantial.

Dogs and cats are furry and friendly, but also need a lot of attention from you. This includes playtime, feeding, walking, brushing and grooming, tooth brushing, and cleaning up the yard or litterbox. You must consider your space – if you live in an apartment and want a dog, think of breeds that are more suited to small space living such as Yorkies, Pugs and Lhasa Apsas, rather than large breeds such as Boxers, Border Collies and Retrievers who need space to run. Even with a smaller breed, think about what kind of grooming they will need. For example, a Lhasa is going to need frequent grooming whereas a Pug will need a quick brushing a few times a week.

Temperament is also important, because some dogs are more “wired” than others to be aggressive or needy, and you want to be able to handle these pups. Do you have children? Some breeds do well with kids, while others do not, and all children should be taught to be gentle and patient with a pet for their own safety.

Cats may seem more independent than dogs, which is true, but they still need your time and attention. Often, cats need to be brushed to help prevent hairballs, as well as have their nails trimmed to keep them from scratching furniture – or you! Most cats use a litterbox, which will need daily attention. Think about where you’ll put the litterbox; if you have a small apartment, it might be tricky and require multiple cleanings each day to keep it odor-free.

Additionally, both dogs and cats require annual vaccinations, veterinary checkups and oral care to keep them healthy. Even so, a health condition or crisis could lead to your dog or cat needing substantial care – think of what you can afford and are willing to do for the health of your pet.

Pocket pets such as hamsters and guinea pigs do not need to be walked and seem better suited for children’s rooms and smaller homes, but need their cages and pens frequently cleaned. Reptiles are the same, and also need special items such as heat lamps and heat rocks to give them an optimal environment. If you are thinking of fish, you must consider how often their bowls and tanks need water changes, whether they need a heater if the fish are tropical, as well as supplies for testing water quality and changing out filters to keep tanks clean. Also think about whether a large tank could be a liability in a small apartment should it leak.

Finally, birds often make beautiful, fun pets, but some of them such as the African Gray Parrot can outlive their owners! Consider who will take care of the bird now and in the future if necessary. Birds also need frequent cleaning of their cages and areas surrounding them – you’d be surprised at how far bird seed can travel! Additionally, birds need their own avian veterinary care and attention, as well as trimming of their wings and claws to keep them in good shape. Some birds, such as the Cockatoo, prefer constant company and do not do well being left alone.

New or Used Model?

The pet population is sadly full of unwanted dogs, cats, pocket pets and more who for one reason or another did not stay with their original owners. More often than not, it was a mismatch between what the pet requires in the way of care, as well as their energy level and temperament, and the owner’s expectations that led to the pet being relinquished. This is why it is so important to look at everything a pet needs and not just that it is cute and adorable.

With this in mind, you should consider adopting a pet from a shelter or rescue group first, as they are the most in need of a good home. There are many purebred pets available of all ages, as well as hardy mutts and cats with more than nine lives. However, if your heart is set on a puppy or kitten, make sure yours comes from a reputable breeder and not a pet shop. Oftentimes, pet shop pets come from “mills” where the sole purpose is to breed animals for profit. This can lead to breeding practices that cause “defects” in your pet that could be minor or life-threatening, not to mention that pet shops often charge a huge purchase fee.

We Know You Have Questions and Want to Help

As your veterinarian, we know a thing or two about animals and selecting one to become a member of your family. Whether you decide to adopt a pet in need of a home, or plan on bringing a new furball into the fold, it is a good idea to have us check them out as soon as possible. Why? So that we can get a baseline on their initial health as well as introduce ourselves to someone who will be an important part of your family. Plus, we are always here to answer any questions you may have about the type of pet you’re interested in, and help guide you toward making the best decision possible. 🐾