



Animal Welfare League
of Frederick County

Are You Ready to Adopt?

Adopting a pet is a serious commitment that should not be taken lightly. Thousands of animals end up in shelters every year because people do not think through what it means to own and care for a pet. Sadly, millions of people find that dumping animals in a shelter is an acceptable solution to a poor decision they made. The result is the euthanasia of millions of perfectly adoptable pets. Don't be one of these people. Think through this decision thoroughly. Talk to other pet owners about what it means to own a pet. Talk to vets about what it costs to properly care for a pet. Talk to trainers about what it means to train a pet so that the animal's behaviour is positive. Go into this decision armed with the knowledge and the resources to make pet ownership a mutually rewarding experience for you and the animal you select.

Factors to Consider BEFORE Adopting a Pet

- Do you have a plan if your animal should become sick or injured? What will you do if such requires medical attention costing over \$1,000? Have you researched pet insurance? If not, start here: <http://www.petfirsthealthcare.com/petfinder/>. This is a reasonable pet insurance option offered through Petfinder!
- Are you willing to give the animal you adopt a solid 4-6 weeks to settle into your life and household? Whether puppy, dog, cat or kitten, animals (like people) take time to acclimate. Hyper dogs often settle once they feel safe and have a routine. Scared cats will come out from underneath the bed once they feel safe. Puppies will learn to sleep through the night and go potty outside if given the time. Abused animals will come around and learn to trust you if you give them time and reassurance. Do NOT expect miracles overnight. Do NOT add to an animal's problems by taking them in and giving them back too quickly because you are not willing to really give them a chance!
- Are you willing to pay and work with a trainer? EVERY single dog/puppy will benefit from training. Start out on the right foot and increase the bond between you and your dog by attending classes or working with an individual trainer. You owe it to the animal and you owe it to yourself. There is no such thing as the perfect dog!



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- Puppies grow up to be dogs! Decide what size dog (not puppy) will fit best into your family. Keep in mind that with mixed breed puppies, it can sometimes be difficult to predict their full-grown size with 100% accuracy.
- Kittens and puppies require hours and hours of attention as they grow. They often don't sleep through the night. They chew. They bark. They climb. They nip. And they grow! Do you have the schedule to care for a puppy or kitten? Will you be able to part with your favorite shoes that one time you forget to put them away and arrive home to find them chewed to pieces? Will you have the time to properly train a puppy or kitten? The untrained pup/kit grows into an untrained dog/cat – and the longer you wait to train, the harder it gets!
- Puppies/kittens are expensive! They require at least 3-4 vet visits for shots in the first 3 months on top of the cost of spaying/neutering, food, toys, supplies, a crate and training. Not cheap!
- Can you have/tolerate a dog that barks? A cat that meows a lot? Can you have/tolerate a dog that sheds and a cat that sheds? Do you require that your dog fit through a dog door? Must your cat stay off the counters? Can you adequately handle a fence-jumping dog? Do you need a dog that likes to ride in the car? Do you need a dog that is good in large groups? Think of your everyday life/environment and the things you like to do. Imagine your dog in all of those situations!
- Are you likely to be transferred in the near future? Will you be able to take your pet? Do you have a plan for who might be able to take your pet if you do have to move with little forewarning? Are you going to be deployed or transferred overseas? Too many animals are abruptly dumped at shelters when people move and cannot take them. THINK about where your pet would go if this happened.
- Are you considering having kids in the near future? Are you willing to research the necessary steps for preparing a pet for a new child? Too many animals are dumped when people do not plan adequately for the arrival of a new child. Pets and children CAN coexist! Do not be one of those people who dumps a pet because you do not want to put in the time to make it work. Pets are not disposable.



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- If you have kids, will you be able to spend the time necessary to make sure that your kids are treating the pet the right way? Animals mistreated by children often grow up to be aggressive and/or fearful of humans. It's important to not only tell your children what is and what is not acceptable, but to watch them closely!
- If you work during the day, are you willing to arrange and pay for a dog walker? Dogs left alone and/or crated for too long are often hyper when you finally arrive home. They jump, bark and chew on things. After a long day at work, it is usually not what most people enjoy. Too often, animals are dumped at shelters because their owners realize they simply do not have the time to give them. So instead, the animals end up euthanized. You must make sure your animal will have get adequate exercise and attention.
- If you've recently lost a pet and are considering getting another, have you had enough time to grieve for your lost pet? Do you understand that the next animal you adopt will have different habits and quirks? Many people move too quickly to fill the void left by a deceased pet. Sadly, these animals are adopted and returned once the owner realizes he/she needs more time. Take the time to grieve and get ready for another pet. It's only fair to you and the next animal you take in.
- Are you prepared to have you new cat/kitten scratch the furniture? Will you be able to work with your cat/kitten and provide alternative scratching objects while teaching the cat not to scratch your furniture?
- Are you ready to commit to addressing litter box issues?

If you have reservations about any of these issues, talk with your family and the adoption group **BEFORE** you make the decision to adopt.

Reprinted courtesy of Homeward Trails Animal Rescue