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Contact: Christi Lightcap, (303) 239-4190, Christi.lightcap@state.co.us

Are Pets on your Holiday Shopping List?

LAKEWOOD, Colo. - The Colorado Department of Agriculture urges families to consider carefully certain factors before purchasing pets as holiday gifts.

“Children running to a new puppy or kitten on Christmas morning can make wonderful holiday memories but it is important to consider how the pet can affect the entire family for years to come,” said Dr. Kate Anderson, CDA’s Pet Animal Care Facilities program administrator.

A few simple steps can help ensure a new family pet brings years of enjoyment:

Research

Families are encouraged to do their research. Each breed of animal has different sizes, temperaments and care requirements. Families should consider which animal will best adapt to their family’s unique situation. For example, a large dog may not fit into an apartment as well as a home with a big backyard and some breeds are better with children than others.

Cost

The cost of pet ownership does not end with the purchase price. New owners need to be aware that even a healthy pet will require routine health care over the course of its life in addition to food, supplies and the all important toys and treats! If a pet becomes ill or is injured, it can become expensive to properly care for that pet. Be prepared financially and welcome a new pet into your family when everyone has time and energy to properly train and care for the new arrival.

Disease

Stress, coupled with the young age of many of the animals makes them more susceptible to disease. Young animals may appear healthy even after they have been exposed to a disease. After exposure, it can take up to 14 days for signs of illness to appear and many animals arriving at pet shops only stay in the store for three or four days prior to purchase. While pet shops, shelters, and rescues are required to disclose any signs of disease or treatment received by the animal, and do all they can to control illness, there may not be enough time for the animal to show signs of disease while in the facility. This means the animal may become ill days after it is purchased. Be sure to read the contract so know your options if your new pet becomes ill.

Postpone Adoption

Holiday pet purchases must be done very carefully. Veterinarians and other animal experts suggest that the purchase of a pet be put off until after the stress of the holiday season is over. Families are traveling, households are bustling, and holiday decorations present many hazards for new pets. This is not always the ideal time to introduce a pet into your family. Consider purchasing a gift certificate that could be redeemed after the holiday, and give yourself plenty of time to find the perfect pet.

“Pets can add a lot of affection and dedication to a family,” continued Anderson. “We just want to make sure families consider the commitment and attention they must give back to that pet.”

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