



Dogs and cats give us companionship, affection, a sense of responsibility, and protection. They work for us, participate in our recreational activities, and keep us in contact with nature.

Too often, because of irresponsible owners, dogs and cats also give us noise, bites and other injuries, diseases, unwanted puppies and kittens, and scattered garbage.

Whether pets are enjoyable members of our communities or nuisances depends almost entirely on our attitudes and sense of responsibility as pet owners. The following are explanations to popular **misconceptions** about pet ownership.



*"I am a great believer in physical fitness. My dog stays in shape by running all over town."*

Dogs and cats that are not restricted to their owner's premises are the ones that tip over garbage cans, get into fights, chase children on bicycles, harass walkers or joggers, and get killed by cars and trucks. An owner who does not confine his pet is actually saying: "I do not care about my neighbors, and I do not really care about my pet."

*"My dog is always sweet to me. He plays with the neighbor kids all of the time. He would never hurt anyone."*

Sometimes we forget that dogs and cats are not people. They are animals, and animals do bite and scratch. Every year, pet dogs kill someone in the United States, and the victim is usually a child. Thousands of children and adults are bitten by dogs and cats each year. Most of these deaths and injuries could be prevented by responsible pet owners.

*"My little dog never bites, and she is not big enough to tip over a garbage can. Why do I have to keep her on a leash or in my yard?"*

Usually, your city or county will have ordinances or rules that require you to restrain your pet. They may also require that you register your pet.

In addition, the average-sized dog will deposit 275 pounds of manure every year. Dogs and cats like to keep their home territory clean, so they will usually defecate in a neighbor's yard. This keeps the owner's yard clean, but certainly shows a lack of consideration by the owner for the other neighborhood residents.

*"Our cat never leaves the yard, so she really does not need a rabies shot."*

Texas state law requires that you have your dogs and cats vaccinated against rabies by a veterinarian. Consult with a veterinarian about the best vaccination schedule for your pet. Rabies is a killer. It is present in wildlife, especially bats, skunks, foxes, coyotes, and raccoons. Pet dogs and cats do not have to leave their yards to be exposed to rabies by a wild animal. Wild animals can easily enter your yard. If a pet develops rabies, the people most likely to be exposed by them to this fatal disease are the owner's family. A rabies vaccination is very inexpensive life insurance for the pet and its owner.

*"Neuter our pet? That would not be fair. We have almost always been able to find homes for most of the babies. Besides, I want my children to witness the miracle of life."*





There is an average of 15 million dogs and cats euthanatized yearly by shelters in the United States. That is not fair! If you want your children to witness the miracle of life, you need to be prepared to discuss the reality of death.

Ask your veterinarian: neutered dogs and cats, both males and females, make better pets, enjoy a healthier life, and are less likely to stray.

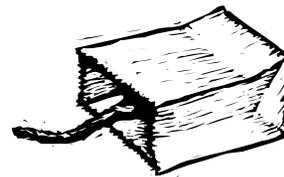
*"I got a pet for my children so they could learn responsibility."*

Children need guidance from adults on caring for their pets. It is a big responsibility to care for another living creature. Do not take it lightly. Animals need to have fresh water available to them throughout the day. They also need to be fed at least once a day. They must be provided with a shaded area if outside and an area protected from wind and rain. They also require grooming, exercise, and regular visits to the veterinarian.

Ownership of a pet is a privilege with many obligations. Pet owners are responsible for the health and well-being of their pets. Just as important, pet owners must show consideration for the safety and comfort of other citizens.



# Caring for Your Pet



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