



Owning a Pet

Getting a pet for the family can seem like such a wonderful idea - before you actually do it. But if you haven't really thought through all the aspects of pet ownership, you can end up feeling that your pet is as much work as your kids!

So before you rush out and bring home a whole bundle of trouble consider the following:

- **Who will look after the pet?** If you have children under the age of 10 years, it is unrealistic to think that they can be independently responsible for a pet. You will be doing the bulk of the feeding, watering, cleaning, walking - unless you are prepared to remind every day.
- **Can you afford to look after the pet?** Pets are expensive - depending on the type of animal you get, there are food costs, vaccinations, beds and cages, grooming, flea and tick control, obedience classes, fences or gates around the house and vet care over the lifetime of the pet
- **Do you have to register your pet?** Most local councils have regulations regarding the registration of dogs.
- **How long will your pet live?** Do you want to care for a pet when your children are older? And on the flipside, will your children be able to cope if there is an unexpected death in the family?
- **Do you know what type of pet you want?** And is it a practical choice? Some pets will be completely inappropriate for your family so make sure you've done your homework to discover the best pet for you.
- **How much exercise will your pet need?** And more importantly, does your family have the time and inclination to exercise a pet?
- **Will you have to leave your pet alone a lot?** If so, do you have to take any measures to ensure that it will be safe and secure?
- **If you go away, who will care for your pet?** Friendly neighbours are often happy to feed and walk pets but if you're short on friendly neighbours (or your pet is a large dog who will bark for the whole seven days you're away) then you need to consider either having someone move into your house to be a companion for your pet, or have your pet board away from home, which can be expensive.

Before diving in, do your research: speak to a vet, an animal breeder, and friends who own pets before you settle on a particular animal. If you are thinking about getting a dog or cat, contact the Petcare Information and Advisory Service, who will take into consideration your family and lifestyle, before advising you on a suitable breed.