

Municipal Press Release Kit for Animal Related Issues

**A Guide from the Sustainable Jersey
Animals in the Community Task Force**



International Fund for Animal Welfare

Introduction

This kit has been designed for use by Municipal Officials to help inform the community about animal related issues and services such as rabies clinics.

Each press release is designed to be easily personalized in seconds to add the name of the municipality that of the public official issuing it. It is recommended that you issue one press release a month to your local papers depending on the subject matter and time of year. Some press releases are not time sensitive and can be issued at any point. Many municipalities have a designated press officer who can assist in this process.

The subject matter includes:

- Annual Rabies Clinic
- Becoming a Seeing Eye Dog family
- Benefits of Licensing Your Pet
- Cold Weather Tips for the Care of Your Pets
- Common Myths about Cats
- Companion Cats Should be Indoor Cats
- How Do I Choose a Family Pet?
- How to Avoid Puppy Mills
- Keeping Your Pets Safe in Your Home
- Nutrition for Your Pet
- Pet Safety in Hot Weather
- Teaching Children to Interact with Animals
- Training Your Dog to be a Good Citizen and Family Member
- Winter Holiday Tips for Pet Owners
- Why Should I Spay or Neuter My Pet?

Annual Rabies Clinic

(Insert municipal official) would like you to know that **(insert Township)** will hold its annual Rabies Clinic on **(insert date and time)**.

This is open to dogs **(and cats if that is the case)** registered to residents of the municipality. **(Insert details – place, required documentation, fee.)** New Jersey law requires that all dogs be vaccinated against rabies. **(This municipality)** requires that dogs **(insert cats if that is the case in this municipality)** over six months of age be licensed. You must show proof of rabies vaccination in order to obtain that license. Dogs must be on a leash **(and cats must be in a carrier)** when they are brought to the clinic.

The campaign to keep rabies out of our pet population is succeeding thanks to rabies immunization of dogs, cats and ferrets. Between 1998 and the middle of 2013, there were only seven cases of rabies in dogs reported in New Jersey, the last in 2008.

Ongoing prevention of rabies is an important public health measure. Rabies is a zoonotic disease, one that can be transmitted from animals to humans. Any warm blooded animal can contract, carry and transmit rabies. Almost all human cases of rabies were fatal until 1865, when a vaccine was developed by Louis Pasteur and Emile Roux. Recorded human deaths in the United States have dropped from 100 or more in the early 20th Century to one or two per year. This is because of active campaigns to vaccinate dogs and cats and improved vaccines and treatments for humans. Most human rabies cases are from bat bites, which may go unnoticed and untreated. If you suspect that you or someone in your family has been bitten by a bat, seek medical attention immediately. Modern treatment is relatively painless with few side effects, according to the Centers for Disease Control, which recommends that you consult a physician after any bite by a warm blooded animal or exposure to their saliva or brain tissue.

Rabies in cats has accounted for 90 percent of the domestic animal cases in New Jersey since 1989. For the last 5 years there has been an average of 16 cats infected with rabies annually. In that same period since 1989, the most cases have been found in raccoons (4137) and skunks (853). During 2000-2004, more cats than dogs were reported rabid in the United States. The large number of rabies-infected cats might be attributed to fewer cat vaccination laws, fewer leash laws for cats, and the roaming habits of cats. The relatively large number of infected cats is probably also due to cats tangling with raccoons and skunks, common visitors to our backyards and fields.

Worldwide, there are about 55,000 human deaths from rabies, most of them in Asia and Africa. In 97 percent of these cases, the cause was a dog bite. As recently as November 2013, a graduate student at a university in India was bitten by a stray puppy on the campus and died of rabies.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

For more information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/exposure/index.html>

<http://www.nj.gov/nj/community/community/rabies.html>

Becoming a Seeing Eye Dog Family

(Insert municipal official) would like to share this information with you about Seeing Eye Dogs.

We've all seen Seeing Eye dogs who guide and protect their blind companions. But do you know how the dog was raised and trained? Everyday people, many of them in New Jersey, play a very important part in providing guide dogs to the blind.

The Seeing Eye has identified breeds and lines of dogs that are best suited to this work. When Seeing Eye puppies are about 8 weeks old, they are placed with foster families who care for them until they are about 18 months old. These families are responsible for teaching the dog basic obedience and exposing them to a variety of settings and experiences that they may encounter later when they are working. This is also a time when any potential problems with the dog will be identified. Many foster families have children, but some retired adults also volunteer. Potential foster families are invited to a 'puppy club' in their area where they can learn about fostering while meeting other families experienced with Seeing Eye puppies. There are clubs in most parts of New Jersey. You can find out more in the puppy raising pages at www.seeingeye.org.

At about 18 months, a dog is ready to be trained for his life as a guide dog. The Seeing Eye training facility is located in Morristown, NJ. Once a month, matched pairs of dog and blind companions start their training, which lasts up to four weeks. This training takes them to busy streets, quiet roads, stores, buses, trains, offices and any other environment they are likely to be in together. By the time they leave The Seeing Eye, they are ready to navigate everyday life in their homes, workplaces and neighborhoods.

Sometimes a dog is removed from consideration as a Seeing Eye dog because of a health, behavior or temperament problem. The foster family is given the option of keeping the dog. If they choose not to, it is available for adoption by another family. These dogs have all been neutered, have up-to-date immunizations and most have basic obedience and house training. They are a good option for someone who wants to adopt a young adult dog.

To learn more about The Seeing Eye, their dogs or opportunities to support their work, go to www.theseeingeye.org.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

Benefits of Licensing Your Pet

(Insert municipal official) of ***(insert town)*** encourages all dog owners ***(and cat owners if this is the case)*** to license their pets with the town. This is the law, and compliance brings benefits to you, your pet and the community.

There are many reasons to register and license your pet.

- You can think of your pet's license as a way to ensure a free ride home in case it is lost. Anyone who has lost a pet knows how we worry about them until they are safe at home. The license tag can be quickly used to find your name and address and the authorities can notify you. This will bring about a quick reunion.
- Licensing is a way for the community to ensure that pets are vaccinated against rabies, a terrible disease that is fatal to dogs and cats.
- The fees from licensing stay in the community and helps fund rabies clinics and support the animal control efforts in your community.
- The cost of the license is far less that the fine imposed if your dog is found without a license.
- Last, but not least, it is the law!

In ***(Insert municipality)*** the fee for licensing a dog is ***(insert cost)*** and for a cat it is ***(insert fee)***. In order to license your pet, you will need proof of rabies vaccination. The State of New Jersey requires licensing for any dog over the age of seven months.*

For more information on how to license your pet, contact ***(insert municipal department and phone number)***.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

*http://www.state.nj.us/health/animalwelfare/dog_lic.shtml

Cold Weather Tips for the Care of Your Pets

Your pet feels cold too! To keep your pet safe during cold winter months, *(insert municipal official)* shares this information on ways that you can help your pets get through the winter safely and in good health.

Just because your pet has fur, that does not mean that it can tolerate long periods of cold.

Forcing your pet to stay outside in cold weather could lead to serious health problems and visits to the veterinarian. If you feel cold enough to go into the house, your pet probably is ready to go in, too. Just like people, pets who have arthritis and joint issues experience more pain in cold weather. Although every pet reacts to cold weather differently, the best advice is to pay attention to them and watch for signs of discomfort.

Here are some cold weather tips to keep your pet safe:

- When the thermometer dips below 32 degrees, keep your pet indoors as much as possible. If your pet must stay outside, provide a warm shelter, raised a few inches off the ground, with the opening facing away from the wind and covered with a burlap or plastic flap. The shelter should be large enough for the animal to stand and turn around, but small enough to retain its body heat.
- If your pet is outdoors for extended periods when temperatures are below freezing (32 degrees Fahrenheit), be alert for signs of distress from the cold. Just like in people, shivering is a sign that the body temperature is dropping. If you see your pet shivering, it is probably time to bring it inside. Remember, your pet's body temperature is between 101-102 degrees and its body temperature lowers faster in cold weather.
- A very young, very old pet or a pet with a health problem is more vulnerable to cold.
- An animal with thick fur can tolerate cold longer than a small animal and one with short hair.
- Don't leave your pet in an unheated vehicle for extended periods of time.
- Make sure your pet has clean unfrozen drinking water. Do not let your pet drink from puddles where there may be deadly antifreeze or other harmful chemicals.
- A pet can pick up rock salt, ice and other melting chemicals in their foot pads. This can harm your pet. Massaging petroleum jelly into paw pads before going outside helps to protect from salt and chemical agents. Moisturizing after a good toweling off helps to heal chapped paws. Wipe your pet's feet with a damp cloth when it comes inside to protect its pads from damage. If this is a problem for your pet, there are boots available in all sizes. Your dog can get used to wearing the boots indoors for short periods of time. Not all dogs take to them.
- If there are outside cats in the neighborhood, rap on the hood of your vehicle and look under it before starting your engine and driving off. Cats sometimes curl up next to or under warm engines when they are left out in the cold.
- Antifreeze has an attractive scent and taste for animals and is extremely poisonous! Be especially vigilant about the ingestion of antifreeze. The first sign of antifreeze poisoning is a pet that appears drunk. Immediately get your pet to the vet if you suspect it has ingested antifreeze as it can be fatal within four to eight hours of ingestion.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the ASPCA and the Humane Society of the United States for making this information available.

Recommended websites: www.vetmedicine.about.com
www.humanesociety.org/news/press_releases/2013/05/warm-weather-pet-tips-052013.html

Common Myths about Cats

(Insert municipal official) would like to share with you some of the common myths about cats and why they really aren't true.

Cats were first domesticated about 10,000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent, currently modern-day Iraq. Cats have always been important in agricultural societies for their ability to kill mice, rats, snakes and other pests. In Egypt of the Pharaohs, the goddess Bastet took on a feline form. Some cats wore jewelry, were mummified and buried in tombs similar to people. These animals have long fascinated and attracted humans. A rich mythology has grown up around them.

The folklore around cats varies from place to place. In Great Britain, black cats are seen as lucky and are often given as wedding gifts. However, in most of southern and western Europe and in America, the black cat is a symbol of bad luck, and legends tell of the cat as a common shape-changer and a familiar of witches. The Puritans who settled in New England brought their beliefs in the evil of black cats to America. Anyone who was found to have such an animal was severely punished and accused of witchcraft, a capital offense.

Because of these misconceptions, shelter workers maintain that it is hardest to find homes for black cats. However, there is no evidence that these cats have a temperament any different than their tabby or calico siblings. They will make good pets.

Although we may no longer view a cat in terms of good or bad luck, myths about this animal persist.

- *Cats have nine lives.* Cats only have one life and have not been known to come back from a mortal illness or injury. They need regular wellness care and vaccines.
- *Cats don't need immunizations.* Cats are susceptible to vaccine preventable diseases such as rabies, feline leukemia and feline herpes virus. Speak with your vet about what vaccines your cat should receive.
- *Cats should not wear collars.* In a 2010 study published in the Journal of American Veterinary Medical Society, it was found that most cats do fine with collars and that, comparing elastic, breakaway and conventional buckling collars, the bucking collars showed the fewest reports of loss and mouth and limbs being caught in the collar. A collar and ID tag, along with a microchip, are the best protection against loss of your cat.
- *Cats are independent creatures and low maintenance pets who can take care of themselves.* The fact is that strays and feral cats who live outdoors without human care, have an expected lifespan of three to four years, while 'pampered' pets can live well into their teens, with reports of cats living into their 20's and even their 30's.
- *Cats should have one litter before she is spayed.* Veterinary evidence says the opposite. Cats that have been spayed before their first heat are healthier throughout their lives. Check with your vet about the best time to spay or neuter your cat.
- *Cats always land on their feet.* Although cats, graceful and agile, are often seen twisting in the air, if they fall from a high enough place or in an awkward position, they can land on their backs

or their heads and be injured. Even landing on their feet can cause injury if the fall is hard enough.

- *Declawing is like trimming nails.* Actually, declawing is the amputation of the first joint on each toe, a procedure that many see as inhumane mutilation. Declawing is painful and can lead to infection and tissue death. Declawing changes the way a cat's paw meets the ground and can result in back problems for the animal.
- *Cats are unhappy being kept indoors.* Like most animals, cats become used to their lifestyles, and a cat kept indoors from kittenhood can be very happy, healthy and content in the house. Cats need exercise and stimulation. A variety of toys, scratching posts, climbing towers, perches, and interaction with caring humans, keeps them from boredom and destructive behavior.
- *Cats are attracted to milk on a baby's mouth and can suffocate the child.* There are no recorded cases of this happening. A cat may like snuggling up to a sleeping child. Some cats like warmth and human contact, but they will not steal a child's breath.
- *Pregnant women should not have a cat.* It is not the cat who poses a threat to expectant moms, but the litter box, where there may be a microorganism that causes disease. As long as someone else handles and cleans the litter box, there is no danger to mother or baby.
- *Cats should drink cow's milk.* Dairy farms have cats to keep mice out of the grains that feed the cows and are the cats are often depicted as loving fresh milk. The truth is that milk is a very rich food for a small animal. Some cats get diarrhea from milk and too much milk can lead to obesity. This is true of most 'people food'. Cats, like all of your companion animals, do best on the food that is formulated to meet their dietary needs.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

For more information on the myths and truths about cats, visit

<http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips>

<http://www.aspca.org/blog/debunking-black-cat-myth>

www.aspca.org/pet-care/cat-care

Companion Cats Should be Indoor Cats

Keeping your pet cat safe and healthy indoors is important. *(Insert municipal official and town)* wants to help you to do this with these tips.

House cats can lead a contented and full life within the confines of your home. Even if you live on a quiet street and believe that your cat won't go far from home, there are dangers that can threaten your cat's health and life. It is not cruel to keep a cat indoors; it is actually the best care you can give your cat.

The first and most important step to having a contented house cat is spaying or neutering. This will eliminate the drive to get out of the house to mate. Being that the drive is very strong, a cat can be relentless around any barrier you set up and finding a way out.

Your cat should be fully vaccinated according to your vet's advice *(If the town requires it,)* and registered. Although you may be taking all precautions to keep your cat inside, it may only take one trip outside to expose your cat to some very serious diseases.

Cats are naturally curious and playful. Satisfy these needs with a variety of toys, some that you share with your cat and some that your cat can play with alone. Some cats really enjoy chasing a yarn ball, a wind-up mouse, or a laser pointer. Even an empty paper bag can bring hours of fun. Make the toys more attractive by sprinkling catnip, an easily grown mint, on them once a week. If you have a sunny windowsill, grow catnip indoors or grow it outside during the summer and dry it for use all year. Catnip is available for purchase at pet stores and in some health food stores.

Many cats love to watch the world go by. Provide a place where your feline friend can look out the window. Pet supply stores and online sites offer cushioned window seats that easily attach to your sills. Some cat lovers report that their pets respond to moving images on the television set. There are also cat 'treehouses' with several perches that your cat can climb onto for a better view of its domain.

Some cats are fussy about food. If this describes your feline friend, try out different foods until you find one that satisfies. If your cat is on a strictly dry food diet, make sure it drinks enough water to prevent dehydration and urinary crystals. Some cats won't drink from a bowl. Fountains and bubblers are available that may be more attractive to your cat. If your cat will not drink water, supplement its diet with wet food.

One of the least attractive of a cat's habit might be scratching on furniture. Scratching is an instinctual behavior that many animal experts think is a form of communication, leaving their marks on trees and other objects in the environment. If your cat likes to scratch, provide a homemade or purchased scratching post. You can make one by securing a piece of carpeting to a wooden post.

The urban and suburban world is not a safe place for cats. Vehicles, poisonous chemicals, dogs, and other cats present a great danger to your feline friend. Antifreeze that may have spilled on a driveway is a very attractive, sweet poison. Some cats carry FIV, the feline equivalent of AIDS, a highly contagious and incurable disease. The only prevention for FIV transmission is to keep your indoors. Feral cats can be

very aggressive and hurt your pet. Humans can also present a threat. Cats have been grabbed off the streets and brought to labs or sold to dog fighters as bait. Further, there are those with an aversion to cats. They think that they are evil or easy targets and hurt them for no apparent reason.

Do yourself and your companion cat a favor. Create an indoor space that is a home that your cat will not want to leave. You will both be happier for it.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

For more information on the benefits of keeping a cat indoors visit

<http://www.peta.org/living/companion-animals/caring-animal-companions/caring-cats/indoor-cats/>

<http://www.americanhumane.org/animals/adoption-pet-care/caring-for-your-pet/indoor-cats-vs-outdoor-cats.html>

How Do I Choose a Family Pet?

(Insert municipal official) would like to offer some information and advice to those of you who may be considering adding a pet to your family.

So, you think you want a pet? Millions of people consider their pets to be part of the family and best friends. There is evidence that pets bring physical and mental health benefits to adults and children. The right animal can be a wonderful companion and friend.

Bringing home a pet is a big decision, one that will affect you and your pet for the rest of that animal's life. Give it careful thought before you bring in a new family member. Be honest with yourself about your needs, wishes and the level of commitment you can give. Do your homework so there are few surprises when you bring your new friend home. Consider the cost of care, feeding, vet bills, grooming, and equipment. Match your pet with your home and lifestyle.

Your thinking should start with the question, "Why do I want a pet?" Do you want companionship, love, protection, amusement? Different animals meet these different needs. Talk to friends and family members who have pets about what they have learned. Ask them what they think would be a good pet for you. Your local library and the Internet are rich sources of information about many types of pets.

- Do you want a large pet or a small one? Being that kittens and puppies grow, consider what the adult animal will be like.
- Would you rather a pet who stays in a cage, aquarium or terrarium or one who is loose in the house?
- Do you want an animal who takes little care or one who will need a lot of attention?
- If you travel, consider how your pet will be cared for when you are gone.
- Read up on the different needs animals have and what it takes to care for them. How long can you expect them to live? What do they eat? How much care will they need? What equipment will you need to get for them? How often must you clean their cage or living space? Will they require spaying or neutering?
- If you are considering a small animal, learn if it is active in the daytime or at night. If it's nocturnal, like a hamster, it will naturally spend most of the day sleeping.
- If you decide you want a cat or a dog, do some research on different breeds, their characteristics and their needs.
- Do you want a young animal or a more mature pet? Puppies and kittens need a lot of attention. Puppies can be quite destructive until they are housebroken and outgrow their need to chew on things. If you want an older animal, consider a rescue organization for a specific breed or visit your local shelter and find an animal to adopt.
- If you already have an animal in the house, consider how an addition will affect it. Some shelters and breeders are open to your bringing your pet to meet prospective companions to see how they might get along.

There are some pitfalls to avoid in choosing a companion animal.

- Never get a pet on an impulse. That puppy, kitten, rabbit, hamster or goldfish might be very appealing at the pet store. You may want to take it home right away. However, have you really thought about what you are getting into? All animals require some commitment of time, attention and money. Do your homework so you know what you are taking on.
- Don't surprise someone with a pet as a gift. The recipient may not be ready for the commitment of time, energy and expense that come with a pet. If you want to give a gift, involve your friend or family member in the choice.
- Giving a pet to a young child to build responsibility often doesn't work out for the child or the animal. Parents should work from the assumption that they will be doing most of the pet care.

While deciding that you want a pet, taking your time and making a well-considered choice will bring you joy and satisfaction while giving your animal companion a happy and healthy life.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

Recommended websites:

www.asPCA.org/adopt/adoption-tips/right-pet-you

www.humanesociety.org/issues/adopt/

www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/choosing_dog.html

How to Avoid Puppy Mills

(Insert municipal official) would like to share this information on irresponsible animal breeders, sometimes called puppy mills, and alternatives to supporting this industry when you are looking for a family dog.

You've decided that you want to add a puppy to your family. Wonderful! You are in for years of fun and friendship. Now you have to decide where to get that puppy. Humane societies encourage you to consider adoption as your first choice. Shelters have a wide variety of dogs available. If you are looking for a specific breed, there are rescue organizations that specialize. You can find these on the Internet. But if you are set on getting a young dog who has not been 'previously enjoyed', how do you make a responsible and wise decision?

You can go to a pet store and see a lot of really cute puppies. The store staff will tell you that they only sell puppies from responsible licensed breeders. The truth is that any breeder who sells to a pet store is required to be licensed by the US Department of Agriculture. This license does not guarantee any quality. They will tell you that their dogs 'have papers'; but this only means that their parents were purebred and has nothing to do with the genetic health of the pup.

You might also find puppies online, with photos of adorable little dogs guaranteed to be 'pedigree' and with papers. You can search for specific breeds and get descriptions of the dog, his parentage and the place where he was bred and born. Are you sure this is all true? How do you know if the puppy was not the product of inbreeding, mating with a close relative with the danger of passing on genetic disorders?

Many of us have heard the horror stories about puppy mills, commercial dog breeding operations that often place their profit above the welfare of their animals and without consideration of the genetic quality of their pups. This can result in generations of dogs with inherited defects. Naturally, you want to avoid supporting such an enterprise. How can you be sure that your puppy is from a breeder who cares for the dogs as you want them to?

The ASPCA says that no responsible breeder would sell pups through a pet store or online, but rather only does business in person, expecting to meet the prospective buyer and encouraging clients to come and visit the puppies in their litter with the mother. According to the ASPCA, most pet store and online puppies are from puppy mills. There are exceptions such as online offerings where the breeder does not ship the puppy. Rather the breeder requires that buyers come and pick up the puppy.

To find an adoptable dog, go to Petfinder.com and specify your area, preferred breed, and the age and gender of the dog you are seeking. You can use this site to find a local animal shelter or rescue group. If you are interested in a particular breed of dog, do an Internet search for rescue organizations that specialize in that breed of 'previously enjoyed dogs'. It may take more time to find a pet this way than buying it at a pet store. Taking the time and care to do this will pay off in the satisfaction of knowing that you have not contributed to the puppy mill industry.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information possible.

Keeping Your Pets Safe in Your Home

(Insert municipal official) would like to share with you information about how we can make our homes safe for our pets.

We all want our homes to be the safest places for our families and friends. That includes our pets. There are a number of common items and substances found in and around the house that are very dangerous to animals.

- Rodent poisons and insecticides are most often the culprit in pet poisonings. However, there are other dangers, some of which we don't think about as a problem.
- Medications meant for humans, including aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen, cold medicines, vitamins, diet pills and many prescription drugs can be toxic to our pets. Keep bottles and tubes out of the reach of animals that might chew through them and get sick. If you drop a pill, make sure you find it and pick it up before your furry friend eats it.
- Over the counter flea and tick powders and liquids can be quite toxic. Ask your veterinarian before purchasing or using these products. Never use products meant for a dog on a cat.
- Many of the same choking hazards that we watch for in children can endanger our pets. Small parts, rubber bands, dental floss, thread and yarn may catch a pet's interest and be swallowed or tangle in the animal's body and cause injury.
- According to the ASPCA, Chocolate is poisonous to dogs, cats and ferrets, as may be coffee beans, onions, tomato, potato, yeasted bread, rhubarb, some nuts, grapes and anything with mold growing on it. If you compost in your yard, using a closed container will keep your pets and those of your neighbors safe from these common dangers. The toxicity depends on the substance and the size and general health of the dog. It is best to avoid any of these foods for your dog as the best food for your pet is one that is made for that animal. Speak with your vet about the best way to feed your pet.
- Some houseplants are dangerous to our pets such as lilies, dieffenbachia, philodendron and mistletoe. The Humane Society website provides a list of nearly 100 common indoor and outdoor plants that may be toxic to your animal.
- Being that rawhide chews may harbor salmonella, wash your hands after handling them and only give your dog as much as it will consume in a day. These chews might also present a choking hazard, so watch your dog while it has one.
- Birds are sensitive to airborne chemicals. Fumes from non-stick cooking surfaces and oven cleaners can be deadly to them. Avoid using pumps and aerosols around your birds.

For detailed information on common household dangers and other tips on keeping your pets safe, visit the Humane Society and ASPCA websites.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

Recommended websites:

www.humanesociety.org/.../common_household_dangers_pets.html

www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/poisonous_plants.pdf

[http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/poison-safe-home.](http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/poison-safe-home)

Nutrition for Your Pet

(Insert municipal official) would like to give you some important information on how to provide the best nutrition for your family dog or cat.

Is your cat or dog getting all the nutrients it needs? Like most questions about nutrition, whether it be for our animals or ourselves, the answer is very complicated and based on a number of interrelated factors such as the animal's breed, age, size, weight, exercise level and general health. Your vet is the best source of advice for your individual pet.

Take into consideration those things that will help you ask your vet the right questions. You need to understand the answers that will help you to comply with good dietary practices.

- More than one-third of U.S. dogs over one year old are overweight and at least one-quarter of U.S. felines are considered overweight or obese, according to WebMD Pet Health. Overweight cats and dogs can suffer from the same ill effects as humans do, such as diabetes and arthritis.
- About 18 percent of your dog's diet should be protein and 9-15 percent of their calories should come from fat. This can be from fish, meat or poultry. Some vegetables are good for dogs, too.
- Dogs love many of the same foods we do, and that includes foods high in fats and carbs. It's easy for a dog to get too much of these nutrients when it is getting table scraps or sneaking tidbits from the cat dish. Cat food is much higher in fat than dog food.
- Your dog may enjoy some fruits and vegetables, but dogs are not naturally vegetarian. They can be fed a plant based diet if it provides a balance of amino acids or if you provide amino acid supplements. If you want to feed your dog a meatless diet, consult your veterinarian and make sure to comply with those recommendations.
- Always provide clean, fresh water for your dog. Exercise and warm weather increase their need for water.
- Cats need about twice as much protein as dogs and humans. The main ingredient in a cat diet should be meat. Felines are 'obligate carnivores', which means that they cannot get all the amino acids and essential vitamins they need from sources other than meat.
- Cats need fat and wild felines get about a third of their calories from fat. This gives them energy and helps them absorb other essential nutrients and vitamins.
- Most commercial cat food contains about 40 percent carbohydrates, much more than cats really need and one of the factors in the large number of overweight cats.
- Unlike dogs and humans, cats have a low thirst drive. Dry cat food contains only about 5 percent water. Feeding them only dry food can lead to dehydration and serious kidney and urinary tract problem. What helps is adding wet food to your cat's diet and providing plenty of fresh water.

Sources: <http://www.petmd.com/>, <http://pets.webmd.com/features/pet-nutrition>

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

Pet Safety in Hot Weather

(Insert municipal official) knows that summer heat is hard on all of us, and can be especially difficult for our family pets.

Here is important information and tips for keeping your pet safe in the summer heat. Late spring and early summer are great times to enjoy the outdoors with your pets. A few simple precautions will keep your animals healthy and happy throughout the warm weather.

- Your pet feels the heat just like you do. Consider getting exercise together in the early morning or late in the day when the sun is lower and the air is cooler.
- Be aware that the summer sun makes pavement and black top very hot which can burn your dog's paws. If you are walking on sidewalks, stay on the shady side of the street or let your dog walk on grass or dirt.
- Indoors or outside, always provide ample fresh, clean water for your pet. If you use a crate, provide water when your pet is confined. Some crates have places to put water. If not, a heavy bottomed bowl will work.
- If your pet spends time outside, make sure there is always a shady place to shelter from the sun. Some dogs dig into the ground so there is a cool depression for them, but this may damage your shrubs or landscaping in your yard. Providing a shady shelter may lessen this behavior. Giving your dog a 'digging pit' of soft earth and training it to dig only there may help. If your dog continues to exhibit destructive behavior in your yard, consult an experienced trainer or speak with your vet.
- Warm weather is the peak time for the mosquitos that carry heartworm and for fleas, ticks and other parasites. Speak with your vet about the best way to prevent these from infecting your pet. If your dog has not been taking heartworm preventive medicine all winter, your vet will order a blood test to make sure there is no infection before starting on heartworm prevention.
- If you are going out in the car and will be parking for a while, it's best to leave your pet home in hot weather. When the outside temperature is 85 degrees, inside a car, even with the windows open a bit, the temperature can reach 102 degrees within just 10 minutes and up to 120 degrees after half an hour. Even at 72 degrees, in under an hour, the interior of the car can reach 116 degrees. If you leave your animal in the car, in the shade, for a brief time, do not leave the windows open with enough space for someone to put in a hand or for your dog to put out his head. Protecting the territory of 'his car' could lead your dog to bite a hand that comes too close.
- A lot of dogs enjoy riding with their heads out the window, but this may not be safe. At speed, debris can hit the animal and cause injury. It is never safe for unsecured dog to ride in the bed of a truck, no matter the speed. Seeing another animal may lure your dog into jumping out of the bed.
- You may think that shaving your dog or cat will help keep him cool in the summer. But vets tell us that an animal's fur provides insulation from the heat and protection from sunburn. You can

trim long fur, but leave enough to provide that protection. Your vet or an experienced groomer can advise you on this.

Thanks for the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the Humane Society and the ASPCA for making this information available.

Recommended websites:

http://www.humanesociety.org/news/press_releases/2013/05/warm-weather-pet-tips-052013.html#.UqJCh_RDtVA

<http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/hot-weather-tips>

Teaching Children to Interact with Animals

(Insert municipal official) would like to share this information with you about safe interaction between children and animals.

Children seem to be naturally attracted to animals. Parents, teachers and caregivers can use this curiosity and attraction to teach children about how to interact with pets and with wildlife. Children love to have pets. Most homes can have a pet of some sort. Dogs and cats are the most common pets, but fish, rodents, snakes and hermit crabs have all given children many hours of fun. Pets provide more than companionship and entertainment to children. They can have significant benefits to a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development.

Although children learn responsibility and empathy in caring for a pet, never get a pet just for that purpose. Bringing an animal into the home should entail a commitment by the parents, since most of the care will fall to them as the child learns and grows in responsibility. Involving the child in the choice of a pet will help to build a bond. Let the older child use the Internet to research a variety of pets as it will help him or her to understand the temperament, behavior and needs of different animals and to be able to participate in a decision with more understanding.

Once you have chosen a type of pet, bring the child in on the selection, whether it be at the local animal shelter, a pet store, or a breeder. Let the child interact with the animal before making a decision. Encourage the child to tell you why a certain animal does or doesn't seem to be the one to take home. Show the child the equipment and supplies you will need and what they are for. All of this involvement will mean that the child is more aware of the animal and feels an investment in its well-being.

There are some things that children should be taught about animals in your home or others'.

- Always treat an animal with kindness and gentleness.
- Small children often pick up animals and squeeze them in a way that hurts the animal. Children should be taught that the animal does not like this and that they should not do it.
- Do not bother an animal when it is eating or sleeping.
- If an animal is in its 'den', a dog crate, a cat's sleeping platform, or a rodent's shelter, leave it alone.
- Keep your hands out of the animal's eyes (small children are particularly interested in eyes).
- Do not get 'in its face'. Many otherwise friendly animals become frightened and aggressive when they feel crowded.
- Never put your hand between two quarrelling animals.
- Unless you know a dog well, do not approach. Teach the child to ask the owner if he or she may pet a dog. Show your child how to hold out a hand for the dog to sniff and to approach a friendly dog slowly until the animal is comfortable.
- Never feed someone else's pet unless the person says it is okay.

The best lesson to give children about wildlife, whether it be squirrels and birds in the backyard or lions and monkeys at the zoo, is to teach them to observe. Ask them to describe what they see. Wonder with

them about why an animal is behaving as it is. These times together will encourage empathy, lifelong curiosity about the natural world and many hours of enjoyment.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

Training Your Dog to be a Good Citizen and Family Member

(Insert municipal official) knows that a well-trained dog is better for the family, the neighborhood and the community and shares this information on dog training.

A well trained dog can be a happy family member, joining in the fun indoors and out, helping to welcome company and warn strangers and serving as a beloved companion for many years. Positive training is the single most important factor in building a good relationship with your pet. An untrained or poorly trained dog, on the other hand, is a constant problem, often relegated to a backyard doghouse or basement, sometimes even given up for adoption or euthanized by a frustrated owner.

A dog should be considered a family member. A dog is most comfortable when it knows its place in the family and knows who the leaders are. It is instinctual to behave in ways that please the leader. If you use that desire to please by rewarding and praising good behavior, you will have much more success in training, and will have a better behaved dog with a nicer temperament than if you use harsh punishments.

Many dog owners have found that crate training is important. The crate is a special place for the dog, her own den, where she is safe and cozy. Make sure the crate is the right size, large enough for the dog to stand in and turn around. Put a soft towel or blanket in with her. Whenever you put the dog into the crate, give a special, high value treat. The crate is not a place for punishment, although sometimes you may want to use it as a place for 'time out' when the dog is cranky or boisterous; but this should always be done in a very positive manner, never with force and negativity. Many dog owners find that their dogs love the crate and go into it willingly, sometimes without being asked to. The crate becomes their "safe spot" to get away from any hectic family activity.

You should start training as soon as your new pet comes into your home. Set physical boundaries (rooms, floors, etc.) and gradually expand the dog's space. If it is a puppy, you may be house training it, teaching the dog the right place to 'do its business'. To determine this "right place" understand that the dominant sense for a dog or cat is the sense of smell. Animals will relieve themselves in those places where they have done so before. The scent of previous familiar eliminations will linger in the spot. Although undetected by us, it will be strong for them which leads them back to that familiar place when they show signs of wanting to relieve themselves. This is an important part of the training. If they have accidents in the house, use something strong (like bleach) to help mask the smell. At the same time clean up the accidental results. This takes patience and kindness, and being ready and willing to go outside with the dog even before you have your coffee, or when it is cold or wet. If your puppy is in a crate overnight, bring it outside immediately upon waking. Also, bring the dog outside immediately after feeding. Praise, praise, praise, and pet when the dog goes in the right place. When it has an accident inside, immediately take the dog outside.

You should also give the puppy things to chew, since it will chew something and it could be your best shoes, your favorite shirt or the kid's homework. Whenever you find your dog with something you don't want it to have, substitute the chew toy (like a frozen durable rubber kong with food in it) and offer

praise when the dog takes it. Again, this takes patience and vigilance. During the training period, it may be that the dog stays in the crate, with her chew toys, when you cannot be attentive to her.

Training enhances the bond between you and your dog. Training is meant to show you how to train your dog the right and most efficient way. Training does not train the dog...it trains YOU to train the dog. The end result is a well-mannered dog with a strong bond to you. There are many organizations that offer training for puppies and for dogs. Shop around, ask friends who have used training programs, and find the one that suits your schedule and that is well reviewed. Training is usually held once a week, and you and your dog will have to do your homework between classes to reinforce the learning. Everyone in the family should be using the same training techniques, words or hand signals, with the dog and there should be consistency or the dog will be confused and not know what to do. You and your family are being trained along with the dog, so be prepared to change your own undesirable habits along with the dog's habits.

The library and bookstores are full of books on how to train your dog and many of them offer good advice. However, if this is your first experience in dog training, you are well advised to use a professional rather than just reading a book. An experienced trainer can tell you what is normal puppy behavior that will be outgrown and what will develop into a problem. He is also knowledgeable about dog behavior and different breeds and temperaments, and can help you to tailor your training techniques to your individual dog and to your family.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

Winter Holiday Tips for Pet Owners

As we approach the winter holidays and the busy times they bring, *(insert municipal official)* wants to remind you that your pets deserve special care so that they can enjoy the holidays safely with your family.

The winter holidays bring a number of hazards to your pets. With the activity of gatherings and feasts, it is easy to lose track of what your pet is doing. Here are the most important things to know and remember:

- Alcohol is harmful to pets. Their bodies are much smaller than ours. It doesn't take much to make them sick. When you have guests, make sure no drinks are left unattended where your cat or dog can reach them.
- People food is not for dogs. These days are times of indulgence in rich foods, lots of sugar, fats and chocolate. You are not doing your pet a favor by sharing your goodies. If you want to give your dog a gift, there are a lot of dog toys and treats available.
- Bread bakers should guard against their pets eating any uncooked yeasted dough which causes bloating and intestinal blockage.
- Some foods are particularly dangerous. Macadamia nuts are poisonous to dogs, causing stomach problems, depression, weakness, and tremors. Raisins and grapes can damage a dog's kidneys. Chocolate and coffee can hurt any small animal, but dogs are particularly attracted to these substances in sweet confections. The stimulating chemicals have a greater effect on animals than on humans and last much longer.
- Plants and flowers that are in your home during this season may harm your pet. Poinsettia has long been recognized as a poison, but it is mild compared to lilies, mistletoe and holly. All parts of lilies are highly toxic to cats. Mistletoe and holly can cause stomach and heart problems for dogs and cats. If you have a curious and active animal, you might consider leaving those decorations out of your home.
- Tinsel, ribbons, glass ornaments and small pieces are tempting to a curious animal. Although not toxic, they can cause problems if they get caught in the animal's fur or if they are swallowed. Your cat batting around a tinsel ball may be cute, but a cat toy would be safer.
- Keep your pets away from the water in the Christmas tree. If you use a chemical to preserve the tree this can be harmful. Stagnant water in the tree stand may contain harmful bacteria.

If your pet seems to have ingested any of these dangerous substances, call your vet immediately if you see any change in behavior or stomach distress, lethargy, tremors or muscle weakness.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

For more information visit www.petpoisonhelpline.com.

Why Should I Spay or Neuter My Pet?

(Insert municipal official) is concerned about the number of homeless animals who are abandoned or surrendered to shelters and wants to bring you this information about protecting your pet's health and preventing the birth of more kittens and puppies.

Note: If the community has a free spay clinic that information can be inserted into this press release.

Annually in the U.S., there are an estimated 6-8 million homeless animals entering animal shelters and more than 2.7 million healthy, adoptable cats and dogs euthanized in shelters. Spaying females and neutering males is the only permanent, 100 percent effective method of birth control for dogs and cats. Besides spaying and neutering being the right thing to do to prevent unwanted puppies and kittens, these procedures also have important health benefits for your pet.

According to a report in *USA Today* (May 7, 2013), neutered and spayed dogs live longer than intact dogs. There is a similar disparity in lifespans among cats. Spayed and neutered pets are less susceptible to certain infections and cannot contract uterine, ovarian or testicular cancer. Another reason for this longer life span is that spaying and neutering reduce your pets drive to roam in search of a mate. Roaming can lead to cats and dogs being lost or injured by vehicles or in fights with other animals. If they wander, they are also more likely to pick up parasites.

Spaying or neutering your dog or cat will reduce some undesirable behaviors. Besides roaming, unaltered dogs and cats, especially males, urine mark their territory. Excessive barking, mounting people and other animals and other dominance establishing behaviors are also greatly reduced among spayed and neutered dogs. Neutering at a young age, before the spraying behavior begins, eliminates this marking in most animals. Spaying and neutering can make your dog, your family and your neighbors safer. Most dog bites and aggressive behavior involve unaltered dogs.

Misinformation about spaying and neutering:

- Myth: I cannot afford to have my pet spayed or neutered.
Fact: Many low cost options exist. Call your local animal shelter for information. The reality is that giving good care to just one litter of kittens or puppies before they are adopted can be more than the cost of spaying/neutering. This is especially true if your pet experiences difficulties in the pregnancy or birth. Responsible owners give basic vet care, immunizations and worming medication to their pups and kittens before they are adopted.
- Myth: Females should have one litter before spaying.
Fact: Every litter adds to the community burden of too many puppies or kittens. Studies have shown that female dogs and cats spayed before their first heat are generally healthier.
- Myth: My dog will be less protective of my home and family.
Fact: Protecting home and family is instinctive behavior in a dog. How much any particular dog engages in protection has more to do with breeding and training than with hormones.
- Myth: My pet will get fat and lazy.

Fact: If the owner does not overfeed the animal and gives it enough exercise, this will not happen.

- Myth: It is only one litter and I will find homes for them.

Fact: You only control that one litter. If a female cat and her offspring breed twice a year they could produce up to 420,000 cats over a seven year period. Only 1 in 12 of those will find a home. In six years, a female dog and her offspring can produce up to 67,000 puppies. A male cat or dog left to roam and breed can sire as many as 2,500 kittens or puppies in a single year. Many people are surprised to learn that nationwide, more than 2.7 million healthy, adoptable cats and dogs are euthanized in shelters annually. These are not 'street animals'. Many of them are the offspring of family pets, even purebreds. Spay/neuter is the only permanent, 100 percent effective method of birth control for dogs and cats.

- Myth: I love my pet so much and want a kitten/puppy just like her/him.

Fact: Chances are that your pet's offspring will not be just like them in appearance, temperament or behavior. You can never get an exact copy.

- Myth: Animals who are not spayed or neutered are healthier.

Fact: Unspayed female cats and dogs have a far greater chance of developing pyometra (a fatal uterine infection), [uterine cancer](#), and other cancers of the reproductive system. Medical evidence indicates that females spayed before their first heat are typically healthier. (Many veterinarians now sterilize dogs and cats as young as eight weeks of age.) Male pets that are neutered eliminate their chances of getting testicular cancer, and it is thought that they have lowered rates of [prostate cancer](#), as well.

Consult your vet for advice on the best time to spay or neuter your dog or cat. You will be a responsible pet owner and a good neighbor when you do.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

Recommended websites:

www.americanhumane.org/animals/adoption-pet-care/caring-for-your-pet/spaying-neutering.

www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet_overpopulation/facts/why_spay_neuter.html#UqO92vRDtvA

www.aspca.org/pet-care/spayneuter. (This website has a tool to help you find a low cost spay/neuter facility in your area.)

<http://www.animalhealthfoundation.net/blog/2012/06/how-spaying-and-neutering-benefits-pets-health-and-behavior/>