

Pets as presents

Think before you buy

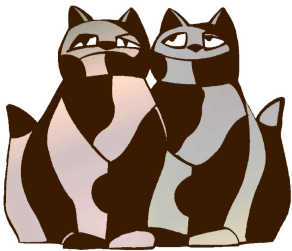


Giving a puppy, kitten or other animal as a gift sounds like a wonderful and exciting idea. But what happens after that first mess on the carpet or chewed up shoe? Too many of these presents end up being "disposable" - dropped off at shelters just a few months after the novelty has worn off.

Animal experts and veterinarians are all too familiar with adoptions and gifts gone bad. The pets end up tied out in the yard, starving for affection and sometimes even lack food and shelter. They may finally be given away or to a shelter. Animals that bounce between shelters and homes have a difficult time bonding emotionally and adjusting socially.

"Often when you give a pet as a gift, it pleases you, but it may not be appropriate for the person who receives it," says Dr. Bonnie Beaver, a veterinarian and animal behaviorist at Texas A&M University's College of Veterinary Medicine and AVMA President.

Points to consider before giving a pet as a gift:



Pet lifespan: 15-20+ years for a cat; 8-15+ years for a dog, depending on the breed; 15-20+ years for an iguana; 25-40 years for a parrot.

Commitment: take into account owning a pet is more than daily feeding. There are housing and training needs, as well as veterinary care. Do you have the time? Who will care for the pet while you are away?

Lifestyle: is this the right pet for your lifestyle and personality?

Alternatives to giving a pet as a gift:

Gift certificate: create a certificate which allows you to give the gift of a pet on paper for adoption from a local shelter, breed rescue or purchase from a breeder.

Photo or stuffed animal: give a photo or stuffed animal and a card. Allow the person who will receive the gift to be involved in the actual selection.

Pet care books: give a gift of pet care books to prepare the person before receiving the pet and help in the selection of a pet that suits their expectations and needs.

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A pet is a commitment for life

Choose wisely

