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## WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER BEFORE ADOPTING A PET

- 1. Adopting a pet should be treated as a lifetime commitment.** The lifespan of a dog or a cat can be 10-15+ years. Just like we humans, our pets have stages of life--puppy/kittenhood, adulthood, and the senior years. Pets in the United States generally do not have legal rights and must rely on their human caretakers and the community to protect them. When adopting a fur family member, you are making a commitment that you are that new fur family member's caregiver and protector. And while oftentimes people are drawn to puppies and kittens, consider adopting a new fur family member who is from a shelter, older and who may be timid.
- 2 Reason for adopting.** Making the decision to adopt a new fur family member should not be a made on a whim or solely based on emotions. The decision should also be made with the consideration of all family members (including other pets) or the other persons who reside in the same home.
- 3 Financial responsibilities.** Adopting a new fur family member doesn't end with the adoption fees, spay/neutering costs, and basic amenities (bedding, bowls, collar/harness/leash) for your pet. Along with monthly budget for food, flea medication, poop bags, cat litter, there are expenses for annual vaccinations, dental care, veterinary cost for illnesses (e.g. vomiting/diarrhea/skin rash/chronic illness, etc.), licensing, as well as possible training and grooming costs.
- 4 What is your lifestyle?** Whether you are in your 20s-30s (a student, new in the workforce, or new parent), 40s-50s-60s (busy with your life obligations), or 70s + (maybe at a slower pace), consider your lifestyle before deciding to bring a new fur family member into your life. Will you have the time and energy to provide the basic daily needs of feeding and potty breaks, play time to engage them physically and mentally, and to provide training and medical care when needed?
- 5 What are your deal breakers?** During life, there are planned and unexpected changes in circumstances. When you adopt a new fur family member, who will be a part of your family for about a decade or longer, your life schedule and priorities will change. With a new pet, will you be willing to tolerate shedding, tracking in dirt, barking, digging, chewing, odors, allergies, potty training issues?

There are also circumstance that may change in your personal life, such as, marriage/life-partner, moving, having kids. Evaluate whether any of the above changes in your life would make you reconsider adopting a new fur family member. Are any of these changes in your life a deal breaker in your plans to bring a new fur family member into your home and your life?

**6 Approvals to obtain before adopting.**

- a. If you are renting, confirm that your lease allows for pets and if so, if there are any restrictions (e.g. weight, size, breed, type).
- b. If you own your home, review your city codes to confirm the number of pet and type of pets you are allowed.
- c. Before bringing a pet home, discuss with and obtain approval from all family members and any other persons who reside in the home.

**7 Where will the pet go potty?** Whether you provide your pet a place to go potty in the house, in the backyard, or during walks, you must provide your pet access several times throughout the day. You cannot leave the pet for hours without access. Also, who will be cleaning the excrement? If in the back yard, not only does the poop have to be picked up, but you may need to wash down areas where your dog urinates because of odor.

**8 Secure home/yard.** When you are not at home with your pet, the home/yard must be secured to prevent the escape of your pet. All items that may be poisonous or dangerous to your pet should also be securely put away before leaving. All items that you don't want your pet to chew or destroy should also be securely put away or out of reach of your pet.

**9 How will you deal with issues that may arise, such as aggression? Biting? Separation anxiety? Aging issues like incontinence, immobility?** As a pet owner, you are your furry friend's sole caregiver and protector. Behavioral issues or medical issues are more likely than not to occur in the decade or so you share with your pet. Consider what steps you are willing to take or not take before you decide to adopt a pet. Are you willing to obtain consultation, training, medical care?

**10 Some animals react badly to loud noises, like fireworks.** During 4<sup>th</sup> of July (usually for about 3 weeks of loud noise in most neighborhoods) and New Year's Eve, many of the pets picked up by animal control are the same pets that would normally never bolt out of your home or yard on any other days. During these noisy holidays, your pet may shake uncontrollably and react with high anxiety. These same pets may also react badly during thunderstorms. How will you plan for these possibilities?

**11 Planning for a vacation?** We all deserve some R&R from our busy life schedules and obligations. But as a pet owner, unless you take your pets with you, you must make plans as to who will take care of your pets and where they will be residing during that time. Your pet may need time to adapt to the new people and new environment.

**12 What are your plans if you die or become unable to care for your pet?** Consider executing a Pet Trust. At the minimum, determine who you may wish to adopt your pet if you predecease your pet or if you become unable to care for your pet. Discuss your wishes with the person(s) and obtain their approval.

Commented [LK1]: