



A COMMONSENSE GUIDE TO SELECTING A DOG OR A CAT



Canadian Veterinary
Medical Association
L'Association canadienne
des médecins vétérinaires

Canadian Federation of Humane Societies
La Fédération des sociétés canadiennes
d'assistance aux animaux



The CVMA Pet Food Certification Program

MISSION STATEMENT

The CVMA Pet Food Certification Program exists to improve the health and well-being of pets by:

- Providing a nutritional standard for pet foods in order to satisfy the nutritional requirements of a normal pet throughout its life;
- Certifying pet foods that meet or exceed the CVMA standards and monitoring those foods to ensure that they continue to meet the standards for composition and digestibility;
- Providing the consumer with an independent quality assurance program and a means of identifying a nutritionally sound pet food in the marketplace;
- Helping pet owners understand the importance of proper nutrition in preventive pet health care.

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As part of a continuing effort to increase public awareness of companion animal nutrition and welfare, this publication was made possible by the participating manufacturers of the CVMA Pet Food Certification Program.

Living with a pet is an enjoyable, rewarding experience. Dogs and cats are fun to live with, and can also provide people with a large measure of comfort. Ask any satisfied pet owner about the pleasure they feel when they come home to a warm welcome from their dog or cat. You'll hear how much happiness a pet can bring to a person's life.

Pet owners have a responsibility to their dog or cat. Caring for a pet involves a lifelong commitment to the animal's well-being.

Before selecting a pet you should spend some time considering your choice. Your family members will also be affected by your decision to adopt a pet. Be sure to discuss the issues with them as you consider acquiring a pet. Everyone in your household should agree with your decision. Consideration should also be given to the adaptability of pets already in the household. Young animals generally adapt more easily to new pets than older animals do.

If you are willing to make the necessary commitments to ensure that your pet will have a healthy and happy life, you will certainly enjoy the benefits of owning a pet. Your pet will also enjoy the benefits of having a considerate, dedicated owner.

What type of pet is right for you?



Dogs are sincere, loyal and loving companions. Dog owners can enjoy active, outdoor recreation with their pets as well as quiet, relaxing times. Dogs add enjoyment to most situations – from playing ball with friends to reading a book or watching television with your companion nearby.

There are many important things to keep in mind before deciding on whether or not to get a dog. Dogs, and especially puppies, can be very appealing pets. Seeing a dog at an animal shelter can really tug at a person's heartstrings. Animal shelters – the term includes Humane Societies and Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCAs) – will not allow you to adopt an animal on impulse. You should not acquire a dog on impulse from any other source either. Never buy one as a gift for someone. Each person should choose their own dog. Take the time to carefully consider whether or not you can accommodate a dog in your life.

Is a dog the right pet for you?

Time

A DOG REQUIRES A LOT OF ATTENTION AND CARE. You must be able to provide your dog with food and a constant supply of fresh, clean water. Dogs also need regular exercise and should be walked 2 or 3 times a day. Letting your dog out in a backyard does not provide it with enough exercise, stimulation or fun.

If you are often away from home for extended periods of time, it will be difficult for you to care for your dog properly. You must be prepared to care for your dog for a long time; small dogs may live for 15 or more years and large dogs usually live less than 12 years.

You must allow for time to train your dog. Obedience classes are the best way to do this. Most lessons take one hour a week in class and you will need at least an eight-week session. An additional 20 or 30 minutes a day are required for practice out of class during your dog's first year. It is important to continue working with your dog for it to become well-behaved and properly socialized. Training can be fun and a well-trained dog will be welcome in more places. Benefits of these efforts will be enjoyed by you and your dog throughout its entire life.

Dogs require regular grooming to keep their coats clean and healthy. You will need to either take time to do the grooming yourself with a comb or brush, or take your dog to a grooming parlour. You will also need to trim your dog's nails every few weeks, check to make sure its ears are clean and brush its teeth regularly. You will have to clean your home more often, especially if your dog is a long-haired breed.

Home

MOST DOGS NEED A LOT OF LIVING SPACE. You may not have room for a large dog if your home is small. It is also important that you have access to a fenced backyard or other safe exercise area. Urban dwellers especially should make sure they have access to a suitable exercise area before getting a dog.

Certain dogs are noisier than others, and barking dogs will annoy close neighbours in the city. Large dogs can scale short fences, so you may need to install a higher fence if you plan to let your dog run loose in your backyard. Other dogs, especially hounds and terriers, can dig under fences. Water dogs, like retrievers and spaniels, enjoy swimming and appreciate having access to freshwater swimming areas.

Some apartment buildings do not allow dogs and it is unfair to a dog and to other tenants to try to hide a dog in such an apartment.

Some people are allergic to dogs or cats and may suffer if a dog lives in their home. If you have experienced allergic reactions near dogs, you may want to be tested for allergies before acquiring a dog for yourself. Allergy sufferers can become uncomfortable and have difficulty breathing when they are indoors with a dog or cat. Allergy sufferers who like dogs should be aware that some breeds, like poodles, do not usually cause allergic reactions.



Expenses

THE INITIAL COST OF PURCHASING A DOG IS JUST THE FIRST EXPENSE IN MAINTAINING A HEALTHY, HAPPY DOG. There are also costs for food, collars, leashes, toys and licenses. Health care, including annual visits to the veterinarian's office for check-ups and vaccinations, and surgical fees to have your dog spayed or neutered, must also be paid. Identification, including dog tags, tattoos or microchips, should also be purchased to protect your dog and to satisfy municipal bylaws. Training fees and health insurance can also add to the cost of keeping a dog.

If you leave home for extended periods of time you will need to pay boarding fees if you have to leave your dog at a kennel.

What type of dog is right for you?

IF YOU HAVE THE COMMITMENT, TIME, MONEY AND SPACE TO ACCOMMODATE A DOG, you must now consider what type of dog to choose. Consider where you will obtain the dog, how you will care for it and what type of dog will best fit in with your lifestyle.

Puppy or mature dog?

IDEALLY, YOU SHOULD ACQUIRE A PUPPY WHEN IT IS ABOUT 8 TO 12 WEEKS OLD. This will give the pup time with its mother and litter-mates, so that it socializes better with other dogs later in life. However, puppies also bond quickly with people at a young age. It is important that the puppy learns to interact with people as well as with other dogs. The time frame during which this socialization best occurs is between 6 weeks and 6 months of age. Puppies who don't grow accustomed to people before they are 14 weeks old can become fearful or aggressive around humans. A properly raised puppy should become a well-adjusted, friendly dog.

Puppies require consistent care and close attention, and may soil your house until they become house-trained, generally by the time they are about three months old. Puppies may engage in play biting and chew furniture. If you have small children you will have to be vigilant to ensure that rough treatment doesn't harm the puppy's fragile bones. No young child should be left alone with a puppy or dog.

You might consider acquiring a puppy or an adult dog from an animal shelter. It is a common misconception that an older dog can't adapt to a new home. Many adult dogs available for adoption are victims of unfortunate circumstances in a previous home. They are often housebroken and already have some training. An owner may have to work harder to establish a solid bond with a mature dog, especially if it is a stray or abandoned animal which has been mistreated in the past. How well a dog has previously socialized with other people will largely determine how it adapts to your family.

Ask the shelter staff if they know anything about the dog's previous owners and their routine with the dog. The dog will be more at ease with you if you can maintain a similar routine. It may take time to modify the dog's behavioural patterns, but you will find that rescuing an older dog from loneliness can be very rewarding. A good obedience class will hasten bonding with an older dog and aid in correcting inappropriate behaviour.

Sex

MALE DOGS USUALLY TEND TO BE BIGGER THAN FEMALES OF THE SAME BREED. Unsterilized male dogs may be constantly anxious if there are in-season females nearby. Male dogs will use trees and posts to mark territory by leaving small amounts of urine. A male dog may urinate indoors if another dog has been inside recently, especially if it is not neutered. Male dogs may also display overt sexual behaviour during adolescence, although this tendency will diminish when the dog is neutered and as the dog ages.

Every 6 to 10 months, unsprayed female dogs will have an oestrus period, commonly known as being in heat, that lasts about three weeks. The dog's behaviour may change temporarily during this time and it may become less obedient.

You should have your dog sterilized by the time it is 6 to 8 months old. A veterinarian spays a female dog by removing the dog's uterus and ovaries. A male dog is neutered by having a veterinarian remove the dog's testicles. These operations are both safe. Having your dog sterilized early decreases its risk of developing tumours of the genital organs. Sterilization also helps eliminate many medical and behavioural problems. Most importantly, sterilizing your dog eliminates unwanted offspring that contribute to the number of animals needing homes. There are not enough good homes for all the cats and dogs in Canada so thousands must be euthanised every year.



Breeds

BESIDES BEING DIFFERENT IN APPEARANCE AND SIZE, EACH BREED OF DOG HAS DIFFERENT PERSONALITY TRAITS AND CARE REQUIREMENTS. Purebred dogs are sometimes bred with close relations to keep certain desired physical characteristics in their offspring. Unfortunately, this practice can accentuate undesirable traits in a breed and may increase the tendency towards hereditary diseases. Avoid dogs that are the result of inbreeding. A veterinarian can inform you of some of the more important common problems in breeds you are considering.



Consider what activities you plan to engage in with your dog. If you like to camp or hike, a sporting dog, such as a Retriever or a Spaniel, would be a good choice. If you want a running companion consider a highly-energetic, long-legged breed like the Doberman or Husky. All dogs like to run, but short-legged breeds like the Basset Hound or Corgi may tire more quickly than a human runner. Black dogs and dogs with thick coats can overheat more quickly in hot weather.



Long-haired dogs require more grooming, especially after a walk outdoors. Small dogs can easily be injured by curious children or unwary adults. Some dogs are not suited to cold weather and you may find it difficult to exercise them during harsh Canadian winters. Dog boots and coats may be a necessity for dogs with very short hair. Certain breeds of dogs are bred for specific purposes and it may be hard to train such a dog away from certain behaviour. A veterinarian, animal shelter staff, kennel club member or dog breeder should be able to explain the advantages and disadvantages of different dog breeds.

Mixed breeds

MIXED BREED DOGS, OR MONGRELS, ARE DOGS OF UNKNOWN PARENTAGE. Crossbreeds are the offspring of two or more different breeds. Mixed breed dogs usually turn out to be intelligent, loving, problem-free family pets, although it can be difficult to predict their character traits.

Mixed breeds are usually less expensive to acquire than purebred dogs. It is also generally accepted that mixed breeds are more resistant to certain health problems than purebred dogs.

When selecting a mixed breed dog, ask the shelter or store staff if they have noticed anything, good or bad, about the dog's behaviour.

Where can you look for a dog?

WHEN YOU GO SEARCHING FOR YOUR IDEAL DOG THERE ARE SEVERAL PLACES YOU SHOULD LOOK. Animal shelters often have a wide variety of dogs in their kennels. Many dogs end up in shelters through no fault of their own and it is wrong to assume they won't make ideal pets. They may have been abandoned and just need a second chance at a loving home.

If you have your heart set on a purebred dog, you should buy directly from a reputable breeder. A veterinarian, the Dogs in Canada Annual directory, or a kennel club should be able to direct you to a reputable breeder. You should always inspect the facilities and the dogs yourself. You should also ask for references from satisfied owners. A reputable breeder will ask you questions to ensure you will provide a good home for the dog.

A good breeder will have their breeding stock checked and certified against genetic disorders and will sell puppies with at least one set of vaccinations, a non-breeding agreement, and a guarantee against genetic disorders. Beware of breeders who will not allow you to see their kennel facilities and at least one parent of the puppy, or who breed a large number of breeds.

Some pet stores sell puppies. Others also serve as adoption agencies, matching prospective owners with dogs from animal shelters. If the puppies are not from an animal shelter, ask the pet store owner for information about the breeder before selecting a puppy. Look for the same qualities in a pet store as at a dog breeder's facility. Good pet stores and dog breeding facilities should boast clean living areas, knowledgeable staff and healthy-looking pups. Expect a breeder or store staff to talk frankly about the nature of the animal you have in mind.

Whether you are at an animal shelter, dog breeder, or pet store, be sure to ask questions about each individual dog. The staff may have noticed certain behaviour and traits in either the dog you are considering, or in its parents. If it is possible, try to see the dog's parents, since they may display desirable or undesirable traits not yet evident in their offspring. If you adopt the dog from an animal shelter, ask the staff if they have noticed anything, good or bad, about the dog's behaviour. Some animal shelters conduct temperament testing of the dogs they have available for adoption.

In Canada, there is a growing awareness of the existence of puppy mills. Mills produce large numbers of puppies in poor, unhygienic conditions. Puppies raised in mills are often unsociable and make unsuitable pets. More importantly, conditions in mills are often unhealthy and the breeding dogs and puppies in them live unhappy lives. Be wary of buying a dog from someone who won't or can't tell you where the dog was born and raised. You should contact your local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) or humane society to report an establishment selling obviously unhealthy dogs or cats.

When you get a dog from any source, be sure to reach an agreement regarding returning the pet. You should be allowed time to take the animal to a veterinarian of your choice for an examination to ensure the dog or puppy is in good health. If you are offered a guarantee, make sure you understand exactly what the guarantee means for you and your dog.



Individual traits

WHEN LOOKING FOR A DOG, DO NOT MAKE YOUR CHOICE BASED SOLELY ON A DOG'S APPEARANCE. Remember that common traits of a breed may not be present in every dog of that breed. Some dogs may be more dominant or submissive than others, or perhaps more excitable or fearful than others of the same breed or litter. Observe and handle each dog to determine any obvious traits it may have. Given the proper training and care, a puppy is likely to grow into a friendly, well-adjusted dog.

Puppy temperament tests

HERE ARE SOME SIMPLE TESTS TO TRY ON A NEW PUPPY TO TEST ITS TEMPERAMENT. A reputable dog breeder may have already done temperament tests on the puppies. If so, you should rely on their judgement to match a puppy to your situation.

- 1 - Place the puppy on the ground out of the sight and hearing of the other pups. Step away from it and crouch down. Observe the puppy's reactions when you clap your hands and call to it. A puppy that comes quickly with its tail level or down will probably respond well to training. A puppy that comes quickly and bites at you may be excessively dominant and difficult to handle for first-time dog owners. A pup that comes slowly or crawls, or that does not come at all, will likely turn into an overly submissive or anti-social dog.
- 2 - Pet the puppy on its head, neck, shoulders and back. Touch its ears, muzzle and feet. A dominant puppy will growl, jump at you or attempt to bite your hands. An adaptable, easily-trained pup will wiggle and lick at your hands. A submissive puppy will roll over, bare its belly, turn its head away, and possibly urinate. A fearful or shy puppy may ignore you or struggle and walk away when released.
- 3 - Roll the puppy onto its side or back and hold it gently until it calms down. Dominant, aggressive puppies will struggle violently, bite, cry and/or growl. An adaptable puppy will struggle, but should quickly calm down without any biting. Submissive puppies will calm down without struggling.

First-time dog owners, and people with children, should try to acquire an adaptable, easily-trained puppy. Dominant, aggressive or fearful pups are difficult to train and will be unsuitable for families with young children or for inexperienced dog owners. A submissive puppy will need gentle handling, and could be a good companion for a senior citizen or quiet adult. An overly submissive puppy will need to be protected from rough handling and may be unsuitable for families with young children.

Health

YOU CAN MAKE SOME PREDICTIONS ABOUT A DOG'S FUTURE HEALTH BY BEING VERY OBSERVANT WHEN YOU FIRST SEE IT. Puppies who have runny eyes, who sneeze, cough or vomit, who have diarrhoea, scratch excessively, or who appear very thin should be examined by a veterinarian. It is natural to feel sympathy for the runt of a litter of puppies, but be warned that a runt may have more health problems than its litter-mates.



Rewards

A DOG CAN BE AN EXCELLENT COMPANION, IF YOU ARE WILLING TO MAKE THE PROPER COMMITMENTS. Your relationship with a dog should be mutually beneficial, enjoying each other's company at play and at rest. Scientists have found that dogs and cats are good for your health. People who enjoy the companionship of a pet, either a cat or a dog, may be better equipped to withstand some of the stresses of life.





Cat owners, like dog owners, are blessed with pets that are both friendly and interesting. Cats are active pets and enjoy chasing balls or playing hide and seek. They are also good companions in quieter times, sitting on a person's lap, purring contently.

It may be tempting to accept the first kitten offered to you. Most kittens are cute and playful. There are, no doubt, many satisfied cat owners who were able to get their pet free over the back fence or after reading a newspaper advertisement. These cats are generally the result of a careless pet owner who allowed his or her unsterilized cat to roam outside. People who obtain their cats this way often do the same thing, perpetuating the problem of pet overpopulation. A prospective cat owner should consider whether or not a free cat is really cheaper than one adopted from an animal shelter where vaccinations, a medical exam, permanent identification and often sterilization are included.

The wise thing to do is to take the time to consider your choice of pet before deciding to bring a kitten or cat home. Some forethought can improve the chance that both you and your cat will be happy.

Is a cat the right pet for you?

Time

CATS ARE MORE SELF-SUFFICIENT ANIMALS THAN DOGS, BUT DAILY CARE IS REQUIRED. Your cat must be fed daily and provided with a constant supply of fresh water. Your cat will also need regular grooming and nail trimming. Cats do groom themselves, but they can develop hairballs and mats if they have to clean themselves excessively. Regular brushing and occasional bathing is important in maintaining a healthy skin and coat. You must also clean your cat's litter box every day. A cat living in a clean area will be less prone to develop medical and behavioural problems.

Home

CATS ARE A FAVOURED PET FOR APARTMENT DWELLERS BECAUSE MOST CAN ADAPT TO SMALL-SIZED LIVING QUARTERS. Make sure you have enough room to set up a litter box away from your cat's feeding area. Most people like to locate the litter box out of sight of visitors.

Cats, like dogs, need exercise. However, it is a misconception that cats need to roam free outside. To safeguard your cat, it should be leashed and supervised when outdoors unless it is in an enclosed area. Cats should not be let loose outside as they can be injured or killed by cars or other animals, they may be exposed to diseases and parasites, and they can become lost. It is also inconsiderate to your neighbours, as cats often defecate in gardens and can be noisy at night.

Most cats will not scratch furniture or curtains if they have suitable alternatives like scratching posts. If this does become a problem your veterinarian can help you resolve it through training or with plastic nail caps.

Prospective cat owners should also make sure they are not allergic to cats.

Expenses

A DOMESTIC OR MIXED BREED CAT CAN BE ACQUIRED AT A LESSER COST THAN A PUREBRED CAT. Purebred cats, like purebred dogs, will cost more, depending on the breed. There are also costs for having your cat neutered or spayed, cat food, cat litter, accessories, toys and for your cat's annual visit to the veterinary hospital for its checkup and vaccinations. It is also important to have your cat fitted with some form of identification, either a tattoo, tag or microchip. For most people these costs are not prohibitive to cat ownership, but should be considered.

Rewards

MANY PEOPLE HAVE DISCOVERED THAT CATS MAKE EXCELLENT PETS. Working people feel comfortable leaving their cat home alone throughout the day, although thought should be given to having two cats to keep each other company. Cats are affectionate and entertaining yet often less demanding on people who don't have the time or energy to train and exercise a dog. In most parts of the country, apartment buildings and condominium associations allow tenants to keep cats because they are normally clean and easily adapt to using a litter box.



What type of cat is right for you?

NO ONE TYPE OF CAT IS SMARTER, HEALTHIER, OR FRIENDLIER THAN ANY OTHER TYPE. Most cat owners are not interested in whether or not their cat is purebred.

Cat or kitten?

MANY KITTEN OWNERS EXPERIENCE GREAT PLEASURE RAISING A KITTEN AND WATCHING IT MATURE INTO A WELL-BEHAVED, AFFECTIONATE CAT. Kittens are all attractive, but some can grow up to be anti-social cats. This can usually be overcome by providing a stimulating environment in the home.

Mature cats have established personalities and behavioural patterns. This can be great for a person who finds a cat whose habits suit the owner's home situation and lifestyle. If the animal's previous owner has let the animal roam outdoors you may have some difficulty teaching the animal to be content living indoors. Do not select a mature cat whose nature is radically different from what you are looking for in a pet.

Sex

YOU SHOULD HAVE YOUR CAT NEUTERED BEFORE IT IS 5 OR 6 MONTHS OLD (EITHER SPAYED, IF FEMALE OR NEUTERED, IF MALE). As with dogs, neutering pet cats prevents unwanted offspring. Neutered cats are also less likely to develop certain medical problems.

Males who have not been neutered, known as intact males, are more likely to roam and fight with other males if they are let loose outdoors. Intact male cats, like male dogs, mark their territory with urine and may urinate indoors when they are sexually aroused or simply want to mark their territory. The urine of intact males has a very pungent odour. Neutered cats may still engage in territorial spraying.

Unspayed female cats often display odd behaviour that can be unnerving to first-time cat owners. For several weeks, 2 or 3 times a year, the cat will experience oestrus and will exhibit behaviour designed to attract males. During oestrus the female produces a powerfully-scented fluid and may spray it in your house. They may also vocalize loudly in their efforts to get out to mate. Mating sounds can be unnerving to people, as it may appear as if mating cats are fighting.

If you are looking for a cat as a companion, there is no reason not to have the animal neutered or spayed.



Where can you find your cat?

YOUR FIRST CHOICE FOR ACQUIRING A CAT MIGHT BE AN ANIMAL SHELTER. Many cats are abandoned or neglected and, consequently, most shelters in urban centres have a variety of cats and kittens from which to choose. You will be giving yourself a companion, while giving an abandoned and neglected animal a safe and loving home. The cost of acquiring a cat from a shelter is very reasonable, as it includes a veterinary exam, vaccinations and sometimes sterilization. Shelter staff will also have had time to observe their animals and should be able to answer questions frankly about the nature of their cats and kittens.

Veterinary hospitals sometimes serve as contact points for acquiring cats by advertising available cats and kittens on their notice boards.

Cat breeders offer purebred cats for people who either want to enter their pet in cat shows, or who like the characteristics of a certain breed. Purchasing a cat from a breeder can be expensive compared to other sources. A good breeder should house his or her cats in a clean, spacious area. If you want a purebred cat, but are not interested in showing your cat, be sure to ask the breeder if they have any “pet-quality” cats. These are animals which retain most of the character traits of the breed but lack some element, usually a particular marking or other physical trait that makes them less suitable for competitive showing. Pet-quality cats are usually available for a lower price than their show-quality litter mates.

Some pet stores offer cats (and dogs) from animal shelters. These stores function as adoption agencies. Others sell mixed breed and purebred cats. Ask the pet store owner for information about the breeder that supplied the kittens before purchasing a cat. Look for the same qualities in a pet store as you would expect to find at a breeder. Clean living areas, knowledgeable staff and playful, well-fed kittens all help identify a quality pet store.

Making your selection

IF YOU DECIDE TO GET A KITTEN, YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR 8 TO 12-WEEK-OLD ANIMALS. It is very important to look for a playful, physically and emotionally stable kitten with a gentle temperament. Kittens in this age group should weigh 2 or 3 pounds. If they are too heavy or too thin, they may have health problems. Look for a kitten that is neither too shy nor too

aggressive. A healthy kitten should stand straight and walk with a bouncy step. If the cat limps, seems listless or lethargic, or has any nasal or ocular discharges, it could be ill and should be avoided. Look at the kitten's hair. It should be soft and lustrous without any clumps. The skin beneath the hair should be free of scaly areas or sores. Salt and pepper patterns on a kitten's fur can indicate the presence of flea eggs and dried blood flecks. Bare patches of skin can indicate the presence of mange.

A kitten's eyes, ears and nose should be clean and free of any dirt or fluid discharges. Dark wax in a kitten's ears is often caused by mites. Repetitive sneezing and coughing, or a runny nose is a sign of a respiratory infection. These animals require veterinary attention.

Another possible ailment afflicting kittens is chronic diarrhoea. It can be detected by the presence of feces stains at the kitten's hind end. This may be the result of stress from leaving its mother or from being in a new environment.

Ask the shelter staff, breeder, or store employees about the behaviour of the kittens you are viewing. Some kittens are naturally aloof and may take some time to grow accustomed to each new person. Other kittens are shy and afraid of both humans and other animals. If a young kitten cowers and tries to get away from you it is likely abnormally shy. This is a behavioural deficiency that can be difficult to correct and you may want to avoid selecting such a kitten. Remember, kittens tire quickly and a seemingly shy kitten may in fact just be sleepy.



Other sources of information on choosing a pet

ASK VETERINARIANS, THE SPCA OR A HUMANE SOCIETY TO HELP YOU SELECT THE RIGHT PET. Ask satisfied neighbours and friends how they selected their pet and what makes their relationship with their pet successful. Kennel clubs and dog trainers may have good information about dogs. Cat fancier associations will have information about cats and kittens.

Look under 'dog' or 'cat' in your library or bookstore and you will find numerous books devoted to helping you select a pet. The Pet Owner's Guide to Dogs by Kay White offers advice on selecting, training and maintaining a dog. The Cornell Book of Cats, edited by Mordecai Segal, offers advice on selecting a cat. It profiles numerous breeds and gives information about medical conditions that can afflict cats. Many other books with general information on dogs or cats will have a chapter or section dealing with pet selection.

Computer users with access to the World Wide Web can find further information if they use their browser to look up pet-related topics. Using the popular Yahoo browser (at www.yahoo.com), look under "recreation" and then the "animals, insects, pets" sub-heading to find numerous sites devoted to pets. Also, search under "Infosearch" or look up pet-related news groups.

As you look for information on selecting a pet, you may want to gather information on feeding and caring for your prospective pet. Books in your local library will contain this information. The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association has a booklet available called "A Commonsense Guide to Feeding Your Dog or Cat", which can be obtained by writing to the CVMA.

When you choose a pet, you are making an important decision that will affect your life – and the life of the pet you select – for many years. It is important to take the time to choose wisely. A good choice will lead to a mutually beneficial relationship between you and your pet. Take the time to ask questions; pet ownership and all its benefits should be an enjoyable experience which can only be achieved by an educated and eager prospective owner.



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"Decisions" (Chris Walkowicz, Dogs Annual 1995)

Pet Owner's Guide to Dogs (Kay White, Howell Book House Inc., New York, 1987)

Prevention of Behaviour Problems in Dogs: Puppy Selection (William E. Campbell, from the Kal- Kan Forum, Summer 1982)

"Purchasing the Perfect Pup" (Special Report, Pet Plan Insurance)

The Chosen Puppy: How to Select and Raise a Great Puppy from an Animal Shelter (Carol Lea Benjamin)

Second Hand Dog (Carol Lea Benjamin)

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association Mission Statement

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) is the national body representing and serving the interests of the veterinary profession in Canada. The Association is committed to excellence within the profession and to the well-being of animals. It shall promote public awareness of the contribution of animals and veterinarians to society."

Adopted August 1987

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The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies Mission Statement

The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) is a national body comprised of animal welfare organizations and individuals whose purpose is to promote compassion and humane treatment for all animals.

Adopted November 1993

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