

CHOOSING THE PERFECT PET TAKES MORE THAN LUCK

Choosing a pet carries responsibility along with pleasure. This means that you should take the time to become aware of what's involved.

Ask yourself some questions about any pet you are considering:

Do you want a male or female?

What's your real purpose in choosing a pet?

Companionship?

Protection?

Whatever you do, it's important to do everything possible to make sure you wind up enjoying the results of your decision. In some cases, you can wind up disappointed or in a terrible fix if the decision you make turns out to be wrong.

For example, a longhaired cat that requires lots of daily brushing may be hard to fit into your hectic day-to-day schedule. Or a dog that turns destructive or isn't housebroken can be even more disastrous if you live alone in a small apartment and work long hours. Or do you have small children? Some pets can be moody and irritable around youngsters. Or a child can unintentionally hurt some small breeds by squeezing them too hard.

For help in answering these questions, you may want to start by checking out books on pet care and characteristics at a local library. Also, there are plenty of books, including inexpensive paperbacks, at bookstores, which can be very helpful. For that matter, you should feel free to ask us any questions that are on your mind.

Once you've decided what kind of pet you want, check the potential pet (cat or dog) for the following points:

- Eye brightness
- Clean ears
- Clean, shiny hair coat and healthy-looking skin
- Good state of nutrition
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing

If you're selecting a cat or dog from a litter, ask to see the entire litter and the mother. The most active and curious are the ones that make the best pets. One that growls or resists your handling is not a good prospect. Don't let sympathy sway your judgement.

Also, remember that veterinarians make good, friendly advisors. We'll be glad to help you make the best possible decision. In fact, if you wind up buying a pet, ask to bring the pet in for a complete check-up before buying a trip that can save you lots of money and sorrow later.



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