



Pets as Presents

Some things to Consider

Unlike with other holiday presents, owners cannot just pop in a fresh battery or put the pet away in the closet after the novelty wears off. In nearly all cases, one of the parents becomes the primary caretaker, doing the feeding, walks, litter scooping and all of the other chores the children once promised to do themselves.

SCRAPS would like you to consider a few things before you add another member to your family this holiday season.

- Pets should never be an impulse purchase. Individuals and families thinking of getting a pet should research, prepare and then, when the time is right, seek a pet who realistically compliments their lifestyle, schedule and energy level.
- "Pets as playthings" is the wrong message to send to children. Pets are living beings who require substantial time and daily care, plus expenses for licensing, food, obedience training, vet bills and occasional petsitters or kennels.
- The new owners will probably be too occupied with holiday preparations, celebrations, cooking, cleaning and guests and overall activity to give the new pet the attention he or she desperately needs. It is already a jolting adjustment for a puppy to leave his mother and littermates.
- Busy holiday time is a really hard time to keep to a proper housetraining, feeding and elimination schedule. It is vital to start housetraining on day one and establish an effective schedule on which the pup can learn to rely on his human caretakers.
- The activities in the household might present safety hazards and increased opportunities for the pup to get in trouble or hurt. Especially when the household is not used to having a pet around and underfoot, it can be hard to keep ornaments, decorations, tinsel, wrapping, string, scissors, candles, potentially poisonous holiday plants and other dangerous items out of animals' reach.
- The holiday hubbub of guests, flashing lights, noisy toys, gift unwrapping, camera snapping, romping children, etc. can scare an animal of any age, particularly a puppy.
- It is essential to always supervise when dogs and children are together. Since this is hard to do during a big holiday, the chance of a bite increases.

Studies show that too often the gift puppy is given up within the first year, starved for training, socialization and affection. Many are brought to the shelter because they have "behavior problems" caused by a lack of training and supervision in the first few months.

SOLUTION: SCRAPS offers gift certificates that allow a family to "purchase" a new pet but let everyone in the family actual choose the specific animal later when things quite down. Preparing and planning for your new family member is key to making a life-long commitment to a pet.

