

Guidelines for Responsible Pet Ownership

The Executive Board of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recently approved the following pet ownership guidelines.

Owning a pet is a privilege and should result in a mutually beneficial relationship. However, the benefits of pet ownership come with obligations.

Responsible pet ownership includes:

- Committing to the relationship for the life of the pet(s).
- Avoiding impulsive decisions about obtaining pet(s), and carefully selecting pet(s) suited to your home and lifestyle.
- Recognizing that ownership of pet(s) requires an investment of time and money.
- Keeping only the type and number of pets for which an appropriate and safe environment can be provided, including adequate and appropriate food, water, shelter, health care and companionship.
- Ensuring pets are properly identified (i.e., tags, microchips, or tattoos) and that registration information in associated databases is kept up-to-date.
- Adherence to local ordinances, including licensing and leash requirements.
- Controlling pet(s) reproduction through managed breeding, containment, or spay/neuter, thereby helping to address animal control and overpopulation problems.
- Establishing and maintaining a veterinarian-client-patient relationship.
- Providing preventive (e.g., vaccinations, parasite control) and therapeutic health care for the life of the pet(s) in consultation with, and as recommended by, its veterinarian.
- Socialization and appropriate training for pet(s), which facilitates their well-being and the well-being of other animals and people.
- Preventing pet(s) from negatively impacting other people, animals and the environment, including proper waste disposal, noise control, and not allowing pet(s) to stray or become feral.
- Providing exercise and mental stimulation appropriate to the pet(s)' age, breed, and health status.
- Advance preparation to ensure the pet(s)' well-being in the case of an emergency or disaster, including assembling an evacuation kit.
- Making alternative arrangements if caring for the pet is no longer possible.
- Recognizing declines in the pet(s) quality of life and making decisions in consultation with a veterinarian regarding appropriate end-of-life care (e.g., palliative care, hospice, euthanasia).