

Humane Society of Elmore County News – 14 Jan '08  
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Whether adopted from a shelter, bought from a breeder, received as a gift, purchased from a pet store or some other source, any animal brought into a home requires care and attention to keep it healthy, safe and happy. With better foods and veterinary care all of our pets are living longer. Many small dogs and cats live well into their late teens and even early 20's and larger dogs to 10-14 years or more. Guinea Pigs can live up to eight years, horse and ponies can live into their thirties, some birds may outlive their owners and even some fish can live 10-15 years.

So taking on a pet should be well thought out since it can be a very significant commitment in terms of money, time, patience and work. Adorable puppies and kittens can turn into unruly adolescents if they don't learn basic rules of acceptable behavior and shelters receive far too many when they are six-twelve months old and getting into mischief. Cute puppy nips can turn into play bites that hurt if the pup is never taught to control itself and kittens that jump on trouser legs get an entirely different reaction when they weigh 10 lbs and twenty claws dig into your leg. Small critter cages require routine cleaning; yards & litter boxes must be 'scooped;' and even fish tanks require routine maintenance to keep the fish healthy.

Many pets are given to children to teach them responsibility and the reality is that millions of small pets and fish perish in a very short time from an ill-prepared and unsupervised child that quickly loses interest. Do we have to kill innocent pets to teach responsibility? And for those pets that survive how many live out their lives in their original home? When the fun wears off and the child loses interest, they learn they can get out of their responsibility by just "getting rid of" the pet. Does that truly instill a sense of responsibility? Of course, re-homing a pet is far better than it suffering or dying from lack of care, but these situations simply illustrate that taking on a pet should be done only after careful consideration of what it will take to be responsible for that animal for its entire life.

Our pets are dependent on us as their caretakers to keep them healthy and safe and also to be hopefully loved and fulfilled in their own right. Life is all about change and while none of us know what tomorrow will bring, please, before you add a pet to your home make sure you are truly committed to giving that animal the loving and lifetime home it so truly deserves.

*"We have the Bill of Rights. What we need is a Bill of Responsibilities." ~Bill Maher*