

## Bringing a Pet Home for the Holidays

The holiday season is one of the most popular time to bring a new pet into your household. This can be particularly rewarding if you are thinking of saving a life by adopting a homeless/rescued pet from the animal shelter or humane society. It can be a wonderful time to add another family member, but there are several things you will need to think about before adding a pet during this often chaotic time of year.

**Plan Ahead:** Christmas Day may not be the best day to introduce a new pet into the family unless you are very committed to giving the new baby lots of time and extra attention and making sure that the new pet is not frightened by numerous visitors or activities in the home and isn't forgotten about during the hustle and bustle. If possible, it is recommended to introduce a new pet into a household a little before or after the holiday. That way, your new family member will have time to adjust to everyone and housebreaking, exercising and feeding routines can be established in a less hectic environment.

An alternative to adding the pet on Christmas day would be to gift wrap a picture of the pet you have chosen or a gift certificate to the rescue that you plan on adopting from and placing that under the tree. You could also gift wrap a book on pet care and training and toys, grooming aids, food, collar, leash and bedding. Then plan on adding Fluffy or Fido a few days afterward. What fun!

**Make Certain:** If you are purchasing a pet as a Christmas "surprise" for someone. Make sure you know exactly what coat type, energy level, and temperament the person is looking for, otherwise you may have a mismatch.

**Be Realistic:** I know little Susie and Johnny begged up a storm for that new puppy or kitten and promised you that they would feed and water and walk and play with and pick up after. But, be realistic. As the adult in the household, you will be the primary caretaker for this pet. It is wonderful to get your children involved in the caretaking process, they should be. Do not, however, allow the pet to suffer simply because your children lose interest. Make sure you, as the parent, are prepared to take on all the responsibilities of pet ownership.