



Adding a new pet can be a wonderful and rewarding experience, but it also comes with significant responsibilities. In this guide, we'll explore some crucial considerations and offer valuable tips to ensure a smooth transition for both you and your future companion.

What to Consider...

- Where will your pet come from?
 - Before you bring a pet home, it's important to ensure they come from a reputable and ethical source. Look for reputable shelters, rescue organizations or responsible breeders who prioritize the well-being of animals. Avoid supporting irresponsible practices like puppy mills, backyard breeders or the removal of wild animals from their natural habitats.
- What kind of pet is most compatible with your lifestyle?

Different pets have varying needs and natural behaviours, so it's essential to choose a pet that aligns with your lifestyle and amount of time you can commit to them. Consider the following factors:

 - **Exercise and Grooming:** Some pets require regular exercise and grooming. Some coats and skin types may require regular maintenance from you or regular appointments with a groomer.
 - **Behavioral Needs:** Pets may exhibit different natural behaviors, such as being vocal, chewing objects, being active at night or needing a companion of the same species. Understanding these traits can help you prepare and provide for them appropriately by giving them the right mental and physical exercise, training and enrichment.
 - **Training and Socialization:** Determine what kind of training your pet would need, and if you can invest time and effort into training and socializing your new companion.
 - **Environmental Needs:** Some animals have specific requirements for their living environment. Consider factors like enclosures, litter boxes and any other necessary adjustments to your home, and the regular cleaning and maintenance their living space would require.
- Do you have other animals?
 - Some animals benefit from having a friend of the same kind around, like guinea pigs and rabbits. Others, like cats and dogs, might need slower introductions or not enjoy living with other animals.
 - If you have other animals, they may each need their own resources, like their own bed, toys, and food and water bowls to avoid conflict.
 - If you're considering having animals that include both predators and prey, such as birds and cats, we strongly advise being cautious. The presence of a predator can be very stressful for prey animals. We recommend keeping them separated by at least 2 barriers



(like a door and a secure enclosure), and if they must be in the same room, having the prey animal protected and to always be supervised.

- What kind and size of housing do they require, and where will they live in your home?

Each pet requires a comfortable and appropriate living space. Consider the following:

- **Specific Housing Conditions:** Some animals need specific environmental conditions, such as certain temperature, light and humidity levels. Ensure you can provide the necessary species-appropriate conditions in your home.
 - **Space Requirements:** Whenever possible, provide your pets with the largest suitable enclosure to promote their well-being. Animals who primarily live in enclosures should have opportunities to exercise and explore outside of their enclosure in a safe space.
 - **Safety Considerations:** Some animals need to be contained for safety, or housed away from direct sunlight, fumes or drafts in order to be safe.
 - **Home Alterations:** Be prepared to make minor adjustments to your home to accommodate your new pet's needs or to keep them safe. For example, you might need to install baby gates for dogs or provide vertical spaces like cat trees and multiple litterboxes for cats.
- What is their age or life stage, and what are the medical and behavioural needs associated with their life stage? How long will they live for?
 - **Age and Life Stage:** Different life stages come with varying care requirements. Consider the age of the pet you're adopting, and the medical and behavioral needs associated with their life stage. Puppies and kittens, for example, need frequent visits to the veterinarian for vaccinations and early socialization, while older pets may require special veterinary attention to address any age-related conditions.
 - **Lifespan:** If your pet will have a long lifespan and may potentially outlive you, you should create a plan to ensure that they are cared for their entire life.
 - What are their general and specific health needs?
 - **General and Specific Health Needs:** Familiarize yourself with the health needs of your chosen pet species. Some animals may require specialized veterinary care, so it's essential to find a veterinarian with expertise in their specific species or conditions they may have. Research regular preventative care, vaccination schedules, proper nutrition and any common health conditions they might be prone to. Some breeds may have specific health concerns, such as brachycephalic breeds needing extra care for their respiratory health.
 - **Dietary Needs:** Research what food your pet will need throughout their life, how much and how to feed them so you are prepared to find the foods you will need to keep them happy and healthy.



- What do you know about the animal's personality and history?
 - **Ask Questions:** Gather as much information as possible about your pet's personality, likes and dislikes, and the temperament of their parents if possible. Inquire about their history, experiences and previous interactions in a home environment. Understanding your pet as an individual will help you cater to their specific needs.
 - **Avoid Stereotypes:** Avoid relying on stereotypes or generalizations about things like breed and age. Sometimes, a pet's breed and age might be uncertain, and they could be a mix of multiple breeds. There are many factors that can influence an animal's temperament beyond their breed, so treat them as a unique individual, and based on observations and what you know about their history.

Tips for Before They Come Home

- 🐾 **Reputable Pet Resources:** Research reliable resources for behavior, medical and other pet supports to be fully prepared. Humane and professional behavior and training advice can help with a successful introduction to your family. Identify nearby veterinary clinics for regular and emergency care and familiarize yourself with lost and found resources in case your pet goes missing.
- 🐾 **Local Bylaws and Licensing:** Look up your local municipal bylaws to ensure you comply with all regulations regarding pet ownership. Obtain the necessary licenses and registrations and understand your municipality's expectations for responsible pet guardianship.
- 🐾 **ID and Microchipping:** Ensure your pet has proper identification, preferably the combination of a microchip and tags when appropriate. Having identification increases the likelihood of a safe return if your pet gets lost.
- 🐾 **Create a Safe Space:** Prepare a separate living space for your new pet before their arrival. This designated area will help them adjust more easily to their new environment.
- 🐾 **Home Hazards:** Conduct a thorough check of your home to identify and eliminate any potential hazards to your pet's safety. Secure wires, remove toxic plants and ensure there are no gaps or spaces under furniture that could pose a risk.
- 🐾 **Spaying and Neutering:** Confirm that your pet is spayed or neutered before bringing them home. If they have recently undergone the procedure, allow them ample time to heal before engaging in high-energy activities.
- 🐾 **Housing Conditions and Neighbours:** Be aware of any housing conditions related to pets, such as guidelines on the number, type or size of pets allowed. Consider informing your neighbours about the new addition to your family, especially if your pet might make noise, if your neighbour has another animal or if they are nervous to interact with certain types of animals.



EHS Resource Guide

Questions to Ask Before Adding a Pet



By following these guidelines and considering the specific needs of your new pet, you're taking significant steps toward becoming a responsible and caring pet guardian. Adding a pet to your family is a lifelong commitment and with thoughtful preparation, you can provide a loving and enriching home for your newest family member.

Additional Resources & Support:

For more information, visit our website:

<https://www.edmontonhumanesociety.com/>

Did You Know?

You can also ask us behavioural questions by emailing:

askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 70% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. Please [Donate](#).