

On the Positive Side: New Puppy, New Kitten? Think Before You Select, But Select

by Frank Bryce

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We are rapidly approaching the season of increased puppies and kittens in combination showing up on our animal shelter's doorstep as well as stretching the resources of hard working animal welfare organizations and fostering individuals outside the shelter. You will hear strong pleas and heart wrenching stories about the real plight of these furry critters and hopefully many of you reading this article will be moved to adopt a new cat or dog, puppy or kitten when this happens.

Adopting a new companion is only part of the lifelong adventure and commitment you will be undertaking. In a recent edition of the ASPCA Action magazine, that organization did an excellent job of discussing the responsibilities of those who are contemplating finding a new best friend for love and companionship to become part of their family. Every animal advocate and shelter administration wants to be confident every animal they adopt out goes to a home that will positively provide for all its needs, both physically and emotionally.

Adoption of a companion animal is not just finding a cuddly, cute and loving little ball of fur in various shapes, sizes and color. It can be said you never own the pet, it owns you. You become responsible for its food, water, shelter, medicine and health and, along with the love you give it, the exercise and entertainment to make it a real part of its new home. In addition to training of the pet, there is training of the family including the children that may be involved.

Questions put forward by the ASPCA's article begin by asking "why do you want to adopt a pet". Thinking through why you want a pet and how that pet needs to fit unto your home life is important to determining cat or dog, large or small, and rowdy or quiet. This does tie effectively to the length of life time a companion animal will be with you. It becomes a life time commitment regardless. Researching the different breeds and seeking assistance from people familiar with the personalities and requirements of potential adoptive animals will help find the right fit for your situation. Finding a good match does not need to be a lone effort or a shot in the dark. This investment in time and effort will help determine health and safety issues you may confront with your new pet. It can be a real challenge with some potential health, food, grooming and behavior traits that need to be addressed for your new pet. Even the living space you have available may require modification and accommodation for an active pet in a small living space such as an apartment or busy street for walking and exercise. Whether you own your home or rent often requires some considerable thought and adjustment. Many of us enjoy pets and want them in our homes. This can be a positive and rewarding experience enhanced by taking some time as you begin to select the right one for you. All of the animal advocates I know are looking for homes for animals. Will yours be the next?

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