



although they should always be supervised by an adult to avoid hurting the pet, or having the children receive a bite or scratch. Children 10 and up are well suited for this type of pet, and enjoy catching and providing live insects for their meals. Yum! Some lizards, such as geckos, are nocturnal, so check to ensure both child and pet will be awake at the same time during the day.

Another pet that has become popular, particularly with children, are ferrets. They are known to be friendly, and are able to be trained to perform dog-like tricks. However, ferrets are known to bite when frightened or hurt and should be supervised around young children. Ferrets are best kept in a wire cage which includes a soft bed and water bowl, and they will eat a variety of packaged foods. They shouldn't be kept in extremely hot temperatures, or left alone for long periods of time.

Is pet hair an issue, either from allergies, or from a cleanliness standpoint?

If the answer is yes, there are many short haired or even hairless cats which will work. The Devon Rex cats in the Evans' household were purchased specifically because Ken is allergic to long-haired cats. Check with the Humane Society for advice on which pets may be appropriate in terms of allergies, and seek advice from your family doctor or allergist as well.

If a clean house is important to you, most dog owners would caution against inviting a dog into your home. It starts with the dog hair, which gets everywhere, and can also include little "accidents" that only Mom or Dad will be willing to clean up. Additionally, some bigger dogs can ruin furniture, eat food off your counters and destroy other household items. Sue Petkovsek, who owns an Australian shepherd, concedes that while they love their dog, the house has suffered. "Don't get a dog if you have high standards of cleanliness for your house. They are dirty and hairy. Give them stuff to play with, chew on, etc., so they don't destroy your house, yard and belongings."

If you're still uncertain about the type of pet that best suits your lifestyle, call an advisor at the Humane Society, toll free at 1-800-641-KIND, or visit their website at www.humanesociety.com for more information, and to check on the pets that are available for immediate adoption.

Just one more caution: Thinking of giving a pet to a family for a present? Think again. Easter, Valentine's Day, birthdays and Christmas are typical holidays when the thought of a cute little bunny or puppy seems like the ideal gift. "Think about it this way," says O'Sullivan, "how would you like it if a person turned up on your doorstep with a suitcase and announced they were staying for 14 years? That's the average life expectancy of a dog. "Luckily, there are fewer and fewer abandoned pets each year as these well-intentioned folks get more educated about the commitment to pet ownership."



Remember that pets are difficult to "return" if the decision was made too quickly, and always remember to get your pets spayed or neutered to avoid additional, uninvited guests. **G**

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Photos on this page by Steve Uhraney and Frank Bell. Photo of beagle on page 10 by Carmela Mandaro.

pet facts

The average dog will live for 14 years, the average cat for 18, and some birds will live for a full 60 years. That being said, pet ownership is thriving in Canada, with:

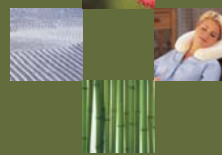
Six out of every 10 Canadian households having some type of pet:

- 6.435 million cats
- 6.04 million dogs
- 3-5 million birds, fish, rabbits, and other small pets
- Over 100,000 horses personally owned.

Information provided by the Humane Society of Canada



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