

Rutgers University Rent-A-Pet Animal Shelter

A Rutgers University based animal shelter designed to educate future pet owners of the responsibilities associated with pet ownership, with the goal of adopting out animals to committed, healthy, happy homes.

Tag Words: animal, adoption, animal shelter, fostering, pets, pet owner, Rent-a-Pet, responsible, Rutgers, student

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Summary (Ott, Sherman)

Millions of pets are surrendered to animal shelters each year because people don't know what to do when animals display certain behaviors. Many pet owners are also unaware of the cost and time commitment of owning a pet, and this leads to animals being abandoned, abused, or put into a shelter. The goal of this project is to raise awareness of the importance of knowledge in regards to pet ownership. There are overwhelming numbers of cats, dogs, and other domesticated animals that are bought as companion animals in the United States. Unfortunately, many of these animals do not have the chance to live out fulfilling lives in the homes they were brought in to. Animals are often acquired on impulse or without sufficient knowledge of the animals needs. Rutgers University Rent-A-Pet is a theoretical solution to alleviating the increasing number of pet abandonments in the New Brunswick, New Jersey area. Rent-A-Pet offers prospective pet owners the option to "try out" the pet of their liking before making the commitment of adoption. Rent-A-Pet works with clients one-on-one to best match each animal to the person's lifestyle. Basic informational seminars, reading material and classes about pet care are the basis of this program. Upon completion of the trial period, the client has the option to surrender, foster or adopt that animal. Pet education is the first and most important thing to have when considering pet adoption. As a service to the animal community, the founders of Rent-A-Pet volunteered their knowledge of responsible pet ownership to interested patrons and customers at several local pet stores near Rutgers University. This student run program will enable us to help prospective owners find a pet that best suits their lifestyle, and will help to place animals in their forever homes.

Video Link

Rent-A-Pet: www.youtube.com/watch?v=anHnGh-T5Qk

The Issue: Animal Shelters

Most people have some familiarity with animal shelters, or have at least heard of them. According to the Humane Society of the United States, “between 6-8 million dogs and cats are in shelters every year in US” (HSUS). To accommodate the millions of homeless animals requires vast amounts of shelter space, volunteers and funding. It is estimated that there are currently 4,000-6,000 functioning shelters in the United States (HSUS). Based on these statistics, it is a reality that not every homeless animal can be helped. This data is specific and does not include information pertaining to small or exotic animals that are also without homes, for which there is also high demand for shelter space.

Many unwanted animals end up in, what are referred to as “Kill Shelters” or “High Kill Shelters”, where the animal has a limited window of time to be rescued before being euthanized. This is primarily due to overcrowding and limited resources. Numerous animal welfare advocacy groups and individuals are working to reduce the number of Kill Shelters around the United States, in the belief that animals also have the right to a fair chance at life. There are also a number of shelters that house unwanted animals in hopes of fostering and adopting out, known as “No-kill shelters”. Only in the cases of extreme illness or dangerously aggressive behavior, do these type of shelters resort to euthanasia.

“In the vast majority of shelters, decisions about adoption and euthanasia are based on factors that include the temperament and health of the animal, and the space and resources available to humanely house and properly care for the animal” (HSUS). The goal here is to provide the necessary care for these animals with the hopes of adopting them out to loving homes.

Shelters play an important role in helping unwanted animals. “Animal shelters provide care and treatment to animals needing protection, attempt to find homes for homeless animals and reunite lost pets with their families” (Ramos). Regardless of the type of shelter an animal may enter, the basic essentials for sustaining a healthy life are provided. Without the services provided by shelters, there would be increasingly more numbers of abandoned, stray animals roaming the streets.

However, the overall mission of each animal shelter cannot be overshadowed by the fact that these shelters are, more often than not, overcrowded and stressed for resources. An overpopulated animal shelter has many concerns, such as animal living space, funding, volunteers and workers, veterinary concerns, etc.. Animals can be pricey to keep. Consider that an individual animal has expenses for food, shelter, medical related issues. Include in that, the cost shelters incur for heating, electricity, water and so on. A big concern is “not having funds... so you have to get money elsewhere; the key is asking for and getting donations” (Anders).

Many companion animals that enter shelters do not experience home life outside shelter walls. Another option to sheltering companion animals is to foster them. Fostering animals works similarly to sheltering them, only with the benefits of a home environment, increased socialization and a priceless sense of normality in life. “The rewards of being a foster parent... include offering an animal a second chance and the added benefit of receiving the love and attention right back from the animal you nurture” (Pets911).

It is a devastating truth that many animals are without homes due to the lack of knowledge of proper pet care. Through education, it is possible to minimize, and hopefully eliminate, the vast number of irrational, impulsive, and poorly thought out purchases of animals by people who are unaware of the what is expected and required of them as a successful pet owner.

Rutgers University Rent-A-Pet Overview (Sherman, Zaccaro)

Rent-A-Pet is a no-kill shelter that reaches out to new, prospective pet owners who are interested in pet ownership, but are not necessarily sure of the responsibilities. This shelter cares for homeless dogs, cats and several species of small animals. Rent-A-Pet's mission is to properly introduce and educate people about responsible pet ownership in a shelter setting with the end goal of adoption. Rent-A-Pet emphasizes the importance of proper knowledge of the responsibilities that come with owning a pet.

Upon completion of an application and contract, the individual will be best matched with the animal of their liking. Rent-a-Pet makes sure that all pets are fit with the right pet owners to ensure the best quality life for both the animals and the owners. By ensuring this, it will help with the issue of overcrowding in animal shelters and decrease the amount of unwanted animals. They will have the option to "try out" being a pet owner for an agreed amount of time.

Rent-A-Pet participants are encouraged to go to training with their animals, like their puppies or dogs. Not only has training of basic obedience been proven to prevent unwanted behaviors, it helps pet owners and animals bond together. This makes a happy, enjoyable life for everyone.

At the conclusion of this trial period, the client will have the option to surrender the animal to our shelter and exit the program, act as a foster home for the animal or adopt the animal as their own. The hopes for providing a fulfilling and healthy life for those animals that are without homes, is something that Rent-A-Pet is working hard to ensure. The overall goal is to prevent overcrowding and offer solutions, so any pet owner that adopts through the organization has help offered to them for the lifetime of that pet.

Rent-a-Pet is dedicated to helping prospective pet owners understand the responsibilities that come with owning a pet before they make a commitment.

Rutgers University Rent-A-Pet Assistance (Zaccaro)

Rent-a-Pet understands that not all pet owners are experts and therefore know what to do if an unwanted behavior becomes an issue. If a dog or puppy starts to chew or bark, Rent-a-Pet offers a help line as well as an expert behaviorist on staff to work with them and the animal to find a solution. Surrendering an animal should never be an option with the animals adopted out through the organization.

Rent-a-Pet has experts in all animal types, from dogs to small animals. We are always here to help answer questions at any hour during the day. With the program, prospective owners are shown a video and are allowed to "rent" a pet that may suit their lifestyle the most before they commit to adopting the animal. If they have any questions at any point, we are here to help

answer them. No pet owner should feel at a loss with their pet, and is encouraged to use the help line for any concerns that they have. For example, if a puppy is chewing objects that it shouldn't, the pet owner can call Rent-a-Pet's help line and advice will be given. Depending on the individual animal and the situation, a solution will be found.

Rent-a-Pet offers help, all the time.

Misconceptions of Pet Ownership (Ott)

When purchasing an animal, people are usually uneducated when it comes to basic care, cost, and the commitment that is needed for owning a pet. Purchasing an animal on a whim without proper knowledge and thought can lead to these animals being neglected or put into a shelter. Millions of dogs and cats are euthanized each year, and this number could be decreased drastically if prospective owners were educated, and the misconceptions of pet ownership were minimized. A person who wants an addition to their family should consider the time and money they have to put into a pet before deciding which one to purchase, and what type of pet would best fit their lifestyle.

Dogs

Owning a dog requires time, money, and a basic understanding of the care that certain breeds need. The first aspect that a person should think about before purchasing a dog is whether they are financially ready for one. If a person purchases a dog from a breeder, they can expect to pay \$500 to \$2,000 depending on the breed. A better choice would be to purchase a dog from a reputable shelter, which would cost about \$50 to \$200. A dog will also need to have regular veterinarian visits. The price for these visits could vary from \$50 to \$300 a year, and could increase more if the dog needs shots or special treatments. The prospective owner should also consider spaying or neutering the new member of the family, which would increase the veterinary bill as well in the first year. Food, treats, leashes, collars, and toys need to be added in as well, and can cost from \$300 to \$900 depending on breed and brand of product. Many breeds also require regular grooming, aside from trimming nails and cleaning ears, so a prospective owner should take this into consideration before choosing a certain breed. It really depends on the time and money they can afford to put into the dog. Additional costs could include training classes and a dog sitter depending on certain situations. In total, a dog would cost an average of \$600 to \$1200 a year, with the first year being the most expensive at about \$1300 to \$1900 (Stregowski 4 2010).

The next aspect a person should consider and understand is the basic care and time needed for a dog. At different stages in life, dogs have different nutritional needs, so the prospective owner should not be feeding their puppy food that is meant for an adult dog. A veterinarian should be consulted to determine what food is best for the dog at different stages in life. Also, dogs need food and water daily, and separate meals should be given so that the dog does not overeat. How much food and how many meals the dog needs depends on the size and breed, and a veterinarian can also help the owner determine what would be best. All dogs need exercise, but some breeds require less than others so this should be taken into consideration before choosing a certain breed. If a prospective owner has a very busy lifestyle, than they would want a dog that would not have as much energy and can have a more relaxed lifestyle, where a person who is very active and likes to be outdoors would want a breed that can keep up with them. All dogs require basic grooming such as bathing and nail cutting, but as stated before,

certain breeds require more professional grooming if they have long or curly hair. If a person does not have the time to brush and maintain breeds with longer coats, then they should purchase a breed with a short coat. Improper maintenance of the coat can lead to matting, which could end up being painful to the animal. A dog also requires attention, and will not do well if it does not feel like a part of the family since they are pack animals. Dogs have an average life expectancy of 13 years, so a person considering a dog should know that they are a big commitment and not something to be taken lightly (Stregowski 5 2010).

Cats

Like dogs, owning a cat requires time, money, and basic knowledge of what certain breeds need. Cats can be a little less demanding though, so they may be a better choice for someone who doesn't have the time commitment for a dog. First, a prospective owner must consider whether they can care for a cat financially. The initial purchase of the cat can range from \$0 to \$750 depending on the breed and place of purchase. Cats also require veterinary visits, and the cost of these can vary from \$90 to \$400 a year if the cat needs vaccines or special treatment. This can also increase the total for the first year if the cat needs to be spayed or neutered. A prospective cat owner will have to invest in food, treats, toys, scratching posts, litter box, cat litter, and bed which could cost \$200 to \$900 a year depending on the brand of the products and if these items need replacing. Cats are generally self grooming, but some breeds may require some maintenance and sometimes professional grooming which could be an addition to the yearly cost. On average, owning a cat will cost about \$700 a year. The first year will be the most expensive, and is usually about \$1000. These costs are much lower than that seen in owning a dog above (Foster and Smith 2010).

Knowledge of the basic care and time required for owning a cat is also important for a person considering purchasing one. Cats, like dogs, require different types of food at different stages in their life, so a veterinarian should be consulted before choosing a specific cat food. Unlike dogs, most cats can manage with a decent amount of dry food being left out once a day for an extended period of time. This requires less time from the owner to have to put out meals at certain times. They should also have access to water everyday, like dogs. A prospective owner should also consider whether they want an indoor cat or an outdoor cat. Indoor cats require more maintenance because they must have a litter box that should be scooped daily and dumped and washed out at least once a week. An outdoor cat will mostly take care of itself, but may not be good for a person who is seeking a companion. Grooming is less crucial for cats compared to dogs since they are generally self-cleaning animals and can use a scratching post to keep their nails trim. Cats also require exercise, but not to the extent that dogs do. Based on this information, a person who does not have the time commitment or the money to care for a dog may be better able to handle a cat as their new companion. Cats have an average life expectancy of 15 years for indoor cats, so they are also a big commitment like the dog. Purchasing one should not be decided on a whim (Syufy 2010).

Small mammals

Small mammals, including gerbils, hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, and many others are generally more cost effective and require less time for care. This makes them more ideal for someone who doesn't have the time and money for a cat or a dog. Their initial costs include a cage, which must be the correct proportion for the small mammal so it doesn't become stressed and has space to

explore. This can range from \$40 to \$100. Small mammals also require specific food, bedding, and toys, which can range from \$300 to \$700 dollars a year, the latter more for rabbits and guinea pigs. A small mammal would be a better companion for a person who is on a budget as seen by the annual costs of owning each type of pet (ASPCA 1 2010).

Small mammals generally don't require too much attention since they are less affectionate than a dog or a cat. They will require regular nail trimming, but they are self-cleaning and would not require any grooming. They require fresh food and water daily, which will vary depending on the type of small mammal purchased. Any left over food should be disposed of. The bedding will need to be freshened daily, removing any soiled areas or droppings, and completely removed and replaced once a week. Most small mammals only have a life expectancy of a couple of years, while rabbits and guinea pigs can live 6-11 and 5-6 years respectively. This makes small mammals less of a commitment than a cat or a dog for a person seeking a new companion, and they are also better for a person on a budget (ASPCA 2 2010).

Pet Ownership Responsibilities: Knowing Behavioral Issues (Zaccaro)

When pet owners first get an animal as a pet they often do not realize the responsibility that comes with it. This is especially true with cats and dogs, in which both require plenty of socialization with other people, scenarios, environments, etc. Small animals (such as guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters, rats, etc.) also need to be handled properly to make sure that they become well-behaved pets. If proper training is not done, many pets develop behavioral issues, such as aggression or fear-based behaviors. These behaviors can be harmful for both the animals and the humans around them.

The most common types of behavioral issues that bring animals to shelters are aggression, fear or just simply because owners do not know how to handle a certain behavior (http://dogs.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Dog_Rescue). However, the animals are not always to blame. Pet owners are expected to teach their new pets how to properly behave. All pet owners should socialize their new pet. This entails letting strange and new people hold them or handle them, taking them to suburb areas, rural areas, and all different types of settings, exposing them to new textures and sounds, and the list goes on. There is no such thing as over-socializing an animal. The more they get to see and know, the better it is for everyone (<http://www.suite101.com/content/puppy-socialization-and-obedience-training-a125985>).

Socializing an animal is easy, and beneficial. For example, a family that gets a cute puppy decides not to take it outside and meet plenty of people or dogs. Later in life when it is mature, it does not know how to react to these new scenarios and it may choose to react aggressively. Now this dog, which was not really aggressive to begin with, ends up in a shelter and will probably be euthanized. Lets look at this same situation, only in the correct way. The family takes home the puppy and starts training and socializing immediately. They take it to parks, stores, to meet other people and dogs of all types, different houses and other settings. Now when this dog is mature, it knows how to react to meeting other people and other dogs. This dog is friendly, happy and well behaved. The family has a great pet and everyone is happy. The only difference between these two situations is how the puppy was socialized. Socialization in itself is not hard to do. It's just a matter of taking your new pet with you wherever you can. In fact, socialization can be fun for everyone, as the pet owner gets to take their pet to many new places and see it interacting with new people, other pets, etc. It is a shame that this crucial time

Socializing is also important for cats and small animals too. This may come off as a shock to read, but it is just as possible for cats and small animals to develop unwanted behaviors

as well. For cats, it is important for cats to be socialized early as they have a tendency to be more territorial (http://www.critterology.com/feline_fearful_or_defensive_aggression-215.html). Kittens that are socialized early are more likely to be friendly towards people and less fearful or aggressive. The same concept goes for small animals. Guinea pigs and rabbits are just two examples of small animals. They are extremely social animals and need interaction to become well-behaved pets. For any small animal, if it is handled right and cared for properly, they will become great pets and love people. However, if they are not handled consistently and exposed to people handling them early on, they will become fearful and hard to work with (<http://www.petsintouch.com/nwposter/1576/rabbits-is-one-right-for-you>).

If for some reason an animal develops an unwanted behavior, or a pet owner sees a warning sign for a bad behavior (such as growling, nipping, etc.), there are many options available to fix it (<http://www.dogtraininghq.com/tips2.html>). Trainers, mostly for dogs, are in all areas and are a quick web search away. Even pet stores offer training. Training levels range from puppy classes to advanced obedience classes. These classes offer basic manners and commands that are essential for a dog to know. Some commands include sit, down, come, stay. These commands can save a dog's life, especially if it develops a habit of running out the door. Trainers also offer services to correct aggression in animals, so even if you have an aggressive dog there's a solution besides surrendering it to a shelter.

Besides aggression there are other unwanted behaviors that are just as fixable. For example, with young animals like puppies and kittens, behaviors like chewing and scratching are undesirable and should be fixed as soon as possible. Again, this is where training comes in and becomes so important. Puppies go through a teething stage when their adult teeth come in, so if a puppy is not given the proper toys to chew on they will chew on furniture, shoes, clothes, other items around the house. If they are not taught to not chew on things, they will think that this behavior is acceptable and will carry it with them into maturity (<http://www.dogtrainingplace.com/52/dog-training-how-to-eliminate-unwanted-behaviors/>).

Chewing is just one behavior that is considered unwanted. There are other behaviors like barking excessively, digging, jumping on people, and many more. For cats these behaviors can be scratching furniture, climbing curtains, hissing at people. For small animals, they can bite or nip, run away and hide. All of these issues are just as likely for people to surrender animals to a shelter. All of these behavioral issues are easily correctible by training, for dogs.

Many of these behaviors are also due to boredom and lack of mental stimulation. To prevent a dog from chewing, a pet owner should give them something else more enticing to chew on, like a bone or toy. For barking and digging issues, the dog may require more exercise and need to be walked more. There are many other reasons why these behaviors occur and what to do about them, but owners should talk to an expert trainer about what fits their pets needs the most. For cats, getting a scratching post or more toys to play with can prevent furniture destruction and chewing. If they get bored, they will take their frustrations out on a new object or they will seek a new "toy" to play with, which is furniture or shoes. For small animals, they need stimulation and things to chew on. Giving them more objects to play with can make them more social, especially if owners involve themselves in that play by taking them out to exercise them or even just petting them.

It is unfortunate that so many animals get surrendered to shelters daily for behavioral issues when they are so easily fixable and avoidable. All pet owners should do their research before getting any animal as a pet. If pet owners did this before buying or adopting a pet, there would be many fewer animals in shelters and therefore overcrowding can be controlled.

The Service Project (Ott, Sherman)

Our plan is to create a student run program called “Rent-a-Pet” located on the Cook campus of Rutgers University in North Brunswick, New Jersey. This program will have an animal shelter setting and will help people interested in owning a pet by educating them about the responsibilities of pet ownership before becoming fully committed.

To get the program up and running, we will create an information sheet stating what the program is all about and distribute them to local veterinary offices, pet stores, and dog parks. We will also personally go to dog parks and pet stores and hold information sessions where people can ask questions and can be informed of the program.

As a service to the animal community, the founders of Rent-A-Pet volunteered their knowledge of responsible pet ownership to interested patrons and customers at several local pet stores near Rutgers University. Each member of the group was able to consult with participating individuals. Discussions included those in reference to what type of pet they were shopping for, their initial experiences with their pet, suggestions for better understanding the needs of their pet, and training tips.

Rutgers University Rent-a-Pet Animal Shelter Business Proposal (Sherman)

Mission Statement

Rent-a-Pet’s mission is to place animals into healthy, happy, loving homes with people who are knowledgeable and committed to giving their pet the best life that they deserve. Our clients are encouraged to gain maximum knowledge to ensure that their experience as a pet owner is fulfilling for both them and the animal. We believe that, through education and experience, prospective pet owners will have a better understanding of the responsibilities that come with being a successful pet owner.

Our staff at Rent-a-Pet is very knowledgeable about dogs, cats, and small animals. We are all Rutgers Animal Science alumni and have years of personal experience as pet owners. At Rent-a-Pet we are all animal enthusiasts. We offer numerous courses in basics of pet ownership, animal behavior clinics, obedience classes, as well as a 24/7 helpline to provide assistance and make sure your experience is the best it can be.

Project Team

Rent-a-Pet is a Rutgers University, student run animal shelter. All employees are required to have superior knowledge and experience with dogs, cats and small animals (i.e. rodents, reptiles, birds, etc.). The staff at Rent-a-Pet is headed by Holly Ott, April Sherman and Michele Zaccaro. All staff will participate and successfully complete an extensive animal care and handling course before working with any of the animals.

Holly Ott is a senior, majoring in Pre-Veterinary Animal Science. She is from Eatontown, New Jersey, and is responsible for reviewing client applications and matching them with the animal that best fits their lifestyle as well as overseeing kennels. Holly currently works at an animal boarding facility and enjoys spending time with her Boston Terrier. After graduating from Rutgers, Holly hopes to attend veterinary school.

April Sherman is a senior, majoring in Animal Industries: Livestock Production and Management. She is from Linden, New Jersey and is responsible for overseeing the general care and management of the animals housed in the Rent-a-Pet shelter. April has owned a wide variety

of pets, ranging from mice and ferrets, dogs and cats, to birds and reptiles. After graduating from Rutgers, April hopes to work with livestock animals in the field of animal health.

Michele Zaccaro is a senior, majoring in Animal Industries: Livestock Production and Management and minoring in Companion Animal Science. She is from Linden, New Jersey, and is responsible for coordinating and running animal training courses. Michele currently works at PetSmart Pet Hotel and owns several rats, a rabbit, frogs and two dogs. Michele's passion is learning about and understanding animal behavior. After graduating from Rutgers, Michele hopes to further her animal career in the realm of animal behavior.

Financial Overview

Rent-a-Pet is responsible for the following expenses: rent, utilities, building upkeep and maintenance, staff salaries, insurance coverage, animal equipment, animal feed, and veterinary visits.

Clients are required to pay the following non-refundable fees:

- \$10 application
- \$30/day animal insurance (this fee covers any veterinary concerns which arise during the trial period)
- \$10/day (dog or cat) or \$5/day (small animal) for feed.

Clients must pay a refundable deposit of:

- \$150 (dog), \$125 (cat) or \$75 (small animal) to cover any equipment that is required of the animal.

A basic animal introduction course is offered free of charge. Any additional training course are \$5/session. These courses are supplemental and highly recommended.

Refundable deposits will be distributed upon completion of the trial period. Clients have the option to surrender their equipment deposit should they choose to foster/adopt that animal.

Should the animal become (naturally) deceased at any time during the trial period, a 100% equipment and feed refund will be issued. Should the animal become (unnaturally) deceased, no refund will be issued. Cases of death will be investigated and analyzed by the supervising veterinarian that Rent-a-Pet employs.

Rent-A-Pet Process (Ott)

Application and Questionnaire

At Rent-A-Pet, we will strive to introduce prospective pet owners to the responsibilities and the joys of having an animal to take care of while being sure that the people are prepared and comfortable for this commitment. To accomplish this, we will require all customers to fill out a short questionnaire and application about they're lifestyle, which will help them see which pet would be most appropriate for them. The application and questionnaire are attached.

Contract and Start of Program

After filling out the application and questionnaire, the perfect pet type will be chosen for the prospective owner, whether it be a dog, cat, or small mammal. They must then attend a class, which will describe the responsibilities of pet ownership, what behaviors to expect and watch out

for, and how to address certain issues they may encounter, which will be further described in another section. This will help the client become familiar with what owning a pet entails instead of jumping right into it with no knowledge at all.

If the person agrees to the program, they must then sign a contract agreeing to it and the terms and conditions and pay a nonrefundable fee. They will then be able to choose whether they would like to “rent” a pet for twenty-four hours, three days, or seven days so that they can experience what having a pet in the house is like for an extended period of time. The necessary equipment will be available for the prospective owner to sign out as well. A help line and an animal behaviorist will also be available for the client so that they can ask any questions they may have regarding their pet.

Completion of Program

Upon completion of the class and renting the pet, the client can then decide if they would like to foster, adopt, or return the pet. If they decide to adopt, they will have access to the help line and professional for the lifetime of the pet. This will help the pet stay in its forever home and keep it from being returned to a shelter.

Rent-a-Pet Available Classes (Zaccaro)

Application is attached

Dog Classes

Puppy Kindergarten

This class is for those who have adopted puppies under the age of 6 months. In this class, we will introduce the basic commands like sit, down, come, stay. These commands are essential for a well-behaved puppy and can even save its life one day. We will also discuss house breaking; good leash manners, and have some puppy playtime if other puppies are in the class. Each class is 1 hour long, and lasts 8 weeks.

Example videos:

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apUblXhuSxM>
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fn42yGBc7W8>

Basic Obedience

This class is for any dogs adopted from Rent-a-Pet that are 6 months and older. This class will go over the basic commands (sit, down, come, etc.) and reinforce them more than we would in puppy kindergarten. For example, we will go over how to have a dog sit and stay for minutes at a time. We will work on reliable recalls as well, all essentials for a safe and happy life for the dogs. Each class is 1 hour long and lasts 8 weeks.

Example videos:

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1Mq2ySro30>
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CO6tf92m3wk>

Private Classes

Private, one-hour sessions are available with the trainer by arrangement. These private sessions are good for dogs that have started to develop unfavorable behaviors, such as growling or barking at people. Private sessions allow for a more personal one-on-one time with

the trainer and are highly recommended for dogs that need the extra time. Nervous dogs, dogs with house breaking issues, etc are also good matches for this. Private sessions last as long as needed to correct the issue.

Other Animal Classes

Small Animal Handling

This class is for first time small animal owners, or for owners who are having issues getting their small pet used to them. This class will show new owners how to properly restrain, handle and hold their new pets. Classes can also cover more specific topics such as shyness around people, not wanting to be held, finding the right toys and housing. Each session is one hour long and lasts as long as needed.

Cat Handling and Behavior

This class is for cat owners who are either first time owners, or are having issues handling their new cat. Since cats behave differently than dogs do, this class will go into great details on cat behavior and the correct ways to handle and hold them. Classes can also cover topics such as litter training, scratching furniture, shyness around people, and more. Each session is one hour long and lasts as long as needed.

Rent-A-Pet Application and Questionnaire

Application

Last Name _____ First _____ MI _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZipCode _____

Home Phone _____ Mobile Phone _____

S.S. # _____ CC # _____

Circle one: Visa Amex Discover MC

How did you hear about us? _____

Information Questionnaire

What made you decide you wanted a pet?

What kind of pet are you interested in owning?
Circle all that apply: Dog Cat Small Mammal

Is there an extended period of time where no one is home during the day?
Please circle: YES NO

If so, how long? _____

Describe a typical weekday at your house.

Describe a typical weekend at your house.

Do you currently have any pets? If so please list them.

Do these pets get along well with other animals? Please explain.

Are they up to date of vaccinations and veterinary visits? _____
If not, please explain.

Who is your current veterinarian? _____
Veterinarian contact info: _____

Have you had any pets in the past? If so, please briefly describe your experience.

Have you ever given a pet to a shelter? If so how come?

Do you have any children? If so, how old, how many?

Does anyone in your family have an allergy to any animals? If so, what kinds?

What environment do you have to offer a pet? Check all that apply.

Apartment _____

House _____

Yard _____ If so is it fenced in? _____

Have a pool _____ If yes, is it fenced in? _____

If you are renting your residence, do they allow pets? _____

Will the pet be generally kept inside or outside? _____

What budget do you have for a new addition to your family? _____

How much are you willing to spend in veterinary bills? _____

Have you had any past experiences that may deter you from a certain pet? If so, please explain briefly.

Have you had any experience in training an animal or learned about animal behaviors?

What would you do with your pet when you went on vacation?

What type of commitment are you willing to make for a pet? Check all that apply.

6 months – 1 year _____

1 year – 3 years _____

10 years + _____

Rent-a-Pet Training Application

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Animal Type (circle): Dog Cat Small Animal

Pet's Name: _____

Pet's D.O.B.: ____/____/____ **Date Adopted:** _____

Pet's Gender: _____ **Pet's Weight:** _____

Pet's Current Vaccinations:

_____	Exp. ____/____/____
_____	Exp. ____/____/____
_____	Exp. ____/____/____
_____	Exp. ____/____/____

Please describe any concerns you may have:

Which Class(es) are you interested in? Please circle all that apply.

Puppy Kindergarten

Basic Obedience

Private Training

Small Animal Handling

Cat Handling and Behavior

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Editorials

Michele Zaccaro
November 2, 2010
Submitted to The Jersey Journal

To the Editor:

The number one reason why animals are surrendered to animal shelters is because of behavioral issues. This is unfortunate, because there are so many options out there for owners to prevent these issues. Most people do not realize the care and responsibility that comes with owning a pet, especially a dog. Socialization is key when first getting an animal, this is most crucial for young animals. Exposing any animal to as many situations, people and other animals is important in preventing unwanted behaviors, like aggression. Also, not training an animal as soon as possible can lead to unwanted behaviors like barking, chewing, separation anxiety, etc.

It is so important for people to realize the responsibilities of owning an animal before they take the animal in. If they don't know what to do once they have the animal, training classes are available everywhere! Many pet stores offer training for dogs from ages 10 weeks to any age. Any online search will bring up trainers outside of pet stores as well. Some people specialize in aggression, fearful behaviors, puppy behaviors, etc.

I believe that if people do their research before obtaining any sort of pet will result in a decrease in the amount of unwanted animals. People should also start early with socializing, handling and training with their animals. For dogs especially, owners should not give up on their dogs. There are so many options available for helping any sort of unwanted behavior. If people did their research and reached out to the professionals, there would be a significant decrease in the amount of animals in the shelters.

Michele Zaccaro
Bayonne, NJ

Holly Ott
November 3, 2010
Submitted to Courier Post Online

Misconceptions of Pet Ownership

When purchasing an animal, many people are uneducated when it comes to basic care, cost, and the commitment that is needed for owning a pet. Purchasing an animal on a whim without proper knowledge and thought can lead to these animals being neglected or put into a shelter. Millions of dogs and cats are euthanized each year, and this number could be decreased drastically if people were educated on this topic before purchasing a pet, and the misconceptions of pet ownership were minimized.

A person who wants an addition to their family should consider the time and money they have to put into a pet before deciding to make a purchase. Different breeds will require different budgets, so research should be done on the breed of interest so that the prospective owner can decide what they can afford. Some breeds require regular grooming, while others are more prone to certain medical conditions. People should be made aware of this before purchasing since this will make the basic yearly cost of the pet increase drastically. They should also become familiarized with certain behavior characteristics that an animal may possess so that they know the proper method for dealing with it. This information can be found online, in books, pamphlets at the pet store, or from talking to a professional such as a veterinarian or a trainer.

I believe that if more people followed these few basic tips before deciding to purchase a pet, whether it be a dog, cat, hamster, bird, etc., then there will be less animals in shelters and more in happy, healthy homes with knowledgeable owners who know how to handle the breed and any behaviors or medical needs they may have.

April Sherman
October 31, 2010
Submitted to: The Asbury Park Press Online

Educate about pet ownership, animals need security too.

I have been an animal lover all of my life. As a kid, half of the pets we had were “hand-me-downs” from neighbors and friends who either could not take care of them or just had no clue what they had gotten themselves into and did not want them anymore. Having had so many different kinds of pets, I grew up to learn a lot about what goes into taking care of another living being, even if they were covered in fur or scales.

What really upsets me today, as an animal lover and educated adult, is the ability for people to purchase pets from their local pet stores, with little knowledge of what is really required of them when assuming the responsibilities of being a pet owner; be it a cat, dog, hamster or hermit crab. There are better ways to ensure that these animals do not end up in the street or shelters. The A.S.P.C.A. estimates “approximately 5 million to 7 million companion animals enter animal shelters nationwide every year”.

We need to start better educating people about the responsibilities of pet care. Our pets deserve healthy, loving, secure homes. Many animal shelters are making the adoption process more thorough and follow up with after-adoption check-in’s. This should be similar for pet store animals.

Encouraging people to do the research about an animal before adopting it, is the first step in decreasing the number of homeless animals.

April Sherman
New Brunswick, NJ