



ENSURING ANIMALS MATTER

A guide for working alongside people who may need additional support in caring for their pets

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1. Who is this guide for and what will you get out of it?

This guide recognises the power of pets, the meaning and purpose they give to people and the mutual benefits of ensuring the health and wellbeing of both humans and pets delivered through existing support networks.

The purpose of this guide is to provide the health and community service industry and informal supports with tools and information to support pet owners needing assistance in caring for their pet/s through:

- understanding that people of all abilities with the appropriate support and education can own and care for a pet;
- developing an increased awareness of the role and value of companion animals in the lives of vulnerable people; and
- developing a greater level of understanding of the roles and functions of other key organisations.

Key Objective: To build capacity of vulnerable people through supporting self-determination of pet ownership by:

- providing education and information on the responsibilities of caring for pets;
- building an awareness of what might be an animal wellbeing concern;
- proactively preventing and addressing animal welfare concerns;
- supporting communication pathways between the pet owners you support and external organisations and service providers; and
- giving guidance and working alongside pet owners to have choice and control over the services they receive and supports they are given.



In this guide we will refer to:

Informal Supports as defined by Peer Connect:

‘Informal supports are the many forms of helpfulness and assistance people freely give to each other in daily life. This could include support a person receives from their parents, siblings, other family members, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, neighbours, and other people in their community.’

Health and Community Service Workers as defined by the National Careers Institute:

‘The health and community services industry are responsible for the wellness and well-being of all Australians. This is a significant task, and it involves a diverse range of occupations in areas such as childcare, aged care, primary care, mental health and disability.’

2. Why did we create this guide?

Australians love their pets and have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world. Around 61% of Australian families have pets and many pet owners consider their animals to be part of the family (RSPCA, 2020). This is especially true for those of us that may be experiencing isolation, loneliness and have limited support networks.

Pets give their owners unconditional love, companionship, and enjoyment. Our pets can make us physically and mentally healthier and just their presence can lift our spirits and help us relax (Beyond Blue, 2019; Health Direct, 2019; RSPCA, 2019b).



Some of the other ways pets improve our health include:

- Pets provide a sense of purpose.
- Pets increase our social interactions and enhance social skills - they are great conversation starters!
- Animals require routine and organisation and therefore motivate owners to maintain daily activities.
- They encourage increased physical activity. Dogs especially help us get out and enjoy the outdoors while getting some regular exercise. They are great motivators, never wanting to miss a training session no matter the weather.
- Pet owners report fewer visits to the doctor and increased cardiovascular health (lower blood pressure, lower triglycerides and in men, lower cholesterol).
- Pet owners experience less depression and appear to cope with grief, stress, and loss better than non-pet owners.
- Pet owners report less feelings of loneliness.
- Pets fulfil the human need for touch.
- People report feeling safer in the company of their dogs.

Depending on the nature and extent of a person's condition, disability, mental health or other personal challenges, an informal, community or mainstream support may be able to assist people in accessing opportunities that maximise the welfare of their animals. This can be through offering guidance, financial supports or resources, such as the checklists from this guide and the RSPCA website.



3. What is the role of an animal welfare organisation?

The role of animal welfare organisations is to promote animal welfare and prevent animal suffering.

The support and services offered may vary between organisations and states and may include:

- caring for abandoned, surrendered, and injured animals - offering shelter and medical attention;
- helping animals in need find loving forever homes;
- helping reunite lost animals with their owners;
- advocating for the humane treatment of all living creatures;
- providing information and education, including dog training;
- responding to neglect and reports of cruelty;
- commercial boarding services; and
- assisting in emergencies.

A list of animal welfare organisations and rescue groups active in your area can be found on the Pet Rescue website - Australia-wide Rescue Directory:

https://www.petrescue.com.au/rescue_directory/

Animal welfare organisations, such as RSPCA South Australia are often approached for help with the animals impacted by human crisis and other emergencies. Most requests for emergency assistance for pets are made at times of human crisis by vulnerable people who have limited social support networks and who cannot afford to pay for animal care.

These are often much-loved pets that get caught up and harmed in human crisis situations.

However, most animal welfare charities have limited resources and capacity to assist.

For this reason, it is crucial for the animal and community services sectors to work together and pursue collaborative responses that encourage seeking best outcome solutions (i.e., keeping pets with their human family wherever possible, helping to plan for emergencies, promoting responsible pet ownership). Building the health and community services sector capacity in the human-animal welfare area is vital for achieving the best and most sustainable outcomes for clients with pets.

4. Benefits of working collaboratively

Together animal welfare charities, health and community service organisations and informal supports can better advocate and provide for improved human and animal welfare.

Key considerations:

- Animal welfare organisations do not often connect with people with a disability or mental health illness unless there is a need for intervention, emergency boarding, or even reports of neglect and animal cruelty.

- Education and prevention are a much better approach. However, most animal welfare charities have limited capacity to reach out to vulnerable groups or may not have the necessary skills to work in this field. That is where health and community services and informal supports play an important role.
- It is widely recognised that people can benefit from animal companionship if they can provide appropriate care - they may just need support to provide some aspects of it. Poor animal outcomes (e.g. animal health issues or neglect) are also likely to lead to poor outcomes for the owners.
- Health and community services and informal supports are often in regular contact with vulnerable people and can recognise when other support may be needed to assist owners to care for their animals. In some instances, they may be able to assist in deciding whether a pet should be acquired or whether an existing pet should be rehomed.
- Development of formal pet-inclusive policies and procedures for your organisation would provide clear guidance and therefore reduce the pressure on support workers assisting people in the context of animal neglect and/or abuse.
- Joint efforts can make the crucial move beyond crisis intervention possible by promoting a neglect prevention and early intervention viewpoint.

Recognising companion animals as an important part of helping

Most pet owners find talking about and sharing photographs of their companion animals to be a positive and enjoyable experience and a source of pride. This tends to be particularly important for people from marginalised groups. Therefore, the relationships that people have with their animals present an opportunity for support workers to establish an improved rapport with the people they support if they take an interest in their animal family members. Discussion of companion animals and their needs can become a bridge into human experience. This can be particularly beneficial when working with people who may not initially respond well to engaging with their formal support providers. On the other hand, ignoring animals when supporting vulnerable people may have a negative impact on a workers' ability to engage and help the people they support (Taylor et al., 2020; Chalmers et al., 2020).



5. Having a preventative approach is the key

Acquiring a pet should never be an impulsive decision

Impulsive decisions, such as when animals are purchased as a gift or without prior planning and learning about their needs, can lead to owners quickly becoming overwhelmed by the responsibilities. As a result, animal shelters receive thousands of unwanted and abandoned animals each year.

You can assist the people you support with making informed decisions about pet ownership by providing some basic pet care information or talking them through the responsibilities and costs of pet ownership. Please see the appendix at the back of this guide for useful and accessible resources you can print off.

Additionally, you can find more detailed information on companion animals on the RSPCA Knowledgebase: <https://kb.rspca.org.au/article-categories/companion-animals/>

For information specific to your location please visit the RSPCA's member societies' websites in your state or territory.

Assisting families and individuals through starting conversations about responsible pet ownership

Some ways in which you could start conversations could be through the following topics:

- When is a good time to get a pet?
- How to best look after a pet?
- Offer to discuss the full costs of owning a pet which could include costs such as the on-going and often unforeseen vet bills and regular purchase of food.
- Initiate identifying, planning, and creating back up plans in case of emergencies or crisis.

Please see chapter 6 for more detail and the resources in the Animal Care Toolkit included in the appendix. Resources, such as Pet Care Checklist and pet budgeting tools are written in an accessible language and can be provided to or be utilised with the people you support.



What to do if having a pet is not a good option right now?

If the person you are supporting is unable to have a companion animal in their life at this time, you could help them find other ways to interact with pets and learn about them. For example:

- Offer support in arranging visits to a local dog park to watch dogs play and learn how to interact with them safely.
- Support in arranging visits to a local animal sanctuary to meet and learn about other animals, such as horses, goats, sheep, cows, and chickens.
- See if the person you support has neighbours, friends or family members that have a pet. Encourage them to ask if they can help with some of the daily responsibilities, i.e., dog walking, pet sitting when they are at work or away, play visits, basic training, grooming etc.
- Speak to the person you support about volunteering opportunities with a local animal welfare organisation/shelter.
- Consider having a conversation and assisting in learning more about fostering animals that need temporary care. This option may benefit someone who may be a great pet carer but is unable to commit long term or keep up with the costs of pet ownership. Foster animals come with food, toys, and vet care. It can be a great feeling knowing that you have helped care for and find a forever home for an animal in need.



6. Pet Care Information

If you are supporting a person who has a pet or is looking to purchase or adopt a pet, it might be helpful to assist them to plan for the care needed. You could also support them to understand the potential costs.

To assist with this task, we have included the following information and some handy and accessible animal care factsheets, shopping lists and budgeting resources in the Animal Care Toolkit in the appendix.

For more detailed animal care and welfare information please visit:

- RSPCA Knowledgebase website: <https://kb.rspca.org.au/>
- RSPCA South Australia site: <https://www.rspcasa.org.au>
- RSPCA Victoria website: <https://rspcavic.org/health-and-behaviour>

When assisting the person you are supporting it may be helpful to consider animal welfare and basic animal needs in terms of the Five Freedoms framework (RSPCA, 2019a). Please refer to the appendix for a visual representation.

- ✓ **Freedom from hunger and thirst:** by having ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- ✓ **Freedom from discomfort:** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- ✓ **Freedom from pain, injury, or disease:** by prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- ✓ **Freedom to express normal behaviour:** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the animal's own kind.
- ✓ **Freedom from fear and distress:** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

What to consider when you are supporting someone to purchase or adopt a pet

Animal owners are accountable and liable for the ongoing care, actions, and welfare of any animal in their care. This includes pets such as dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, ferrets, rats, mice, birds, and fish among other species.

Responsible ownership includes planning. Here are some things to consider when supporting someone who is looking to adopt or purchase an animal:

- Is the animal suited to the owner's lifestyle, budget, and capability to properly care for and manage the chosen animal throughout the animal's life?
- Does the person know the characteristics and behavioural and social needs of the animal?
- Does the person have the capabilities to undertake appropriate animal rearing and care practices relating to feeding, exercising, grooming, housing?
- Is there appropriate containment of the animal, i.e. fencing?
- Can the person being supported follow a preventative health care program to:
 - ensure veterinary care is provided when needed; and

- prevent unwanted pregnancies through desexing or other safe suitable methods, such as physical separation of males and females.
- Is the person being supported able to care for their animal in terms of:
 - following correct processes of registration and identification of the animal; and
 - providing training and socialisation needed to ensure the development of appropriate behaviour (RSPCA, 2021).

Please see the appendix for an accessible Pet Care Checklist to assist you with this task. You may also wish to utilise our handy fact sheets on specific animal types and their needs. For more information on housing, management and caring for companion animals please refer to RSPCA Knowledgebase: <https://kb.rspca.org.au>

What to consider when you are supporting someone who has a pet

When the person you support has a pet, they may need some additional assistance with caring for them.

Some of the main challenges that pet owners encounter and may need some support with are:

- feeding/watering
- walking
- grooming/ bathing/ transport to grooming appointments
- administration of medication, worm, and flea treatments
- assistance with vet visits
- financial counseling to help plan for the potential costs (i.e., vets, grooming, boarding)
- finding suitable pet insurance
- assistance cleaning pet areas
- providing appropriate housing/shelter
- planning for short- and long-term absences, e.g., hospital stays, respite care
- coping with the loss of a pet

The following chapters discuss responsible pet ownership and animal welfare in more detail.



7. Is there an Emergency Pet Care Plan in place?

From time to time, the people you are supporting may find themselves in situations where they cannot look after their pets. This might be for short periods, for example if they go on a holiday or if they may need to enter hospital, respite, or short-term accommodation. In cases like these, having a back-up plan is highly recommended to ensure the pet is well cared for until the owner can once again resume the task.

Worrying about a pet's welfare can cause extra stress if a person must go into hospital. In some situations, it results in people delaying vital treatment. It is important to include **pet care as part of a client's Emergency Care Plan**.

To help planning for emergencies we have developed an Emergency Pet Care Plan and Emergency Pet Plan Cards. Both resources can be found in the Animal Care Toolkit in the appendix or on the RSPCA South Australia and Feros Care websites.

<https://www.rspcasa.org.au/the-issues/petcaresupport/>

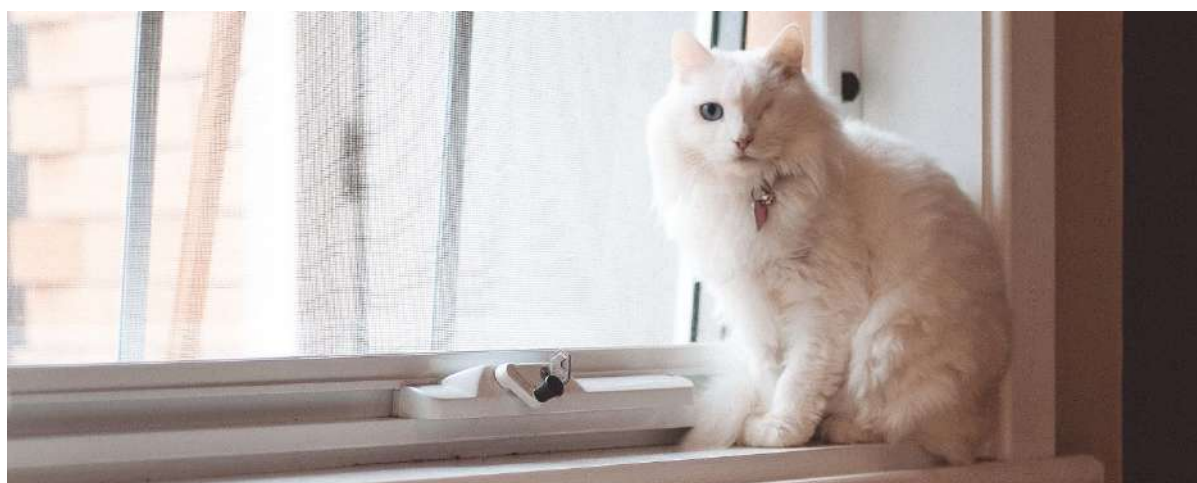
<https://www.feroscare.com.au/ndis/projects/emergency-pet-plan>

Emergency Pet Care Plan Template

The Emergency Pet Care Plan helps record information about pets including:

- details of back up animal carers
- lists other things that should be considered when preparing for possible future crisis/emergency (pet emergency kit)
- information required by animal services that might be approached for emergency boarding

The Emergency Pet Care Plan template is written in an accessible language, however if completed with the assistance of a carer or support worker it could constitute a good tool for engagement with the pet owner. The document should then be shared with emergency contacts and a copy kept in a safe and easily accessible place in the pet owner's home to be retrieved in future emergencies. Additionally, we recommend an electronic copy be stored on file. All family/household members and formal or informal supporters should know where to locate this form.



Emergency Pet Plan Card

The Pet Plan Cards are designed to help collect vital information about the pet and the backup caretakers and can be kept in easily accessible locations, such as in a person's wallet, mobile phone case, bag or on the fridge. We recommend printing multiple copies and laminating for durability.

Encourage the people you are supporting to share their Pet Plan with their key supports.

Encourage the preparation of a pet emergency kit (food, waste bags, harness, leash, carrier, bed, emergency contacts, a photo of the pet, vet records, medication etc.).

Additionally, an **Emergency Animal Authorisation form** can be filled out and given to the main emergency contact. This form authorises them to access the pet owner's home to care for their animal and make decisions for the animal on the owner's behalf (for example, if the animal needs veterinary care). The form can be found on the RSPCA Knowledgebase: <https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Emergency-Animal-Authorisation-Form.pdf>

8. How can we be aware if a pet is unwell?

Being familiar with the signs of sickness can support a person to know when to speak with someone further about treatment for their pet or book an appointment with their local vet.

We have put together a list of some of the common signs of sickness to be aware of if the person you are supporting has a pet that might seem unwell. This could help you to speak with the person you are supporting to understand what they should be looking out for and when they should be asking for further help.

It is important to note that signs of sickness or injury are different for many animals and treatment options vary.

- runny nose
- runny, discharging, or inflamed eyes
- repeated sneezing
- coughing
- vomiting
- severe diarrhoea, especially if bloodstained
- lameness
- bleeding or swelling of body parts
- inability to stand, walk, urinate, or defecate
- loss of appetite
- weight loss, particularly if severe or sudden
- apparent pain
- fits, staggering or convulsions
- bloating of the abdomen
- difficulty or inability to urinate or defecate
- fluffed feathers
- red or brown coloured urine
- patchy hair or feather loss
- depression
- fever
- presence of external parasites
- any other serious physical or behavioural abnormality (DEW, 2017)

Sometimes the signs of sickness may be very subtle. For best preventative care it is recommended that pets such as dogs and cats undergo an examination from a veterinarian at least once annually.

Information to give to the person who cleans the area where sick pets have been (such as a cleaner, support worker, person you are supporting or family member):

To stop people and other animals in the household catching a sickness:

- Animal waste/litter should be cleaned daily - it can be disposed of in either the organic waste council bin (wrapped in newspaper or green compostable bags) or the landfill bin (please check with your local council for details as it varies between councils).
- It is recommended that rooms where sick animals were kept are cleaned with a cleaning product that is disinfectant based, this could be with a bleach solution (one part water seven parts bleach). It is important to carefully scrub all walls, doors and floors (RSPCA, 2018).

In instances of flea infestation:

- Flea bombs can be used - it is important to follow the instructions on the product for best results.

9. Identifying local and affordable vet clinics

It is desirable to encourage people to establish a good quality relationship with their local vet clinic. Vet clinics may be able to assist with payment plans for emergency vet treatment.

The costs of emergency vet treatment can be very high. If budgeting for this may be challenging, getting pet insurance could be a good option. The person you support may need help assessing their options and selecting the best insurance for their needs.

Additionally, some people may be eligible for No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) loans, which may be approved for animal boarding or vet treatments. There is criteria involved to meet the requirements of NILS Loans. For detailed information please consult the NILS website: <https://nils.com.au/> or call 13 64 57.

In some cases, VetPay services are available for eligible clients. For more information, please look at the VetPay website: <https://vetpay.com.au/about> or call 08 8465 1850.

For assistance with pet **desexing**, please contact **The National Desexing Network**: <https://ndn.org.au/low-cost-desexing/>, 1300 368 992.

For **affordable microchipping** options, please contact **\$10 Microchipping | South Australia | Chipblitz**: <https://www.chipblitz.com/> or speak about your options to your local council.

Additionally, some rescue groups may be able to offer assistance.

Search the PetRescue Knowledge Base to find your local rescue and crisis support groups: <https://support.petrescue.com.au/article/89-finding-short-or-long-term-foster-care-for-my-pet>

10. Let's talk about animal wellbeing concerns

Are you a community services professional or an informal support?

Community Service Professionals (tenancy officers, support workers, local area coordinators, case managers etc.):

It is recommended that community service organisations supporting vulnerable pet owners develop internal policies to help workers support the people they work with in understanding best practice pet care. These policies can also help workers assist people to address any arising animal welfare issues. Understanding what policies are currently in place or championing policies in your workplace may support the people you work with.

Informal Supports (carers, supports, family members and friends):

It might also be helpful to have a conversation with any paid support organisations about how you can work together to support the person you care for more holistically, by being inclusive of their companion animals. This could be achieved by incorporating a pet as a goal in a care plan, such as a support worker going for a walk with the person they are caring for and taking the dog for a walk at the same time, or a cleaner being aware of the needs of a pet.

For cases where there is no further support and there are signs of animal neglect:

If there are clear animal welfare issues, it is important to address them by talking to the person you support, their family or representative about the concerns.

If the person you are supporting is willing to take appropriate steps to attend to the needs of the animal, they may still need your support to follow through on the necessary actions and ensure the achievement of the desired outcome.



If the animal is suffering and the pet owner does not agree to any intervention to assist the animal, you should contact your local animal welfare organisations for advice and assistance.

For a list of signs that will help you identify serious animal neglect and suffering please refer to the Appendix (SPCA NZ, 2019).

All cases of animal neglect and cruelty must be reported to your local animal welfare organisations (e.g., RSPCA SA in South Australia)

RSPCA resolves most of the reports through advice and education as well as referrals to appropriate services. Only a minor percentage of reports are pursued in the courts (RSPCA SA, 2021).

Longer term difficulties

Sometimes a short-term crisis evolves into longer term problems. In such case, you can advise the person you are supporting to:

- Plan for someone they trust to take on care of their pet permanently.
- Re-home their pet through an animal welfare/rescue organisation.

Some people may need assistance to decide when surrendering a pet may be the best solution and learning how to do it. Help them find organisations that can help. Most loved pets are re-homed.

11. Helping people and pets in family violence situations

We include the following information to raise awareness of the link between animal abuse and domestic and family violence. This is especially important in relation to supporting people with a disability, as people with a disability have a higher risk of experiencing violence than people without a disability. Women with a disability are at the greatest risk, and may also experience significant barriers to accessing support services. They are also less likely to report experiences of abuse (WSSSA, 2021).

The link between animal abuse and domestic and family violence has been well documented. This includes recognition of the fact that:

- Pet abuse often occurs before or at the same time as human abuse in domestic and family violence situations.
- A major reason for the abuse of pets by perpetrators is to control women and children.
- Many women will delay leaving an abusive relationship because they cannot make arrangements for the safety of their pets - rates range from 18% to 48% (Volant et al., 2008).
- Significant trauma is experienced by women and children witnessing the threat or actual abuse of pets.

- Over 50% of pets living in violent households are reported as deliberately injured or killed (Ascione, 1997; Volant et al., 2008).
- Pets are an important part of the family, and they play a significant role in improving the physical health and emotional wellbeing of their owners (Taylor, et al., 2020).

Therefore, the inclusion of pets in risk assessments and safety planning processes in the context of domestic and family violence will benefit decision making and likely result in enhanced safety. A person seeking safety with a service or companion animal may require additional support or provisions.

For more information on supporting people with disability in the context of domestic and family violence, please visit:

<https://womenssafetyservices.com.au/index.php/information-for-workers/women-with-disability>

<https://www.1800respect.org.au/inclusive-practice/supporting-people-with-disability>

Contact details for more help and support:

Domestic violence helplines: **1800 737 732** or **1800 800 098**.

In an emergency, **ring 000**.



12. External organisations

Animal welfare organisations:

The role of animal welfare organisations is to promote animal welfare and prevent animal suffering. The programs and services offered may vary between organisations and states.

For more information, please refer to the Pet Rescue website that lists animal welfare organisations and rescue groups in all Australian states and territories:

[Australia-wide Rescue Directory - PetRescue](#)

https://www.petrescue.com.au/rescue_directory/

Some of these rescue organisations may be able to assist with finding temporary animal care:

[Finding short or long-term foster care for my pet - PetRescue Knowledge Base](#)

Boarding facilities and pet sitting services:

The boarding of pets is usually needed when owners are temporarily unable to care for their pets. This may be due to a variety of reasons, including: Illness, hospital admission, holidays, work commitments, breakdown in support, change in personal circumstances.

Many animal welfare organisations offer commercial pet boarding.

Speak to your vet or local council for information about local pet boarding services.

Note: Most boarding kennels only admit pets that are up to date with their vaccinations.

There is also a range of pet sitting services available, including:

PetCloud <https://www.petcloud.com.au>

Mad Paws <https://www.madpaws.com.au/>

These are examples only, not endorsements. Further research is recommended.



Animal training and behaviour:

Finding a reputable force-free trainer is crucial. Ask your local vet or animal welfare charity for advice.

See RSPCA South Australia page for a list of force-free trainers in South Australia:

<https://www.rspcasa.org.au/the-issues/force-free-dog-trainers/>

Local Councils:

Local councils are responsible for managing dogs and cats within their jurisdiction. They administer the registration of animals.

Some councils offer community support programs, e.g., Companion Animal Program for older residents in City of Charles Sturt. Others may be able to help connect people to support services available in their area.

We recommend supporting your client in connecting with their local council and learning about supports available to them.

SA councils listing | LGA South Australia - <https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/sa-councils/councils-listing>

13. Useful resources:

Pet care information, training, and management

RSPCA Knowledgebase - Australia's most trusted source of animal welfare science, advice, and information, including information about suitability of different species/breeds as companion animals - policies and procedures and position papers:

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/>

RSPCA Knowledgebase - Five freedoms: <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-five-freedoms-of-animal-welfare/>

RSPCA Knowledgebase - Companion animal policies: <http://kb.rspca.org.au/77/>

RSPCA Knowledgebase - What is 'One Welfare'? <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-is-one-welfare/>

RSPCA Knowledgebase - Information about assistance animals - What are the potential animal welfare issues associated with assistance animals?

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-potential-animal-welfare-issues-associated-with-assistance-animals/>

RSPCA South Australia - Animal welfare education for children:

<https://kids.rspcasa.org.au/>

RSPCA South Australia - Lead by Example - Train your dog the force-free way:
<https://www.rspcasa.org.au/the-issues/lead-by-example/>

RSPCA South Australia - Pet Care Support: <https://www.rspcasa.org.au/the-issues/petcaresupport/>

RSPCA Queensland - Well over 50 individual Fact Sheets covering topics relating to dogs and cats that help understand triggers, observe behaviours and what they mean and provide examples of useful strategies to adopt. <https://www.rspcaqlld.org.au/what-we-do/provide-animal-care-advice/animal-training-factsheets>

SA Health - Fact Sheet - Caring for Pets in extreme weather
<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/67b46600431be25eb468ff5fdb58e26/Heat-Caring-for-pets-fs-PH-EMU-20111122.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>

RSPCA UK - Pet care - Advice and welfare:
<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets>

RSPCA Victoria - Animal care - Health and behaviour: <https://rspcavic.org/health-and-behaviour>

Pet Positives - Pets Improve Lives: <https://www.petpositives.com.au/pets-improve-lives>

AWL - Basic dog training tips: <https://awl.org.au/advice-education/pet-advice/dog-tips-advice/basic-dog-training-tips>

Dog and Cat Management Board (SA): <http://www.dogandcatboard.com.au>

Including lots of good information and advice and links to useful publication and facts sheets for dogs and cats: <http://www.dogandcatboard.com.au/publications>

And information about South Australian law in relation to dogs: <http://gooddogsa.com/>

Lili Chin - US website - Dog body language drawings:
<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=Doggie+Drawings+Lili+Chin&FORM=RESTAB>

Other useful links

For cat enclosures:

Aristocat Enclosures: <http://www.aristocatenclosures.com.au/>

CatPad enclosures: <https://www.catpadenclosures.com.au/>

For affordable microchipping and desexing options:

Chipblitz: <https://www.chipblitz.com/>

National Desexing Network: <https://ndn.org.au/low-cost-desexing/>

For assistance with vet costs and other crises:

NILS website: <https://nils.com.au/>

PetRescue - Australia-wide Rescue Directory:
https://www.petrescue.com.au/rescue_directory/

Safe Pets Safe Families: <https://safepetssafefamilies.org.au/>

VetPay website: <https://vetpay.com.au/about>

To update microchip details:

Pet Address: <http://www.petaddress.com.au>

South Australia's Dog and Cats Online system: <https://www.dogsandcatsonline.com.au/>

Other:

GriefLink: Grief following the loss of a pet: <https://grieflink.org.au>

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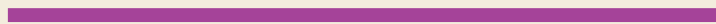
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APPENDIX

*Tools and accessible resources for helping
professionals and informal supports*



Appendix contents

Tools for helping professionals and informal supports

- A. Letting people know you are a pet friendly organisation
- B. Recognising animal cruelty
- C. Emergency Pet Plan Card

Animal Care Toolkit - Accessible resources

- A. Emergency Pet Care Plan Template
- B. Emergency Pet Plan Card
- C. Pet Care Checklist
- D. Budgeting tools - Pet shopping lists
- E. Budgeting tools - Costs of pet ownership handouts
- F. Animal care handouts
- G. Five Freedoms Poster

*“Animals are sentient, intelligent, perceptive, funny and entertaining.
We owe them a duty of care as we do to children.”*

Michael Morpurgo

Letting people know you are a pet friendly organisation

If you are pet inclusive, it is important to communicate it to the people you support. Please feel free to use the sample brochure/web content provided below as a template to develop your own advertising/communication strategy.

Pet care support

We understand that your pet may be an important part of your family. Taking care of a pet is not always easy - we may be able to help you find information and support with their care.

Becoming a pet owner is a big commitment. It is best to talk about it first with someone you trust and ask people for information. This way you can be clear about what is involved before making your decision.

Pets can be fun, but they are also a big responsibility. They rely on us for all their care. Most pets need a lot of attention - they need you to spend time with them having fun, training them, grooming them and cleaning up after them. Pets can also be expensive to keep because they need good quality food and other things for their care, including vet bills.

How can we help?

We can help you find information about owning a pet and the responsibilities you will be taking on. We can also help you make plans for the care of your pet so it has a happy and healthy life with you.

We can talk about things like:

- Pet care information and websites
- Obedience training for dogs
- Veterinary services
- Pet insurance
- Boarding and pet sitting services
- Animal welfare organisations
- Coping with the loss of a pet

If we don't have the information you need we try to connect you with someone who does.

How you can help us

Talk to us if you have a pet or are thinking about getting one - we may be able to assist.

- Tell us about your pet
- Talk to us if you are struggling with the care of your pet
- Tell us who can care for your pet if you are not able to do it yourself (if you are sick or going away). We can help you plan for emergencies so that your pet is not forgotten and you know your pet is always being cared for by a family member, friend or neighbour

RECOGNISING ANIMAL CRUELTY

PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Animal is underweight, extremely thin, bones evident under the skin.
- Open wounds, sores or scars from old injuries.
- Signs of illness or untreated injury including lethargy, limping, obvious discomfort or an unusual gait. Animal may be unable to stand.
- Skin conditions that result in excessive hair loss, skin diseases or parasites, matted hair, untreated rash, sores, lumps or dry and scaly skin.
- Animals showing signs of fleas, mites, worm infestation. The animal is constantly scratching or rubbing. The animal has dirty fur with eggs, maggots or flea dirt present.
- Sticky fluid is evident around the nose, eyes, anus, ears or wounds.
- Tight collar causing skin irritation or cutting into the skin.
- Note: Zoonotic diseases are transferred from animals to humans and commonly include, toxoplasmosis, salmonella, cat scratch fever, ringworm, and skin diseases or parasites.

BEHAVIOUR

- Animals that cower, hide, avoid contact with family members.
- Animals that are observed to be abused by humans or when the humans' interactions with the animals are intentionally negative.
- Animal behaviour that is aggressive towards other animals. Animals that are constantly barking, whimpering or in distress. Animals that are unable to settle, pacing or agitated or those animals that appear untamed or skittish and intolerant of human interaction.
- The animal that is unresponsive and avoidant of interaction with humans.

ENVIRONMENT

- The animal is surrounded by faeces, urine or garbage.
- The animal is tied up for extended periods of time without sufficient food, shelter or water.
- The animal is kept constantly chained or tied to a structure.
- The animal is left outdoors without shelter during severe weather conditions.

ATTENTION!

MY PET IS HOME ALONE!

In the event of an emergency, please call my contacts on the back of this card to care for my pets.

Thank you
for
caring!

RSPCA
South Australia
Ph: 1300 4 777 22

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RSPCA
South Australia
Ph: 1300 4 777 22

My name / number / address:

.....
.....

Pets names / types / ages:

Emergency contact 1:

Emergency contact 2:

Vet:
'I grant permission to provide details of my situation to the people
listed on this card & as a last resort to RSPCA'.

My name / number / address:

.....
.....

Pets names / types / ages:

Emergency contact 1:

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ANIMAL CARE TOOLKIT

Accessible resources

Toolkit contents

Accessible resources

- A. Emergency Pet Care Plan Template
- B. Emergency Pet Plan Card
- C. Pet Care Checklist
- D. Budgeting tools - Pet shopping lists
- E. Budgeting tools - Costs of pet ownership handouts
- F. Animal care handouts
- G. Five Freedoms Poster

*“When I look into the eyes of an animal, I do not see an animal.
I see a living being. I see a friend. I feel a soul.”*

Anthony Douglas Williams



EMERGENCY PLAN FOR MY PET

ANIMALS MATTER PROJECT

RSPCA South Australia has worked with Feros Care, an NDIS partner in the community, on the development of this plan.



Delivering the NDIS in your community



MY NAME

My Address:

My Phone Number:



MY PET'S VET DETAILS

Vet Clinic:

Vet's Name:

Contact Number:



MY PET'S NAME/S



MY PET'S MEDICATION



WHAT MY PET EATS



**MY PET'S FAVOURITE TOY
AND WHERE THEY SLEEP**

MY EMERGENCY CHECKLIST IF I NEED SOMEONE TO CARE FOR MY PET:

I have enough food, litter and medication for my pet for 2 weeks

☐

I have made a list of all medications and instructions

☐

My pet is up to date with vaccinations

☐

I have carriers/crates available for all my animals, in case they need to be transported

☐

I have a contact list for the temporary pet carer I have organised in my plan

☐

I have my pet's leash, harness, collar, ID tags, photo of my pet, copies of medical records, proof of vaccination records and/or microchip details at hand

☐

My pet is free from fleas

☐



WHO CAN CARE FOR MY PET IF I AM UNABLE TO?

Your animals will need to be cared for while you are in hospital or unable to care for them.

Make sure that you have a contact list for the temporary pet carer. The contact list should include your pet's Vet and insurance company (if relevant), and anyone else who is necessary for your pet's care.

Options available for pet care if you are in hospital include:

- leaving your pet/s at your home with family, friends or a trusted pet sitter coming to care for them
- having family or friends take care of your pet/s at their own home
- boarding kennels, catteries, and home care pet sitters may be available, at a cost

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

EMERGENCY CONTACT 1

Name _____

Relationship _____ Phone/Email _____

How will they help me and my pet? _____

Authorised to make decisions about my pet? YES / NO *(please circle)*

EMERGENCY CONTACT 2

Name _____

Relationship _____ Phone/Email _____

How will they help me and my pet? _____

Authorised to make decisions about my pet? YES / NO *(please circle)*

EMERGENCY CONTACT/SUPPORT WORKER

Name _____

Relationship _____ Phone/Email _____

How will they help me and my pet? _____

Authorised to make decisions about my pet? YES / NO *(please circle)*



HEALTH HISTORY

My pet has a medical condition called:

My pet takes _____ medication.

Morning / Night / Both *(please circle)*

Time: _____ am

Time: _____ pm

How much medication do I give my pet? _____

Comments: _____

My pet is desexed? YES / NO *(please circle)*

My pet's microchip number is: _____

My pet was last vaccinated: _____ My pet's next vaccination is due: _____

I keep my pet's important items, including their leash, harness, collar, bed, photo of my pet, copies of medical and vaccination records and other important information in the following place/s.

FEEDING MY PET

My pet eats _____

Morning / Night / Both *(please circle)*

Time: _____ am

Time: _____ pm

How much food is my pet fed? *i.e. half a can, a cup* _____

Comments: _____

I keep my pet's food stored: _____



My pet is calm when traveling in the car? YES / NO (please circle)

NOTES

[illegible]



USEFUL LINKS

For assistance and boarding services please check your local pet boarding facilities and pet sitters in your state.

RSPCA AUSTRALIA

rspca.org.au/contact-us

For more information please visit the link for your relevant state or territory.

AUSTRALIA CAN – COMPANION ANIMAL NETWORK

(Formerly Animal Welfare League Australia)

australiacan.org.au

PET RESCUE

Visit PetRescue Knowledge Base to find your local rescue and crisis support groups.

support.petrescue.com.au/article/89-finding-short-or-long-term-foster-care-for-my-pet

SAFE PETS SAFE FAMILIES

safepetssafefamilies.org.au

For further information for pet owners in crisis

Call: 0490 818 879

Email: admin@safepetssafefamilies.org.au

RSPCA South Australia has worked with Feros Care, an NDIS partner in the community, on the development of this plan.



Delivering the NDIS in your community

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Thank you
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South Australia
Ph: 1300 4 777 22

My name / number / address:

.....
.....

Pets names / types / ages:

Emergency contact 1:

Emergency contact 2:

Vet:
'I grant permission to provide details of my situation to the people
listed on this card & as a last resort to RSPCA.'

FRONT

↑
FOLD HERE

BACK

Thank you for downloading RSPCA South Australia's Pet
Emergency Contact Card.

Please print this and follow the instructions:

1. Print out the card on A4 paper.
2. Cut it out following the dashed line.
3. Fold down the middle. (If you like you can use glue or tape to keep the card folded in half).
4. Write in your details and the details of emergency carers for your pets.

All done! Please print as many of these as you would like
and need.

Be sure to carry a copy in your wallet, mobile phone or
bag.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

*"Animals are such agreeable friends –
they ask no questions, they pass no
criticisms."*

George Eliot

Pet care checklist

This checklist is for anyone looking to get a pet and learn about caring for them

Here are some of the ways you can plan before getting an animal
(You can tick them off as you go through them):



- ☐ Am I prepared to love and look after a pet for life?
- ☐ Have I researched the pet I am looking to purchase or adopt?
- ☐ How long do they live?



- ☐ Can I afford a pet?
- ☐ Have I completed a budget?
- ☐ Do I understand the costs of owning a pet including food, vet bills, bedding, toys, insurance, boarding?
- ☐ Do I need support to budget for a pet?



- ☐ Do I live in a home where I can have a pet?
- ☐ Does my home let me have pets? Did I ask my landlord?
- ☐ Is there enough space in my home and yard for my animal to run around, sleep and toilet?
- ☐ Do I need to have someone help me to clean up after my pet?



- ☐ Do I understand how to care for a pet?
- ☐ Have I got information about the needs of a pet I want to get?
- ☐ What do I know about their food, health, exercise, shelter and toileting needs?
- ☐ How often do they need to see a vet? What medication and vaccinations do they need?
- ☐ How can I tell my pet is unwell?



- ☐ Do I have time to care for a pet?
- ☐ Do I understand how much time it takes to care for a pet each day?
- ☐ Do I have time for daily walks, playtime and training?



- ☐ Will a pet fit into my lifestyle, daily activities, and priorities?
- ☐ How much time do I spend at home?
- ☐ Who will keep my pet company when I am not at home?

Pet care checklist

This checklist is for anyone looking to get a pet and learn about caring for them

Here are some of the ways you can be a responsible pet owner
(You can tick them off as you go through them):

- ☐ 1. Provide your pet with a balanced diet.
- ☐ 2. Make sure your pet has access to clean, cool drinking water all of the time.
- ☐ 3. Some pets need to be exercised everyday such as going for a daily walk or playing a game of fetch.
- ☐ 4. You will need to make sure that you have bedding, housing, and shelter for your pet, this could mean a kennel for a dog or a cage for a bird.
- ☐ 5. Keep your pet safe and secure. Dogs need to be on lead when walked outside. Cats are safest indoors. Small animals need secure enclosures.
- ☐ 6. So that your pet does not get bored, spend time with your pet and have lots of playtime. Pets also like to have toys to keep them busy.
- ☐ 7. Make sure that you have a local vet who you can take your pet to whenever it is sick or hurt. Book medical check-ups as needed (including for vaccinations and flea and worming treatments).
- ☐ 8. It is the law to microchip your pet and register it with your local council so it can be returned to you if it becomes lost. You can contact your local council to help you with this.
- ☐ 9. You will need to speak with your vet about de-sexing your pet at an early age to prevent unwanted offspring.
- ☐ 10. Your pet might need grooming such as baths and haircuts, this might need to be done regularly.
- ☐ 11. Most pets need to be socialised with other animals and people, particularly at a young age so give your pet safe opportunities for meeting others.
- ☐ 12. Teach your family, friends, and children how to connect with your pet.
- ☐ 13. Make sure that you know who can care for your pet if you are going on a holiday or needing to go into hospital.

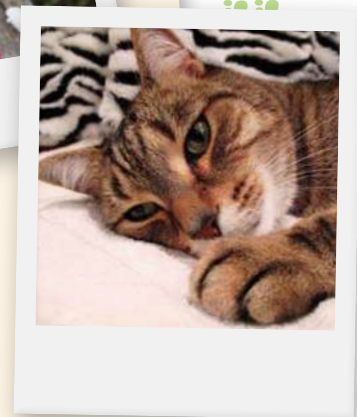
Dog shopping list:

- ☒ Dog or puppy
- ☐ Food bowl
- ☐ Water bowl
- ☐ Dog food
- ☐ Worming treatments
- ☐ Flea treatments
- ☐ Vaccinations
- ☐ Kennel / Shelter
(At times when you need to leave your dog outside the house they must have access to suitable shelter. In most cases that means a properly constructed kennel of suitable size.)
- ☐ Comfortable dog bed
- ☐ Dog lead
- ☐ Collar
- ☐ Identification tag
- ☐ Suitable dog toys
- ☐ Grooming brush
- ☐ Pet insurance
(optional – but a good idea)
- ☐ Microchip
(dogs and puppies from the RSPCA will already have a microchip)
- ☐ Desexing (**Female – spay, male – neuter**) this is a special operation that prevents animals from having babies
(dogs and puppies from the RSPCA will already be desexed)
- ☐ Annual registration
- ☐ Pet sunscreen if your dog has a white or pink nose



Cat shopping list

- ☒ Cat or kitten
- ☐ Comfortable cat bed
- ☐ Safety collar and bell
- ☐ Food bowl
- ☐ Water bowl
- ☐ Worming treatments
- ☐ Flea treatments
- ☐ Vaccinations
- ☐ Suitable scratching post
- ☐ Litter tray
- ☐ Cat litter
- ☐ Scoop for litter
- ☐ Suitable cat toys
- ☐ Cat food
- ☐ Grooming Brush
- ☐ Cat carrier
- ☐ Pet insurance
(optional – but a good idea)
- ☐ Microchip
(cats and kittens from the RSPCA will already have a microchip)
- ☐ Desexing (**Female – spay, male – neuter**) this is a special operation that prevents animals from having babies
(cats and kittens from the RSPCA will already be desexed)
- ☐ Pet sunscreen if your cat has a white or pink nose



Rabbit shopping list

☒ Rabbit(s)

Rabbits are very sociable and often crave the companionship of their own kind. Having a bonded pair is often a recipe for happiness, especially during the day when you are at school and cannot spend time with your rabbit.

Both rabbits must be desexed to avoid breeding or fighting. The best match is a neutered male and spayed female.

☐ Large hutch

Minimum of 1.6m (length) x 0.8m (width) x 0.75m (height)
5.3ft 2.6ft 2.5ft

☐ Large exercise run

Minimum of 3.0m (length) x 1.5m (width) x 0.75m (height)
9.8ft 4.9ft 2.5ft

☐ Indoor crate or large indoor cage

☐ Suitable bedding
– straw, hay or shredded paper

☐ Food bowl

☐ Water bottle

☐ Gnawing block

☐ Toys (e.g. treat balls, slinkys, large tubes and shelters)

☐ Food

- Fresh hay
- Grass and garden greens
- Fresh vegetables
- Rabbit pellets

☐ Grooming brush or comb

☐ Litter tray and litter

☐ Collapsible play pen



Guinea pig shopping list

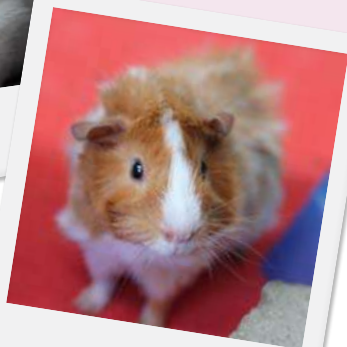


Guinea pig

Guinea pigs are very sociable and often crave the companionship of their own kind. Having a bonded pair is a great way to keep your guinea pig happy, especially during the day when you are at school and cannot spend time with them.

Both guinea pigs must be desexed to avoid breeding or fighting.

- ☐ Large home – with smooth flooring
- ☐ Large exercise run
- ☐ Suitable bedding
- ☐ Food bowl
- ☐ Water bottle with metal spout
- ☐ Gnawing block
- ☐ Toys
(large tubes and shelters)
- ☐ Food
 - guinea pig pellets
 - hay (very important)
 - fresh vegetables
 - grass and garden greens
- ☐ Grooming brush
(for long-haired guinea pigs)



Goldfish shopping list

- ☒ Goldfish
- ☐ Large fish tank or pond
- ☐ Safe, washed, gravel for bottom of the tank
- ☐ Water filter
- ☐ Drops or tablets to make tap water safe
(Chlorine in the water will kill fish so it is important to allow time for it to evaporate. Alternatively, the chlorine may be neutralised by the use of special drops, tablets or water ager available from your pet store or chemist)
- ☐ Bucket to use when cleaning the tank
- ☐ Siphon to remove dirty water
- ☐ Net to remove floating debris
- ☐ Brush to remove algae
- ☐ Goldfish food
- ☐ Suitable objects to place in the tank for your goldfish to explore and hide in.



The costs of owning a dog

Below is a list of costs you will need to think about before deciding to become a pet owner. The first part looks at the starting cost of adoption or purchase and setting your pet up for success. The second part looks at the cost that come up every year.

Dogs can live to up to 15-20 years.

Starting costs (First year)	Cost guide	Actual cost
Purchase/adoption:	\$0-\$2000	
Collar, leash or harness:	\$40-\$100	
Name tag:	\$5-20	
Food and bowls:	\$800 every year depending on quality	
Bed and/or kennel:	\$100-\$200	
Council registration:	\$20-\$100 (desexed or undesexed)	
Car restraint:	\$30 minimum	
Desexing:	\$200-\$500 depending on age, gender and size	
Flea and worming treatments, and heartworm prevention:	\$120-\$300	
Grooming:	\$50-\$100 depending on breed, needs and size	
Microchipping:	\$40-\$60	
Puppy vaccinations:	\$170-\$250	
Puppy training:	\$170 depending on provider	
Toys and treats:	\$50 minimum	
Total for first year:	\$1,795-\$4,680	
Ongoing costs (Every year)		
Annual vaccinations and veterinary check:	\$100	
Flea and worming treatments:	\$120	
Food:	\$600 minimum	
Grooming:	\$50-\$100 depending on breed and needs	
Toys and treats:	\$50 minimum	
Total for second year:	\$920 minimum	

Please note, all prices are a guide only.

This table does not include emergency vet treatments for sick or injured pets.

When you adopt a dog from an animal shelter, the cost of desexing, first vaccinations and microchipping are included as done before adoption.

The costs of owning a cat

Below is a list of costs you will need to think about before deciding to become a pet owner. The first part looks at the starting cost of adoption or purchase and setting your pet up for success. The second part looks at the costs that come up every year.

Cats can live to up to 15-20 years.

Starting costs (First year)	Cost guide	Actual cost
Purchase/adoption:	\$0-\$2000	
Collar and bell:	\$10-\$50	
Name tag:	\$5-20	
Food and bowls:	\$400 every year depending on quality	
Carrier and bed:	\$50-\$100	
Council registration:	\$0-\$100 (desexed or undesexed)	
Tray and litter:	\$130-\$180	
Desexing:	\$120-\$300 (male or female)	
Flea and worming treatments:	\$100	
Grooming:	\$50 depending on breed and needs	
Microchipping:	\$40-\$60	
Kitten vaccinations:	\$170-\$200	
Scratching post:	\$20-\$200	
Toys and treats:	\$30 minimum	
Total for first year:	\$1,125-\$3,790	
Ongoing costs (Every year)		
Annual vaccinations and veterinary check:	\$100	
Flea and worming treatments:	\$100-\$150	
Food:	\$400 minimum	
Grooming:	\$50	
Toys and treats:	\$30 minimum	
Litter:	\$120 minimum	
Total for second year:	\$800 minimum	

Please note, all prices are a guide only.

This table does not include emergency vet treatments for sick or injured pets.

When you adopt a cat from an animal shelter, the cost of desexing, first vaccinations and microchipping are included as done before adoption.

The costs of owning a pet

Below is a list of costs you will need to think about before deciding to become a pet owner. The first part looks at the initial cost of adoption or purchase and setting your pet up for success. The second part looks at the costs that come up every year.

The costs of care for different animals may be much higher or much lower.

Think about cost for every type of animal you would like to keep.

Starting costs (First year)	Cost guide	Actual cost
Purchase/adoption:	\$0-\$1000	
Food and bowls:	\$400 every year depending on quality	
Carrier or cage	\$50-\$300	
Tray and litter:	\$100	
Bedding:	\$100	
Desexing:	\$100-\$300	
Flea and worming treatments:	\$100	
Grooming:	\$50 depending on breed and needs	
Vaccinations:	\$100-\$200	
Toys and treats:	\$30 minimum	
Total for first year:	\$1,030-\$2,580	
Ongoing costs (Every year)		
Annual vaccinations and veterinary check:	\$100	
Flea and worming treatments:	\$100-\$150	
Food:	\$400 minimum	
Grooming:	\$50	
Toys and treats:	\$30 minimum	
Litter/bedding:	\$120 minimum	
Total for second year:	\$800 minimum	

Please note, all prices are a guide only.

This table does not include emergency vet treatments for sick or injured pets.

When you adopt a pet from an animal shelter, the cost of desexing, first vaccinations and microchipping are included as done before adoption.

Dogs and puppies

Dogs have an average lifespan of 10-15 years.

Follow this guide to make sure your best friend can live a healthy life by your side.

Food

Dogs should be fed dog food. Dry food is better for their teeth, but wet food is tasty as a treat. Puppies need to be fed puppy food until they stop growing and reach adult size (this depends on the type of dog). After that age, they can be fed adult dog food. Talk to your veterinarian about giving a raw, meaty bone to your dog once a week. This will help keep your dog's teeth and gums healthy.

A puppy or dog should never eat:

- ✗ Chocolate
- ✗ Cooked bones (raw bones are okay!)
- ✗ Grapes
- ✗ Onions

These foods make them very sick and could be deadly.

Water

Always make sure dogs have access to fresh, clean water.

Dogs can only drink special puppy or dog milk from pet supply stores or supermarkets – cow's milk can make them sick!

Shelter

Dogs need comfortable bedding in a safe place that will protect them from the heat, wind and rain.

When there is a storm or fireworks display, dogs can feel very alone and scared. Make sure to bring them inside and comfort them when they are startled by the sounds.

Grooming

Remember, different breeds have different needs.

Dogs should be brushed to prevent their coat from matting and given a bath when needed. How often you groom or wash a dog depends on their coat, breed and if it's needed (e.g., if your dog has been rolling in mud, you should wash him).

Make sure to also check the length of their nails, including the 'thumb' nails! Their nails might need to be trimmed with animal nail cutters. Remember, only an adult or veterinarian should do it!



Hygiene

Dogs should be let outside regularly to poo or wee. Make sure to pick up after them and keep their normal toileting areas clean.

Health

Puppies and dogs can't take themselves to the veterinarian so there are a few things to do to keep them healthy!

- Dogs need a health check and vaccinations every year.
- Puppies need a series of important vaccinations to protect them from dangerous viruses.
- Fleas make animals very itchy and worms can be deadly. So, it's important to protect your dog by using a treatment from the local veterinarian, which is normally a dose of liquid that is squeezed onto the dog's neck every month.
- When a dog or puppy is quieter than normal, eating or drinking differently or their poo or wee is different, they should be taken to a veterinarian to be checked out!

Enrichment

To prevent dogs from becoming bored and barking, they will need toys and a walk at least once or twice a day. During the walk, let them meet lots of different people and make new dog friends! Kongs are great for a dog because they have to work hard to get their treats!

Training

The most important time to train and socialise a puppy is between eight to 17 weeks of age – so make sure they attend puppy preschool! At home, you can train your puppy or dog two to three times a day in sessions of 10 minutes. Otherwise, they won't remember what they've learned! Use positive reinforcement, like giving treats, to reward your dog when they do the right thing.

Desexing

It is very important that pet dogs are desexed! Desexed animals can no longer have babies, which is good for our community because we have too many unwanted animals. Desexed dogs and puppies are less vulnerable to illness, better behaved and can live longer than non-desexed animals.

Identification

All dogs and puppies need to have a microchip implanted by a veterinarian. The microchip links to all of the owner's important details on a register, which should always be updated.

If the dog is lost, the finder can have them scanned at the pound, RSPCA shelter or veterinary clinic. If the microchip is registered, the owner can be easily found. Dogs also need to wear a collar with an ID tag that has the owner's telephone number on it.

If you can't find the right dog for you at your local RSPCA shelter, animal rescue groups or at adoptapet.com.au, check out our Smart Puppy Buyer's Guide to help you find a good breeder.

For more information about dogs and puppies, visit kb.rspca.org.au/9/.

Cats and Kittens

Cats have an average lifespan of 15-20 years.

Follow this guide to make sure your feline friend can purr through life.

Food

Cats should be fed cat food. Dry food is better for their teeth, but wet food is tasty as a treat. Kittens need to be fed kitten food until they stop growing and reach adult size (around six months old). After that age, they can be fed adult cat food. Talk to your veterinarian about giving raw chicken wing once a week. This will help keep your cat's teeth and gums healthy.

A kitten or cat should never eat:

- ✗ Avocados
- ✗ Chocolate
- ✗ Cooked bones (raw, meaty bones are okay!)
- ✗ Grapes
- ✗ Onions

These foods make them very sick and could be deadly.

Water

Always make sure cats have access to fresh, clean water.

Cats can only drink special kitten or cat milk from pet supply stores or supermarkets – cow's milk can make them sick!

Shelter

It's best to keep cats safe on your property, entertaining and exercising them with toys, scratching posts and access to outdoor enclosures.

If cats are let outside, they must be supervised at all times and brought indoors at night. This is to stop them hunting our native wildlife and avoid being run over by cars!

Grooming

Even though cats lick their fur to groom themselves, they should still be brushed every day. This is especially important for long-haired cats, and this way they won't get as many fur balls!

Hygiene

Cats are very clean animals so they need to be provided with a litter tray and kitty litter for their toileting. Make sure each cat has their own litter tray and the kitty litter is changed every day.



Health

Kittens and cats can't take themselves to the veterinarian so there are a few things to do to keep them healthy!

- Cats need a health check and vaccinations every year.
- Kittens need a series of important vaccinations to protect them from dangerous viruses.
- Fleas make animals very itchy and worms can be deadly. So, it's important to protect your cat by using a cat treatment from the local veterinarian, which is normally a dose of liquid that is squeezed onto the cat's neck every month.
- When a cat or kitten is quieter than normal, eating or drinking differently or their poo or wee is different, they should be taken to a veterinarian to be checked out!

Enrichment

Cats should have toys that will make them use their brain and give them exercise. Balls with bells, scratching posts and table water fountains are fascinating to cats and can keep them entertained.

Desexing

It is very important that pet cats and kittens are desexed! Desexed animals can no longer have babies, which is good for our community because we have too many unwanted animals. Desexed cats and kittens are less vulnerable to illness, better behaved and can live longer than non-desexed animals.

Identification

All cats and kittens need to have a microchip implanted by a veterinarian. The microchip number links the pet to the owner's important details on a register, which should always be updated. If the cat is lost, the finder can have them scanned at the pound, RSPCA shelter or veterinary clinic. If the microchip is registered, the owner can be easily found. Cats can also wear a quick-release collar with an ID tag that has the owner's telephone number on it.

If you can't find the right cat for you at your local RSPCA shelter, other animal rescue groups or at adoptapet.com.au, check out our Smart Kitten and Cat Buyer's Guide to help you find a good breeder.

For more information about cats and kittens, visit kb.rspca.org.au/34/.

Rabbits

Rabbits have an average lifespan of eight to 12 years.

Follow this guide to make sure your bunny lives a happy life in your home.

Food

Rabbit teeth are always growing so they need food that makes them continuously chew.

There are two important parts of a rabbit's diet:

1. Good quality fresh grass or grass hay (e.g., Timothy, Oaten, Wheaten, Pasture, Paddock, Meadow or Ryegrass hays).
2. Two packed cups of leafy greens and vegetables for each kilogram of body weight. For example, if the rabbit weighs three kilograms, they need to be fed six cups.

Rabbits should eat:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| ✓ Basil | ✓ Celery | ✓ Dill | ✓ Other Asian greens |
| ✓ Bok Choy | ✓ Coriander | ✓ Endive | ✓ Parsley |
| ✓ Broccoli | ✓ Dandelion | ✓ Kale | ✓ Spinach leaves |
| ✓ Brussels sprouts | ✓ Dark leafed lettuce | ✓ Mint | |

Rabbits can have fruit or small chunks of 'sweet' vegetables as rare treats, such as apple and carrots.

Rabbits should never eat:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------|
| ✗ Beans | ✗ Cereals | ✗ Nuts | ✗ Sugar |
| ✗ Biscuits | ✗ Chocolate | ✗ Peas | ✗ Sweets |
| ✗ Breads | ✗ Corn | ✗ Seeds | |
| ✗ Breakfast Cereals | ✗ Grains | ✗ Some garden plants | |

Water

Always provide fresh, clean water. It's best to use a water bottle drinker so the water stays clean.

Shelter

Rabbits will need to live in a hutch that has two parts. One part must be completely covered to protect the rabbit from the weather and predators. It will act as a safe sleeping place. The other part should have mosquito-proof wire mesh that allows fresh air and sunlight pour in.



Inside the hutch, the rabbit will need a 'burrow area' they can hide inside, such as a box or straw. Cover the floor with bedding material, such as straw, grass hay or shredded paper.

Rabbits should never be left in the sun. If it gets too hot inside the hutch, leave frozen water bottles inside to help keep them cool.

Grooming

Rabbits should be brushed regularly, especially if they have long hair. If their toenails are too long, a veterinarian or groomer should clip them.

Hygiene

The hutch should be cleaned out every week and water should always be clean. Make sure to regularly change the bedding, throwing out any poo and leftover food.

Health

Rabbits need to be vaccinated every year to protect them from diseases spread among wild rabbits.

Rabbits should be checked by a veterinarian if they have:

- Any scratches or cuts
- Runny poo
- Sneezing
- Weepy or watery eyes

Enrichment

Rabbits need plenty of exercise so give them lots of opportunities to run, jump and dig every day. Let them out of the hutch into a safe, protected grassy area where they can move around. Supervise them at all times so they don't burrow and escape or be attacked by cats or dogs.

Rabbits can also be housetrained to use a kitty litter tray so they can exercise safely inside your house.

Rabbits should have toys to investigate and play with. Don't put them all in your rabbit's hutch at once and just leave them there. Instead, rotate them so they stay interesting and fun!

Desexing

Rabbits should be desexed so they don't breed unexpectedly! Desexing rabbits reduce the chance of getting some serious diseases, and makes them happier and healthier!

For more information about rabbits, visit kb.rspca.org.au/55/.

Guinea pigs

Guinea pigs have an average lifespan of five to seven years.

Follow this guide to make sure your furry friend lives a healthy and happy life!

Food

Guinea pig teeth are always growing so they need food that makes them continuously chew.

There are three important parts of a guinea pig's diet:

1. Good quality fresh grass or grass hay (e.g., Timothy, Oaten, Wheaten, Pasture, Paddock, Meadow or Ryegrass hays) should be most of their diet because it's very important for digestion and healthy teeth.
2. Small amounts of foods that are rich in Vitamin C, such as citrus and kiwi fruits. Guinea pigs need a direct source of Vitamin C in their diet to stay healthy.
3. Fresh leafy green vegetables and herbs, including:

✓ Basil	✓ Cabbage	✓ Dandelion	✓ Kale
✓ Bok Choy	✓ Carrot tops	✓ Dark leafed lettuce	✓ Mint
✓ Broccoli	✓ Celery	✓ Dill	✓ Other Asian greens
✓ Brussels sprouts	✓ Coriander	✓ Endive	✓ Parsley

Guinea pigs can have a very small amount of fruit or small chunks of 'sweet' vegetables as rare treats, such as apples and carrots.

Guinea pigs should never eat:

✗ Beans	✗ Cereals	✗ Nuts	✗ Raw beans
✗ Beetroot	✗ Chocolate	✗ Onions	✗ Rhubarb leaves
✗ Biscuits	✗ Corn	✗ Onion grass	✗ Seeds
✗ Bread	✗ Garden shrubs	✗ Peas	✗ Spinach
✗ Breakfast Cereals	✗ Grains	✗ Pickled foods	✗ Sugar
✗ Buttercups	✗ Lily of the Valley	✗ Potato tops	✗ Sweets

Water

Always provide fresh, clean water. It's best to use a water bottle drinker so the water stays clean. If your guinea pig doesn't know how to use a water bottle drinker, give them a small, shallow water bowl.



Shelter

The more space, the better! But the minimum space for an enclosure to house one guinea pig would be 70 centimetres (length) x 70 centimetres (width) x 70 centimetres (height).

With outdoor hutches, you must make sure a few things are in place.

Guinea pigs will need to live in a hutch that has two parts. One part must be completely covered to protect the guinea pig from the weather and predators. It will act as a safe sleeping place. The other part should have space to move around in and something they can hide inside, such as a box. It should also have a mosquito-proof wire mesh that allows fresh air and sunlight in.

Cover the floor with bedding material, such as grass hay or shredded paper. Make sure inside the hutch is always a comfortable temperature, so your pets do not get heat stress.

Guinea pigs are social animals and should be kept in pairs or groups that can't reproduce with each other.

Grooming

If guinea pigs have long hair, they should be brushed daily to remove tangles. While grooming, check the length of toenails and for signs of illness or external parasites (e.g., if your guinea pig loses patches of hair, take them to your veterinarian).

With daily handling and grooming, a guinea pig will build its confidence and become a more social pet!

Hygiene

Every day, check for wet bedding, poo or leftover food. If there is, make sure to throw it out and put in fresh, dry bedding. The entire hutch should be cleaned out at least once a week and water should always be clean.

Health

Most of the common health problems for guinea pigs can be prevented with good cleaning and feeding practices. If your guinea pig becomes quieter than normal, is eating or drinking differently, or their poo or wee is different, they should be taken to a veterinarian to be checked out!

Enrichment

Guinea pigs should be provided with a gnawing log (made of untreated wood) and given access to an exercise enclosure which is escape-proof and safe from predators.

Because their teeth never stop growing, wooden toys are important for them to chew on.

Desexing

Guinea pigs should be desexed so they don't breed unexpectedly. It also reduces the chance of getting some serious diseases, and makes them happier and healthier!

For more information about guinea pigs, visit kb.rspca.org.au/56/.

Goldfish

Goldfish have an average lifespan of 10-15 years.

Follow this guide to make sure your fishy friend swims through life!

Food

Goldfish need to be fed special goldfish food. The best type of food is small floating pellets because it helps to keep the tank clean. It also means all the fish will receive their fair share! A mixture of goldfish flakes and granules are a good staple diet. Always ask the seller for some treats you could give them, and how much to feed them, as it can depend on their breed.

Shelter

The bigger the tank is, the better it is! With a bigger tank, you'll find it won't get as dirty as quickly. So have a tank with a minimum volume of 50 litres.

Hygiene

To help keep the water clean, some of the water will need to be changed every week – only change 10-25 per cent of the water each time. To do this, use a tube to move water out of the tank. While sucking up the water, use the tube to remove fish faeces from the bottom of the tank.

To help prevent algae growth, keep the aquarium away from direct sunlight or windows. Aquarium lights can be left on for eight hours a day. Remember to turn the lights off at night as fish have no eyelids and need darkness to sleep!

Health

Goldfish eat quite a lot, so they'll probably poo a lot too! Make sure the filter suits the tank size to help keep the water clean. Also, buy a filter that creates bubbles or moves the water's surface.

This should help oxygenate the water and provide a healthier environment.

Enrichment

By putting real water plants into the tank, goldfish can have places to hide and something to interact with. It also helps to absorb some waste products. The more plant cover, the more active the goldfish will become, so plants should take up about half of the tank.



Adopting your goldfish

When choosing a new fishy friend, make sure the aquarium is responsible and the tanks are not overcrowded.

Signs of a healthy goldfish include:

- Ability to swim well
- Clear, bright body colour
- Fins are straight, not curled up or torn

Signs of an unhealthy goldfish include:

- Has lumps, bumps or wounds
- Has a trail of poo from its behind
- Sinks or bobs to the surface
- Stays in the corner for a long time

For more information about goldfish, visit kb.rspca.org.au/74/.

THE FIVE FREEDOMS



FREEDOM FROM PAIN, INJURY OR DISEASE

(medical care)

By prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment from a veterinarian.



FREEDOM TO EXPRESS NORMAL BEHAVIOUR

(exercise)

By providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind when appropriate.



FREEDOM FROM DISCOMFORT

(shelter)

By providing shelter and a comfortable resting area.



FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND DISTRESS

(love and understanding)

By ensuring conditions and treatment that avoid mental suffering.



FREEDOM FROM HUNGER AND THIRST

(food and water)

By providing access to fresh water and a nutritious diet to maintain full health and energy.

For more information visit

rspcasa.org.au/aware



*Thank you for helping people
and animals in need*