If it Doesn't Work Out

Even with the best intentions, pet ownership doesn't always work out as planned. There are times when owners no longer wish to keep their pets or can no longer care for or afford them. This difficult decision must be made objectively and with the needs of the PET considered when discussing his/her future.

- Consult with friends and family as they may be willing or able to help.
- Check with local shelters, adoption agencies, and animal rescue societies to see if they will accept your pet. Please check with them first before making a permanent decision about the life of your pet.
- Talk to your veterinarian to see what suggestions they have or if they can provide contacts at helpful organizations.

ABANDONMENT is **NEVER** the answer. Abandoning your pet to the streets or leaving your pet behind when you have a permanent change of station (PCS) or move may subject that animal to untold suffering and many times a slow and painful death. It is also illegal to abandon your pet in government quarters or on post and in most municipalities. Remember, you chose them, you raised them, and you accepted their love in return for yours. Do the right thing and do not abandon your family pet. Instead, work to adopt or move them to a shelter.

Please **schedule** an **appointment** with your veterinarian to discuss any questions or concerns!

http://phc.amedd.army.mil
1-800-222-9698
APHC Animal Health

This information brochure was written by Army Veterinary Services personnel and published by the Army Public Health Center to inform and educate Service members, beneficiaries, and retirees about Animal Health. Comments or questions regarding content can be directed to ARMY-VSPublications@mail.mil. Locate your local Veterinary Treatment Facility at https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/animed/vtfo/Pages/Veterinary-Treatment-Facility-Interactive-Map.aspx.

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Preventive Health

Pet Ownership responsibilities

Pet ownership comes with benefits and responsibilities.

Your Veterinary Treatment Facility can help!

Army Public Health Center Animal Health

Pets make wonderful family members and provide their owners with unconditional love and companionship. The many benefits of pet ownership come with certain responsibilities.

Responsible pet ownership involves doing everything you can to make sure your pet has the best life you can provide for your pet. As a pet owner, it is your duty to properly care for your animal and to make sure your pet is healthy, happy, and safe. Having a pet is a privilege and should be beneficial for both your family and your pet.

The Basics of Pet Ownership

Are you and your family ready and committed to adopting, raising, and living with a pet? Pet ownership is a serious commitment that lasts for the life of the pet.

Families looking for a pet should:

- Recognize and be prepared to commit to a life-long relationship with a pet.
- Recognize and accept that pet ownership requires a continuous investment of care, time, and money.
- Carefully select a pet suited to your lifestyle, and avoid impulsive decisions about obtaining a pet.
- Select and keep only pets for which you and your family can provide an appropriate and safe environment.
- Do Your Homework before adopting a pet to understand the unique health, social, exercise, and environmental requirements of the dog and cat breeds you are considering. Not all dogs and cats are the same.
- Never adopt a pet during stressful times or solely because a child or family member "wants a pet."

Recognize and be prepared to commit to a **life-long relationship** with a pet.

Once you find your pet:

- Provide your pet with appropriate food and water, a home or shelter sized for the pet, routine health care, the appropriate level of exercise, environmental enrichment (such as toys, cat trees, etc.), and companionship.
- Register pets according to local and city ordinances. Always ensure your pets are properly identified (such as tags, microchips, or tattoos) and that information is kept up-to-date in associated databases. All of this will help identify your pet and ensure they are returned to your family should they become lost.
- Establish and maintain a good relationship with your pet's veterinarian and ensure that your pet receives all necessary preventive (such as vaccinations, parasite control) and therapeutic health care throughout its entire life.
- Spay/neuter your pets. This helps pet overpopulation problems and decreases unwanted behaviors.
- Recognize declines in your pet's quality of life and make decisions in consultation with a veterinarian regarding appropriate end-of-life care (such as palliative care, hospice care, euthanasia).

Beyond the Basics

Beyond providing your pet with basic care, it is important to provide your pet with appropriate training and discipline, attention, and socialization.

Training and socialization

- Teach your pet basic commands and behaviors to allow proper and peaceful interactions with other animals and people, including sit, stay, and so forth.
- Socialize your pet with people and animals outside the home.
- Spend time and interact with your pet often. Your pet needs interaction and emotional commitment from his/her family on a regular basis.
- Do not house your pet outside or leave them staked out on leashes. Doing so can endanger the health and safety of your pet.

Prevent your pet from negatively impacting other people, animals, and the environment

- Properly dispose of your pet's waste at all times, whether in your yard, in their pen, out in the parks, or on walks. This reduces odors, helps control the spread of parasites, and removes unsightly piles from the area.
- Work with your pet to ensure his/her noise does not disturb others around you. Discuss ways to prevent or curb unwarranted barking and howling with your veterinarian.
- Do not allow your pets to run free and become stray or feral. Proper licensing, tagging, and control of your pet are important responsibilities.

Responsible pet ownership involves doing everything you can to make sure your pet has the best life you can provide for him/her.