

Pet Care



Adjusting to a New Home

Adopting a pet is both exciting and stressful at the same time, especially for the animal.

New sights, unfamiliar smells and different routines can leave even the friendliest dog or cat feeling overwhelmed.

To help adopters understand what to expect, many shelters and rescue organizations recommend following the “3-3-3 rule.”

The guideline provides a general roadmap for the first three days, three weeks and three months after adoption and emphasizes patience, consistency and positive reinforcement.

While every pet adjusts at a different pace, the 3-3-3 rule can help families set realistic expectations during the transition period.

Sarah A. Neikam, marketing director for the Albrecht Center for Animal Welfare, describes the rules this way.

THE FIRST THREE DAYS: DECOMPRESSION

The first few days in a new home can be overwhelming for a newly adopted pet. Dogs and cats may be nervous, withdrawn or unsure of their surroundings. Some may hide, eat less than usual or seem reluctant to interact with family members.

Animal welfare experts recommend creating a quiet,

comfortable space where the pet can feel safe. Keep food, water, bedding and toys easily accessible, and let interactions occur on the animal’s terms. New owners should avoid overwhelming pets with visitors, busy schedules or too many new experiences at once.

Dogs are more social and cats are more independent. To help cats feel more secure, confine them to a single room initially. For dogs, provide consistent walks, playtime and training sessions.

THE FIRST THREE WEEKS: SETTLING IN

As pets become more comfortable, they begin learning household routines and exploring their new environment. Their personalities often start to emerge, and owners may notice behaviors that were not immediately apparent during the first few days.

This is an ideal time to establish feeding schedules, bathroom routines, training sessions and household expectations. Positive reinforcement can help pets learn appropriate

behaviors while building confidence and trust.

Take dogs for longer walks and let cats expand their territory beyond their initial safe space.

Gradual introductions to family members, visitors and other pets can help create a smoother transition and reduce stress for everyone involved.

THE FIRST THREE MONTHS: BUILDING TRUST

By the three-month mark, many adopted pets begin to

feel at home. They understand routines, recognize family members and have developed stronger bonds with their caregivers. This is a good time to build trust with daily interactions, training and play.

Introduce your pet to the vet and schedule regular checkups.

The 3-3-3 rule is a guideline, not a guarantee. Some animals adapt more quickly, while others may need additional time, particularly if they have experienced neglect, trauma or multiple transitions.



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Understanding Pet Anesthesia

Few words make pet owners more nervous than anesthesia.

Whether a pet is scheduled for a dental cleaning, spay or neuter procedure, surgery or a diagnostic test, many owners worry about the risks involved.

Veterinarians understand those concerns. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), anesthesia is a controlled state of unconsciousness that allows pets to undergo procedures without pain, stress or movement. Modern veterinary anesthesia has become increasingly safe, thanks to advances in medications, monitoring equipment and individualized care plans.

Understanding how anesthesia works can help owners feel more confident when their pet requires a medical procedure.

WHY ANESTHESIA IS NECESSARY

Many veterinary procedures cannot be performed safely or effectively on an awake animal.

Anesthesia allows veterinarians to perform surgeries, dental procedures and certain diagnostic tests while keeping pets comfortable and pain-free. It prevents movement that could interfere with delicate procedures or increase the risk of injury.

Before anesthesia is administered, veterinarians evaluate



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a pet's overall health and medical history. The AVMA notes that factors such as age, breed, medications and underlying health conditions help determine the safest anesthesia plan for each individual animal.

Many veterinary practices recommend pre-anesthetic testing, which may include blood work, urinalysis or additional screening tests. These evaluations help identify potential health concerns that could affect anesthesia safety.

MONITORING

Anesthesia involves much more than simply administering medication.

The AVMA explains veterinary teams closely monitor pets before, during and after anesthesia. Monitoring may

include heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, oxygen levels and body temperature. Intravenous catheters and fluids are often used to support circulation and provide rapid access to medications if needed.

Veterinarians adjust anesthetic drugs based on each pet's needs and continuously assess how the animal is responding throughout the procedure. These safeguards help reduce risk and support a smooth recovery.

Many owners are especially concerned about older pets. While senior animals may require additional evaluation, experts emphasize that age alone does not determine whether anesthesia is appropriate. Overall health is often a more important factor than chronological age.

HELPING YOUR PET RECOVER SAFELY

Recovery begins as soon as the procedure is complete.

Pets may be sleepy, less coordinated or temporarily disoriented for several hours after anesthesia. Some may have reduced appetites or spend more time resting than usual. These effects are typically temporary.

Owners should carefully follow all discharge instructions, including medication schedules, feeding recommendations and activity restrictions. Any persistent vomiting, extreme lethargy, breathing difficulties or unusual behavior should be reported to a veterinarian promptly.

Protecting Pets Year-Round

Few things can make a pet uncomfortable faster than fleas and ticks.

These tiny parasites are more than just a nuisance. They can cause itching, skin infections and serious illnesses in both pets and people.

While many pet owners think of fleas and ticks as a summer-time problem, veterinarians increasingly recommend year-round prevention. Understanding the risks and using preventive products correctly can help keep pets healthy and comfortable throughout the year.

WHY PREVENTION MATTERS

Fleas are among the most common external parasites affecting dogs and cats. A single flea can lay dozens of eggs per day, allowing an infestation to spread rapidly throughout a home.

Beyond causing itching and irritation, fleas can trigger allergic reactions, skin infections and, in severe cases, anemia. They can also transmit tapeworms and other parasites.

Ticks pose different but equally important risks. As they feed, ticks can transmit diseases such as Lyme disease, anaplasmosis and ehrlichiosis. Some of these illnesses can affect both animals and humans.

Pets that spend time outdoors are particularly vulnerable, but even indoor an-



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imals can be exposed. Fleas and ticks may enter homes on people, other pets or wildlife that venture into yards.

Because prevention is far easier than eliminating an established infestation, veterinarians often recommend maintaining protection throughout the year.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PRODUCTS

Today's pet owners have many options for flea and tick control, including topical treat-

ments, oral medications, collars and prescription products.

Not every product is appropriate for every pet. Factors such as age, weight, species, health conditions and lifestyle can influence which option is safest and most effective.

Carefully follow label directions and use only products designed for your specific animal. A medication intended for a large dog, for example, should never be divided among small pets.

Special caution is needed in

households with cats. Some flea and tick products formulated for dogs contain ingredients that can be toxic to cats even through accidental contact.

Veterinarians can help owners select products that match their pets' individual needs and local parasite risks.

ADDITIONAL STEPS FOR PROTECTION

Preventive medications are only one part of a comprehensive flea and tick safety plan.

Regularly checking pets for

ticks after outdoor activities can help reduce the risk of disease transmission. Keeping grass trimmed, removing yard debris and discouraging wildlife from entering the property may reduce tick populations around the home.

Wash pet bedding regularly and vacuum frequently if fleas are suspected. Most importantly, promptly report any signs of illness following a tick bite, such as lethargy, fever, loss of appetite or lameness, to a veterinarian.

High-Tech Litter Boxes

The basic litter box has been a staple of cat ownership for decades, but recent innovations are transforming one of the least glamorous aspects of pet care.

From self-cleaning litter boxes and health-monitoring technology to environmentally friendly litter materials, today's cat owners have more options than ever before. These advancements are designed to improve convenience, reduce odors and create a more comfortable experience for both cats and their humans.

While no product completely eliminates litter box maintenance, new technology is helping make the task easier.

SMARTER LITTER BOXES

One of the biggest developments in recent years has been the rise of automated litter boxes.

Self-cleaning models use sensors to detect when a cat has finished using the box. The device then separates waste from clean litter and deposits it into a sealed compartment for later disposal. Some systems can operate for days or even weeks before requiring attention.

More advanced models connect to smartphone apps, allowing owners to monitor



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usage patterns and receive maintenance alerts.

These features offer convenience and provide useful health information. Changes in litter box habits are often among the first signs of illness in cats. Frequent urination, straining, constipation or changes in elimination patterns can indicate underlying medical conditions.

Some smart litter boxes track a cat's weight and bathroom activity, helping owners identify potential concerns earlier and share information with their veterinarian.

Experts caution that automated systems are not ideal for every cat. Some cats prefer traditional boxes, and owners should monitor their pets closely when introducing any

new litter box system.

NEW CHOICES IN LITTER MATERIALS

Litter itself has evolved significantly.

Traditional clay litter remains popular, but manufacturers now offer products made from a wide variety of materials, including corn, wheat, walnut shells,

wood, paper and grass fibers.

Many of these alternatives appeal to environmentally conscious consumers because they use renewable resources and may be biodegradable.

Manufacturers have developed improved odor-control technologies, low-dust formulas and lightweight products that are easier to carry and pour.

Some specialty litters are designed to change color when they detect abnormalities in a cat's urine. While these products are not diagnostic tools, they may alert owners to potential health concerns that warrant veterinary attention.

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Despite the growing number of options, experts agree that the best litter box is the one a cat is willing to use consistently.

Cats can be particular about litter texture, box size, cleanliness and location. A high-tech litter box with advanced features may not be successful if a cat finds it intimidating or uncomfortable.

When introducing new products, gradual transitions often work best.

Whether owners choose a traditional setup or the latest automated system, the goal remains the same: providing a clean, accessible and comfortable bathroom environment. Thanks to ongoing innovations in litter boxes and litter materials, achieving that goal may be easier than ever before.

Hot Topics for Animal Lovers

From training tips and veterinary advice to heartwarming rescue stories and humorous pet tales, podcasts have become a valuable resource for pet owners looking to learn more about the animals they love.

Whether listeners are walking the dog, commuting to work or tackling household chores, pet-focused podcasts offer a convenient way to stay informed about animal health, behavior and welfare while being entertained along the way.

As podcasting continues to grow in popularity, there are now shows available for virtually every type of pet owner.

LEARNING FROM EXPERTS

Many pet podcasts feature veterinarians, trainers and animal behaviorists who share practical advice on common pet care topics.

Shows such as The Pet Buzz explore pet health, adoption, legislation and animal welfare issues, while The Veterinary Viewfinder examines trends and developments in veterinary medicine. Other programs focus on answering common questions about nutrition, preventive care and



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emerging health concerns.

For dog owners, training-focused podcasts have become especially popular. Drinking From the Toilet and Shaped by Dog offer guidance based on positive reinforcement techniques, helping owners better understand canine behavior and communication.

These educational podcasts can be particularly useful for first-time pet owners who want reliable information from experienced professionals.

While podcasts should never replace veterinary care, they can help owners become more informed and prepared when discussing concerns with their veterinarian.

BUILDING STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS WITH PETS

Many podcasts focus on helping owners better understand their pets' emotional and behavioral needs.

Programs such as Cog-Dog Radio explore topics ranging from enrichment activities and problem-solving behaviors to building confidence in anxious dogs. Cat-focused podcasts offer advice on everything from litter box issues and environmental enrichment to understanding feline communication.

Learning how pets experience the world can help owners strengthen bonds with their animals and create

healthier, happier home environments.

Behavioral issues are one of the most common reasons pets are surrendered to shelters. Experts say education can play an important role in preventing problems before they become overwhelming.

MORE THAN JUST ADVICE

Not every pet podcast is focused on training or medicine.

Some programs highlight inspiring rescue stories, interviews with authors and animal advocates, discussions about pet-friendly travel and lighthearted stories celebrating the joys of pet ownership.

Shows such as Oh Behave

with Arden Moore combine expert interviews with entertaining conversations and pet-related news, while Talking Animals explores a wide range of topics involving companion animals, wildlife and conservation.

For many listeners, these podcasts provide a sense of community and connection with other animal lovers.

Whether someone is seeking expert guidance, practical tips or simply a few laughs, pet podcasts offer something for nearly every owner. With thousands of episodes available across major podcast platforms, finding a new favorite may be as easy as pressing play before the next walk around the neighborhood.

Who Will Care for Your Pet?

For many people, pets are family members. Yet while owners often plan for the care of spouses, children and other loved ones, they may overlook an important question: What would happen to their pets if they became seriously ill, disabled or died?

A pet trust is one tool that can help provide an answer.

According to the ASPCA, a pet trust is a legally recognized arrangement that provides for the care and maintenance of a pet if the owner is no longer able to do so. The trust can take effect during an owner's lifetime in the event of incapacity or after death, helping ensure that beloved animals continue to receive proper care.

MORE THAN A PROMISE

Many pet owners assume that a verbal agreement with a family member or friend is sufficient. While such arrangements can work, circumstances can change unexpectedly.

A pet trust creates legally enforceable instructions for a pet's care. The owner can designate a caregiver responsible for daily care and a trustee responsible for managing funds



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set aside for the animal's needs. This structure helps ensure that money intended for the pet is used appropriately.

Pet trusts can include detailed instructions about feeding routines, veterinary care, medications, exercise requirements, grooming preferences and even favorite activities. Owners may specify what should happen if the designated caregiver becomes unable to continue providing care.

The ASPCA notes that pet trusts can be particularly valu-

able for animals with significant medical needs, multiple pets that should remain together, horses, exotic animals and pets with long life expectancies.

CREATING A PLAN THAT WORKS

A pet trust does not need to be reserved for wealthy pet owners. The goal is not extravagance but ensuring that resources are available to provide appropriate care.

When creating a pet trust, owners typically identify a caregiver, designate a trustee,

estimate future expenses and establish instructions for the animal's care. Funding may be used for food, veterinary care, medications, grooming, boarding and other anticipated needs.

The ASPCA recommends maintaining up-to-date information about pets, including veterinary records, medications, feeding instructions, microchip information and emergency contacts. These details can help caregivers provide a smoother transition if they suddenly need to assume responsibility.

PLANNING FOR PEACE OF MIND

Pet ownership comes with many responsibilities, including planning for the unexpected.

Whether through a formal pet trust or another estate-planning strategy, taking steps now can help ensure that pets remain safe and cared for if circumstances change. For owners, that preparation provides valuable peace of mind. For pets, it may provide the stability and protection they need when they need it most.

Keeping Pets Safe During Travel

Whether it's a cross-country vacation, a weekend getaway or a trip to the veterinarian, many pets spend time riding in vehicles.

While traveling with pets can be enjoyable, safety experts say proper preparation is essential for protecting both animals and people on the road.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), pets should always be properly restrained when traveling in a vehicle. An unrestrained pet can become a distraction to the driver and may be seriously injured during a sudden stop or collision.

Taking a few simple precautions can help ensure a safer and more comfortable journey for everyone.

BUCKLE UP YOUR PET

Many pet owners would never consider driving without wearing a seat belt, yet pets are often allowed to ride freely in vehicles.

The AVMA recommends using a secured crate, carrier or pet safety harness while traveling. These restraints help prevent pets from moving throughout the vehicle and reduce the risk of injury during an accident.

Cats generally travel best in sturdy carriers that are secured to the vehicle. Dogs may travel in a secured crate or wear a



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properly fitted travel harness designed for use with a seat belt system.

The AVMA advises against allowing pets to ride in the front seat. Airbags that protect human passengers can cause serious injuries to animals during deployment.

Allowing a pet to sit on a driver's lap is especially dangerous because it increases distractions and can interfere with safe vehicle operation.

PLAN AHEAD FOR COMFORT

Long trips require more planning than simply loading a pet into the car.

Owners should pack food, water, medications, waste bags, leashes and any necessary travel documents. Familiar blankets or toys can help reduce anxiety and make pets feel more comfortable in unfamiliar surroundings. Frequent rest stops provide opportunities for

exercise, bathroom breaks and hydration.

Pets that are not accustomed to car travel may benefit from shorter practice trips before a longer journey.

Proper identification is important. The AVMA recommends ensuring pets wear identification tags and have up-to-date microchip information in case they become separated from their owners during travel.

NEVER LEAVE PETS IN A PARKED VEHICLE

One of the most important travel safety rules is never leaving pets unattended in a parked vehicle.

Temperatures inside a car can rise rapidly, even when outside temperatures seem moderate. Cracked windows provide little protection against dangerous heat buildup. Heat stroke can develop quickly and become fatal.