

ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

Picking Out Your New Pet

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Picking out a new pet is exciting but also a very big responsibility. Your first step is to decide if you should have a pet right now. If money is tight, the best thing to do is wait. A new puppy or kitten will cost around a \$1000 a year in food, equipment, training, toys, fencing and veterinary care. It doesn't matter if the pet is an expensive purebred or free. Even free puppies and kittens cost hundreds of dollars to just do the basic care.

If you have talked it over with family members, have done some research, and feel you are ready, then start your search at animal shelters. There is always the chance that your "dream pet" is there waiting for you and is next in line for euthanasia. There is no reason why a shelter dog or cat won't make an excellent pet. I have adopted several excellent purebred dogs there.

If you cannot find what you want at the shelter, call the AKC at 1-800-561-5651 and ask for a list of breeders for the type of dog you are interested in. They can also send you an information packet on choosing your new puppy. The CFA has information on cat breeders. Call them at 1-732-528-9797. Dog or cat shows are a good place to get information or a pet. There are also breed rescue groups that take in unwanted purebred dogs and find them good homes. You can call us for more information or do a search for them on-line under the breed name and "Rescue".

We do not recommend that you purchase a puppy or kitten from people that keep multiple breeds in unclean environments. Frequently called "puppy mills", these unscrupulous people often breed brother to sister or breed genetically defective animals just trying to make money. If you want to save the poor animals housed there, report the owners to your local shelter. Many pet stores purchase their stock from "puppy mills".

Purebred dogs or cats should be accompanied with registration papers and information certifying that it is free from certain hereditary diseases like hip dysplasia and eye disease. A good breeder may require that a pet that is not show quality be spayed or neutered. **DO NOT** buy a pet from a breeder who requires you to sign a contract saying you **cannot** have your pet spayed or neutered. **DO NOT** pay

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full price for a pet when the breeder says the papers will be mailed to you later. You will never see the papers and most likely it is because the puppies are not purebred.

If the owners just didn't get around to getting their female spayed and now wants to get rid of the puppies or kittens, don't encourage this by paying them money. The mother may be purebred, but you don't know the father of these babies. It could be an aggressive, dangerous animal. Second, these people will never take the step of getting their pets spayed or neutered if they are able to get rid of the offspring, especially for a profit. You are encouraging irresponsible behavior, not saving an animal.

Getting a new puppy or kitten is a big responsibility. If you have questions, please call us at the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643. 🐾