

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home

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Factsheet

Responsible ownership



Registered Charity No. 206394
A member of the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes

Ref:08/IN/24



Owning a dog or cat can be a hugely rewarding and enjoyable experience. Pets bring companionship but they also bring responsibilities and the decision to take on a dog or cat should not be taken lightly. Potential pet owners should consider their lifestyle and home environment carefully as well as thinking very hard about the impact a pet will have on their lives.



Health

Keeping your dog or cat in the best of health is one of the major responsibilities of pet ownership. If you felt ill or had a toothache, you would go to the doctor or the dentist and it's your responsibility to ensure your pet receives veterinary care when necessary. At Battersea, we recommend that owners take out pet insurance to help with any unexpected vet bills. Do your research and find the right policy – your vet may be able to offer impartial advice.

Caring for your pet's health also means trying to prevent avoidable health problems developing. Both dogs and cats should have yearly vaccinations and regular worming and flea treatments. We often see animals with conditions such as tooth decay or obesity which could have been easily prevented with an appropriate diet and veterinary advice.

In most cases neutering your pet is also a sensible option, both to avoid unwanted litters of puppies and kittens and to prevent certain health problems. For more information, speak to your vet or look on our website www.dogshome.org where you can download a factsheet about neutering.

Identification

You must ensure that, should the awful situation arise that your dog or cat goes missing, they can be easily traced back to you. Every year, rescue centres take in thousands of stray dogs and cats, many of which are not reunited with their owners as there is no way of tracing who they belong to. In fact 70% of dogs and 40% of cats coming into Battersea are strays. So, how you can avoid your pet becoming one of the statistics?

Have your dog or cat microchipped. The chip is tiny and is inserted by your vet in a simple procedure which is quick and painless. The chip has a unique code which when scanned with a special reader can be matched to the owner's details on a central database. Rescue centres, animal wardens and vets are all able to scan for this permanent form of identification. It is very important to keep your pet's chip details up-to-date with your contact details so that you can be contacted if your pet is found.

Make sure your dog or cat wears a secure collar and tag with your contact details on it. This is actually a legal requirement for dogs and you could be fined if your dog doesn't wear one.

<u>TO DO</u>	Home	Car	Ralph	Milly	Dad	Mum	Billy	Lucy
Microchip								
Vaccinate			✓	✓				
Insure	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Neuter			✓	✓	✓	✓		
Mat/Annual Health Check		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collar & Tag			✓	✓			✓	✓

Out & about

Taking your dog for a walk should be one of the most enjoyable parts of ownership but there are a number of things to think about.

Take note of rules and regulations. Some local authorities have dog control orders. There may be restrictions on where you can walk your dog, you may need to keep your dog on lead and there may even be areas where dogs are banned like children's playgrounds. Your local authority should be able to provide more information.

Make sure your dog is under control. Keep your dog on a lead in busy areas, on pavements and around roads – if a dog strays on to the road, he could cause an accident. Only let him off lead in safe, appropriate areas and only if you are sure that he will come back to you when you call him. Don't allow your dog to pester other people or their dogs. You may know that your dog is very friendly but other people, and especially children, may be nervous around dogs. Likewise, not all other dogs in the park will want to play with your dog. They may be elderly, nervous or even aggressive. You should ensure that your dog will return to you so he can be called away from other dogs if necessary.

Clean up after your dog. Always pick up your dog's poo and dispose of it in a designated bin – if you don't, you could end up with a hefty fine. Dog mess in parks and on pavements is a common complaint by members of the public and gives all dog owners a bad name.

Most cats spend a large amount of their day exploring the outside world. If you have a garden, ensure that it is a safe environment for your cat and any others that may visit. Cats love to explore and so keep garden equipment and chemicals safely locked away.

Confining a cat to living indoors is an option but must be given careful thought. For further information, visit the Feline Advisory Bureau website (www.fabcats.org). An indoor cat will be heavily reliant on you for stimulation and company and so you will need to spend time coming up with activities to keep her mentally and physically stimulated. Failing to do so could result in a cat with problem behaviours brought on by boredom.



Training

Dogs and cats are brought into rescue centres every year because their owners are no longer able to cope with their pet's problem behaviours. Destructive behaviour, anxiety when separated from owners or left alone and over-boisterous behaviour are all common reasons why we get animals given to us and are avoidable if an animal is trained and socialised correctly.

Puppies and kittens need careful socialising from a young age to get them used to people, other animals, sights and sounds and their environment. A training class can help new owners take the right approach to training and can be great fun too! Always do plenty of research before booking a training class. Reputable associations such as the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (www.apdt.co.uk) can help you to find a class in your area and it is always a good idea to visit a class first without your dog to check that you are happy with the methods used.

Remember that your puppy or kitten will grow into an adult animal – don't encourage behaviours that you would be unhappy with when they are fully grown. At Battersea we see a lot of unruly young dogs aged between six and 18 months who have had no training as young dogs and have become too much for their owners to handle. A cute puppy jumping up at you can be amusing, but it's much less funny when the dog jumping up is a fully grown Great Dane!

Training doesn't just apply to dogs; both cats and dogs can display problems with housetraining or destructive behaviour. Both can be addressed with some simple training methods, often before they develop into major problems.

Battersea have produced a number of helpful factsheets and leaflets on various behaviour problems, available to download on our website www.dogshome.org. For further free advice with any behaviour issues, contact our Behaviour Advice Line.



Useful contact details

The Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors
www.apbc.org.uk

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers
www.apdt.co.uk

Feline Advisory Bureau
www.fabcats.org

The UK Registry of Canine Behaviourists
www.ukrcb.org

Petlog
www.petlog.org.uk

Lost Dogs & Cats Line – 0901 477 8477
(calls cost 60p per minute from a BT landline, other networks may vary. Opening hours 8am–8pm, Mon–Sun)

Behaviour Advice Line – 0905 020 0222
(calls cost 25p per minute from a BT landline, other networks may vary. Opening hours, 12 noon–5pm Mon–Fri)

