

# PETS & PEOPLE

## Dog Adoption Is A Life-Changing Event

(NAPSA)—There's good news, bad news and better news about pets.

The good news: A recent report by the American Veterinary Medical Association found that about 63 percent of all households in the United States have a pet.

The bad news: 5 to 7 million companion animals enter animal shelters nationwide every year and about 3 to 4 million are euthanized.

The better news: One solution to reduce the number of pet deaths is adoption.

Adopting a dog is a life-changing event. Dogs need lots of time and attention, requiring owners to be there every day. Therefore, it's critical to find out whether you're actually ready for a dog or would be happier with a goldfish instead.

"Making sure people are fully prepared to adopt a dog means a happier home and longer life for the dog," said dog expert Trevor Wright. "Taking the time to thoughtfully consider if you are ready can reduce the number of abandoned and neglected pets."

Here are a few things to consider when adopting a dog:

### 1. Are your children ready?

Babies and toddlers can't be trained as easily as dogs, which is why many experts recommend waiting until children are at least 8 years old before bringing a canine into the mix. If you're set on getting a dog and have small children in the house, consider adopting an easygoing adult dog who'll need less attention than a growing puppy.

### 2. Is the decision to adopt unanimous?

Dogs shed, bark and can be messy. Unless the whole household is fond of your dog, it's easy for resentment to build. It also makes it hard to set and enforce house rules, such as whether the dog can join you on the couch.



**Finding the right dog for you may be just a click away.**

### 3. Consider the costs.

On average, expect to spend about \$800 during the first year of your dog's life. If you live in a city where vet costs are higher, work full-time and need backup care, and want to give him at least a few treats, it can easily climb to \$1,200 to \$1,800 annually.

### 4. No yard? No problem.

Some people believe a fenced-in yard is critical to having a dog. In fact, a yard can become an excuse for not walking or exercising your dog daily. Dogs spending most of their time in the backyard miss out on meeting other dogs and people, which keeps them happy and well socialized.

Wright's company, DogTime, an online pet network, has created powerful tools in the fight against abandoned and neglected dogs. "Are You Ready?" is an online quiz to determine if you are ready to bring a dog into your home. After answering multiple-choice questions, you can link to "DogFinder MatchUp" to help determine what kind of dog is right for you based on your personality.

### Learn More

For more information, visit [www.dogtime.com](http://www.dogtime.com).