There are Benefits to Owning a Pet

People who love animals will often describe their pets as being more than just a pet. They are a beloved member of the family. Animals have a way of getting to us with their expressive eyes and other endearing qualities. Unlike most people, pets love unconditionally.

Pets are natural mood enhancers for us. Just petting a dog or watching our fish swim lazily around a tank lowers our cortisol production and relaxes us.

Pets afford us opportunities to interact with other people. Who hasn’t stopped at one time or another to pet someone’s dog or to comment on an exotic animal? Pet owners tend to attract the attention of potential suitors, also, because there is something trustworthy about a person who takes care of an animal that may be completely dependent on him/her.

People who have pets have a lower risk of dying from any cardiac disease, including heart attacks. Cat owners tend to have fewer strokes. Because our pets love us unconditionally, pet owners are less likely to suffer from depression.

Pet ownership helps us in more practical ways, too. One breed of Mexican hairless dog, the Xolo, generates intense body heat. People who suffer from fibromyalgia or other types of chronic pain conditions can curl up with a Xolo to reduce the pain. Some people carry them around their necks or on an affected shoulder for relief.

Some dogs can sense a change in the blood glucose levels of their owners and alert them to sudden drops.

Individuals who suffer from Alzheimer’s tend to exhibit less anxiety if there are pets in the home with them.

Children with ADHD can benefit from owning a pet because of what they must learn in order to care for it. The pet takes the focus off of what they can’t do and helps them learn what they can do.

Responsible Ownership Means Spaying/Neutering Pets

According to the Spay Oklahoma website, one female dog plus one male dog and their offspring can produce about 67,000 puppies in a six-year period of time. For cats, that number increases to over 400,000 kittens! Every year, thousands of animals in the United States are euthanized by shelters that cannot afford to keep them. Thousands more die from abuse and neglect or from being abandoned. Owning a pet involves the responsibility of providing adequate food, shelter, and medical care for it. Spaying/Neutering your pet means that there won’t be unwanted babies for you to support (or abandon), and it reduces the risk of harm to the animal and to other people.

To locate low cost vet services in the metro, contact:

OK Humane Place
4522 NW 16th; 974-7729

Oklahoma Volunteers for Animal Welfare; 843-4755

Pets and People Humane Society; 350-PETS
She might do tricks for a bite of your food, but eating her own food is safer.

You might get lucky if you give chocolate to your wife. You'll only get a vet bill if you give it to your pet.

People Food: Not the Same as Pet Food

Sometimes, our pets seem more like a member of the family than just an animal we own. It's no wonder, then, that we often spoil them by letting them eat at the table, or at least under it. To us, sharing food is an expression of love, and we love our pets. However, it is much safer (and therefore, shows more love) if we refrain from letting them eat whatever we are eating. At best, people food may cause upset tummies. It may also be fatal. The following are some of the people foods that our pets should never eat.

Raw Fish and Meat. Okay, so there ancestors were great hunters in the wilderness, but they also succumbed to parasites that are found in raw meats and fish. Raw fish are also notorious for storing toxins such as mercury in their fatty tissues. An occasional piece of cooked meat or fish (minus the bones) might be a treat for Kitty or Fido, but each one needs a more nutritious variety of foods.

Chocolate. Chocolate might touch a woman's heart, but it might send your pet's into an arrhythmia. A chemical in chocolate (theobromine) can cause abnormal heart rhythms, tremors, seizures, or death in cats and dogs. Dark chocolate contains the highest concentration of theobromine, but all chocolate, including white, contains this chemical.

Candy/Gum. What could be cuter than watching your cat or dog struggle with gumdrops stuck to their teeth, right? Wrong. Many types of candy and gum contain the sugar substitute xylitol. Xylitol is a natural sugar alcohol found in plants. It is perfectly safe for human consumption and does not cause tooth decay the way that sugar can. For cats and dogs, xylitol can cause a deadly spike in insulin levels. About 5 sticks of Orbit gum can kill a 65 pound dog. Smaller animals may die after just a couple of pieces.

Grapes/Raisins. Grapes contain a toxin that causes kidney failure in cats and dogs. While many dogs like the taste of grapes, and some can tolerate a very small amount on an infrequent basis, consuming too much can be fatal.

Chicken Bones. Chicken bones are not toxic to animals, but they can splinter and get stuck in the roof of the mouth, in the throat, or in the intestines.

Onions, Onion Powder, Garlic, and Garlic Powder. These foods, or foods containing them, may be fatal to cats and dogs because the sulfoxides and disulfides in them break down red blood cells and cause anemia.

Alcohol. You might find it amusing when your cat or dog finds the mug of beer that you set on the floor, but alcohol affects the liver and brain of your pet in much the same way that it affects yours, except to a much greater degree. It just takes a bit to give your pet alcohol poisoning. Drink if you wish to, but consider your animals the designated drivers.

Liver. Maybe you don't especially like liver, but your cat probably does. A little bit on occasion is probably not a problem, but too much can cause Vitamin A toxicity and be fatal.

Tomatoes. This is another no-no for cats. All tomatoes and tomato plants are toxic to cats. At best, they will cause gastrointestinal upset. Consuming too much can be very serious.

Persimmons, Peaches, and Plums. The family dog might really enjoy these sweet treats, but the pits can cause an inflammation of the small intestine, or an intestinal obstruction. On top of that, peach and plum pits contain cyanide. Bad, bad news!

Macadamia Nuts. This is another food that should stay off-limits for dogs. The dog that eats these may experience muscle tremors, weakness, paralysis of the hind quarters, vomiting, hyperthermia, and a rapid heart rate. How much fun is that?

Dog Food. Okay, this isn't a people food, but it also isn’t good for cats. Cats require a diet that is much higher in protein in order to stay healthy. Letting the cat eat from the dog bowl too often will lead to health problems.

Pantry Items. Items such as baking powder, baking soda, sugar, nutmeg and other spices, and any food containing caffeine may be fatal to cats and dogs. Yeast dough will do in their stomachs the same thing it will do on the counter—expand in size! This could cause the stomach to explode.
Do Your Part to Keep Wildlife Safe

1. Pick up litter and refuse that can harm wildlife, including six-pack connectors (cut each circle to help prevent entrapment), fishing line, and batteries.

2. Do not leave fishing line or fish hooks unattended or lying outdoors. Try to retrieve any kite string left on the ground or entangled in trees.

3. Alert birds to large expanses of glass in your home (picture windows or patio doors) by hanging streamers or other objects on the glass.

4. Educate children to respect and care for all wild creatures and their habitats.

5. Garbage attracts nuisance wildlife such as raccoons, rats and mice, crows, etc. Spoiled garbage can kill wildlife. Keep your garbage in well-sealed containers.

6. Do not leave harmful chemicals such as oil, pesticides, or antifreeze where wildlife can access them. Antifreeze may be especially attractive to many animals and to children because of its cool-aid like appearance and taste.

7. Do not attempt to catch and/or keep wildlife yourself. This is illegal, and it may be dangerous for the animal and for you.

8. When providing watering or bathing sources for wild birds, place a stone or other resting material in the water to provide life saving support.

How to Choose the Right Pet for You

In Norman Rockwell’s America, the family pet was usually a dog or a cat. Pets usually had some kind of useful function (such as herding, hunting, or catching mice) in addition to being a companion to the family. Today, there are many more options, which means that the decision can be tougher to make, and the stakes may be much higher. Before making such an important decision, consider these suggestions.

1. Don’t impulse shop. Of course that doggy in the window seems to be saying, “Take me home,” but owning a pet is a huge responsibility. Do your homework before you pick a pet.

2. Do your homework. A pet will be completely dependent on you for its care and feeding. Find out what kind of nutrition and routine care that that particular animal needs. How much space is enough? How much exercise is necessary? What are the grooming needs?

3. Match your pet to your lifestyle. A sedentary person should avoid animals that need a lot of daily exercise. Don’t try to justify getting a high energy dog if you don’t move much by telling yourself that you’ll have a reason to walk. Get active first. Better still, choose a pet that you know you’ll be compatible with.

4. Decide why you want a pet. Do you want an animal that will be especially affectionate and loving or one that is more independent?

5. Think twice about exotic pets. Sure, they’re interesting, and not everyone will have one. But do you have what it takes to really give it a good home? Many exotics require special diets and other care. Their vet bills also tend to be higher. On top of that, exotic animals that are adorable as babies may grow up to be quite dangerous to novice handlers.

6. Consider adopting a rescue animal. While some of these animals come from iffy backgrounds, they are fostered by people who love them and work hard to make them healthy and adoptable. These animals seem to know that they’ve been given a second chance, and they can’t wait to fill a new owner’s home with love.

7. Say “No!” to puppy mills and disreputable breeders. The health of the animal and its good fit with your family are much more important than pedigree.

No matter how cute “Bambi” might be, wild animals can be dangerous if you frighten them.

Iguanas make fine pets for some families, but they are expensive to maintain. Adult males can become aggressive.

The right pet can make anyone’s life richer.
Student Support Services houses a variety of services designed to enhance the performance and well-being of students at Oklahoma City Community College.

- Services to Students with Disabilities, including providing accommodations for documented disabilities, interpreting and captioning services for deaf and hard of hearing students, and assistive technology.
- Professional counseling by a licensed provider.
- Learning support specialist to assist with academic needs such as learning styles, study skills, test-taking, and general health and wellness issues.
- TRIO Grant Programs (Upward Bound and Trio Student Support Services) designed to help first generation college students learn more about college before they arrive and how to be more successful once they are here.

For more information about our services and how to access them, please visit our website at http://www.occc.edu/support/ or call us at 682-7520. We are located on the first floor of the Main Building near Entry 12.

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**Granny’s Slow Cooker Vegetarian Chili (Serves 8)**

Beans are an excellent source of protein and fiber in this animal-friendly comfort food.

- 1 11 oz can condensed black bean soup (or canned black beans in juice)
- 1 15 oz can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 15 oz can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed (may substitute lentils)
- 1 16 oz can vegetarian baked beans
- 1 14 1/2 oz can chopped tomato puree (or a 29 oz can crushed tomatoes)
- 1 15 oz can whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 2 zucchini, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 4 oz can diced chilies
- 1 or 2 jalapeno, chopped, depending on your taste for heat
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- 1 tablespoon cilantro (optional)
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1. In a saucepan, sauté the onion, bell pepper, zucchini, and celery for about 5 minutes.
2. In a slow cooker, combine all of the beans, tomatoes, corn, onion, bell pepper, zucchini, jalapeno, chilies, and celery.
3. Season with garlic, chili powder, cumin, parsley, oregano, basil, (and cilantro, if using).
4. Cook for about 6 hours on low.

Per Serving:
- 292 calories
- 28 g total fat
- 0 mg cholesterol
- 1104 mg sodium
- 1075 mg potassium
- 60 g total carbohydrate
- 13.8 g fiber
- 13.9 g protein