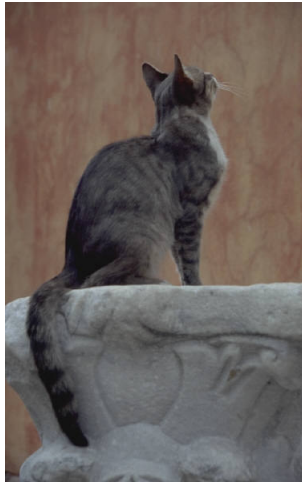


Want More Information?

The Kent County Health Department has several education programs designed for a variety of audiences, including schools, clubs and neighborhood groups, to teach youth and adults about Responsible Pet Ownership and Dog Bite Prevention. The presentations may be done offsite or combined with a tour of the Kent County Animal Shelter. For more information or to schedule a presentation, call Rachel Newland at 616.632.7923 or Veronica Smith at 616.336.3501.



“For in the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.”
—B. Dioum

Kent County Health Department

700 Fuller Avenue, NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Phone: 616-632-7920
Fax: 616-632.6898
www.kentcounty.org

Kent County Animal Shelter

711 Ball Avenue, NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Phone: 616-336-3210
Fax: 616-336-2425
www.kentcounty.org/kcas



What Does It Mean to Be a Responsible Pet Owner?

A publication of
the Kent County
Health Department
and Animal Shelter

www.accesskent.com



Plan Ahead Before Getting a Pet

Getting a pet is a big decision. Know what you are getting into BEFORE you get a pet.

- Ask yourself these important questions: Do I have the time, space and patience for a pet? Am I able to take on the expense of a pet? Am I willing to make a lasting commitment for the life of the pet?
- Do research on different pets and breeds to find the right animal to suit your lifestyle. Some animals require a lot of exercise, some live 25 years or more, some require more time or money. Never get a pet on impulse!
- Do research on where to get a pet. Find out the reputation of the shelters, breeders and stores in your area before adopting or buying.
- Prepare your home for the pet. Have all the necessary goods—bedding, toys, food, etc.—before you bring the pet home.
- Prepare your family for the pet's arrival. Teach your children how to treat and handle the pet.



- Have realistic expectations. Your pet will not be perfect all of the time. Realize that there may be some unpleasant moments.
- Know the laws of your county, city or township concerning pet ownership, including leash and licensing laws.



Provide Proper Care for Your Pet

Pet owners have a responsibility to their pet and to the community to ensure that their pet is well cared for and does not become a threat or nuisance to others. Some responsibilities include:

- **Spay or neuter your pet.** This prevents unwanted litters, reduces aggression, need to roam, territoriality, and behavioral problems. Pets that are neutered live longer, healthier lives and are less likely to bite. For information on low cost spay/neuter options, call the Animal Shelter at 336-3210.

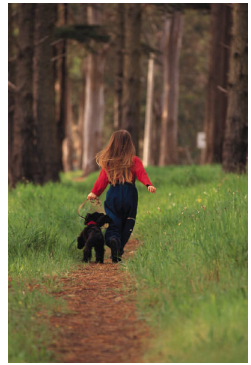


- **Keep your pet in good health.** This includes providing quality food and fresh water every day, proper exercise,

adequate grooming and regular visits to the veterinarian for vaccinations and check-ups.

- **Never allow your pet to run free.** Always have your pet confined or on a leash. Pets that are allowed to run free have a much shorter life span due to hazards such as: car accidents, being stolen, exposure to antifreeze or other poisons, being attacked by another animal, starvation, harsh weather conditions, being trapped, abused or teased by neighborhood children or adults.
- **Always have a collar and a current ID tag on your pet.** Thousands of pets are put to sleep every year in shelters because they lack any form of identification. A current license is required by law for all dogs in Michigan.

- **Socialize your pet,** not only with people but with other animals. Socialized pets are much less likely to bite and be aggressive toward people and other animals. Having a well socialized pet allows you to do more with them, like take them to the park, the beach or the pet store!



- **Make your pet a part of the family.** Make sure your pet has a special place to eat and sleep. Give your pet plenty of attention and love. Include your pet in



Seek Advice When Needed

- If your pet is sick or injured, call or take your pet to the veterinarian immediately.
- Correct aggressive or inappropriate behaviors immediately. Train your pet to behave properly. Take your dog to obedience classes. Talk to your veterinarian about any behavioral problems your pet may have.
- Call your local animal shelter for questions or concerns regarding animal cruelty, adoptions, spay/neuter programs, stray or lost pets, and animal bites.

