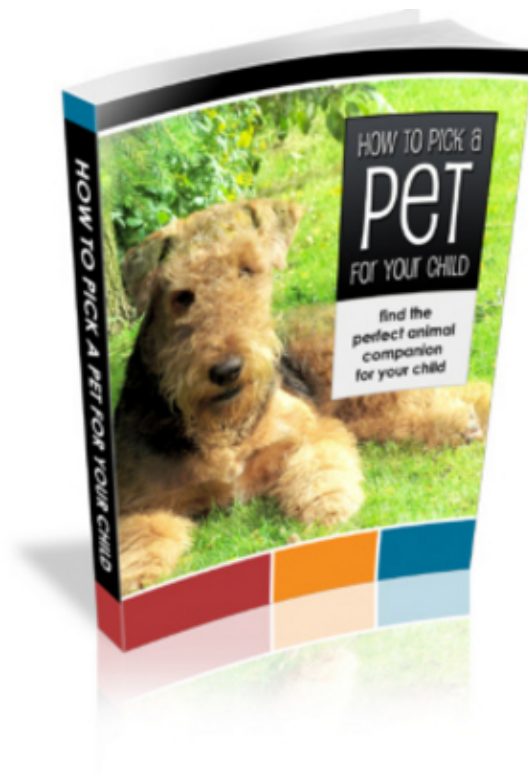


How To Pick A Pet For Your Child

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Chapter 1 – Why Your Kids Should Have A Pet

Most parents will, at one time or another, be asked by their children if they can have a pet of some sort. Kids and pets go together like ham and eggs on a Sunday morning. Most people agree that kids should have pets. Not only does having a pet teach a child the responsibility of caring for another living creature, but it creates a bond between the child and the animal.

Pets ask for very little but give unconditional love to their owners. Most children are interested in animals the minute they see these creatures. According to many psychiatrists, children who grow up with pets tend to be more caring towards other individuals.

In addition to creating empathy, pets can also raise a child's self esteem. A pet will always be there for a child, even when it seems as if nothing else is going right. There is a comfort that most people, children and adults, find in being unconditionally loved.

Studies of heart attack victims indicate that those who have pets are four times more likely to recover from their heart attack than those without pets. Pets calm us. They stabilize us in a highly unstable world. No matter what is going on in your life, your pet will still want to be walked at a certain time and you will do it because it is part of your routine.

Routines are the mainstay of a healthy mind. Routines are just as important to children as they are to adults. One thing that children like to feel more than anything else is safe. One way to get security in your life and your child's life is through routine. Pets force us to maintain a routine, making the entire family more balanced.

Just about everyone agrees that pets are good for kids. Even if it is a simple goldfish swimming around in a bowl, pets can teach children so

many of life's lessons that they are well worth the investment. The type of pet that you get your kids depends upon their age as well as your lifestyle.

When people think about getting a pet for their kids, they naturally think about getting a dog. A dog is the only pet that really depends on a social environment to survive. All dogs come from wolves somewhere down the line and wolves are the only wild animal that will cohabit with man. Dogs are natural companions for mankind. Other pets are merely creatures that live in the house that you get to enjoy.

Dogs can be quite a lot of work, especially if you get the dog as a puppy. There are certain dog breeds that you will want to avoid when you have small children, for both the safety of the children and the animals. Cats can make good pets, but they are not very tolerant of small children who may pull their tails or squeeze them. Hamsters, gerbils and other rodents are sometimes a wise choice for busy families who want to have a pet but don't really have a lot of time to invest in the animal.

Other pets include fish and reptiles. Some people enjoy having birds as well. Rabbits are always a favorite pet among young children and can be held and played with like a cat, without having to worry about scratching.

Chances are that your child will enjoy any type of pet that you give them and learn to gradually take care of the animal. While some people prefer to start off small when it comes to introducing their children to pets, others jump right in with a dog. Either way, there is always a period of disruption before everything gets harmonized. This book will teach you about kids and pets including what type of pets to get your kids, how to care for certain pets, which type of pets to avoid and how to get your children to take care of their pets.

Pets and children are a good combination and add joy to any

household. Both are innocent and dependent and require a lot of patience. By getting your children a pet, you are not only teaching them responsibility, building their self esteem and confidence and giving them the opportunity to care for another living creature, you are also giving yourself the gift of receiving unconditional love from a pet.

Chapter 2 - Starting Out With Fish

Many people who want to get pets for their kids start off small with fish. Before we go any further, here's a little bit of insight - the joy you get out of a pet is usually measured by the amount of time you invest in a pet. While children may love watching fish swim around fish tanks, particularly the colorful tropical fish, they cannot take them out of the tank and play with them or take them for a walk around the block. Actually, they can but the fish will die and people will talk. Getting started with fish, however, is a good idea to see just how responsible your kids really are. Once you get a pet, it should be forever. It is not fair to the animal to bring it home and then get rid of it once you are tired of it. By getting fish, you can see just how far your children are willing to go when it comes to taking care of a pet. There are two different types of fish tanks that you can get. Most people get fresh water tanks because they are much easier to care for. Others prefer salt water tanks because you can get the more exotic fish and sea creatures in your tank. Taking care of a fish tank is a job for an adult or an older child as it is very involved and can be quite costly. If you want to get started with a small pet for your child, think about getting it a goldfish.

Goldfish can swim in fresh water and do not need a water filter. You can get a small tank and get your child to change the water every other day. It will be important to make sure that the temperature of the water is the same for the fish when the water is changed as a sudden change in temperature will most likely kill the fish.

To get your child set up with a goldfish, you can get a large goldfish bowl, a net, a container where the fish can be put when the water is being changed and goldfish food. You can get more than one goldfish in the bowl as it will be more interesting for your child and the fish. The goldfish should be fed a little every day and allowed to frolic. The water must be changed every other day or the fish will die.

Goldfish are very inexpensive as most of them are simply feeders for other fish. You will not only be teaching your child a lesson on how to care for a pet, you will be saving the life, temporarily, of goldfish who are doomed to be lunch for a bigger fish.

Goldfish do not live very long lives. With care, the fish may last two weeks. The reason they do not live long lives is because of natural selection - they are designed to be food for other bigger fish and do not need a long life span. Like other creatures with a short life span, they tend to breed quite a bit during their short life span, although it is unlikely that your child will have any fish eggs in their fishbowl.

In addition to the feeder goldfish, which usually cost pennies at a fish store, you can also get large, exotic goldfish. These fish will live a longer life, but should be kept in a tank with a filter. A filter in a fish tank suctions out the waste and replenishes the oxygen in the water so that the fish can survive. Fish breathe in the oxygen in the water through their gills and when the oxygen is all used up, the fish dies. This is why it is important to have a filter on a fish tank. However, when caring for feeder type fish that have a typically short life span, it might not be wise to invest in a filter right away.

By starting out slow with goldfish, your child can see if he or she likes the idea of caring for the fish. Your child will also have to experience the death of the fish, and this can be a valuable life lesson as well. Unlike a cat or a dog, the fish does not have a long life span and will not form a bond with your child, however, the death of the fish can be very traumatic for a child.

While starting out with a goldfish as a pet can give your child a good indication of what it is like to care for another creature, it is really only advised for older children who understand the concept of death and the child should be advised early on that the fish does not live a long time. You do not want to make the child feel that he or she somehow caused the death of the fish, as this would do more harm than good

when it comes to getting a pet for your child to raise his or her self esteem.

Your child may actually enjoy taking care of his or her fish to the point that you want to invest in a tank. This can be a great hobby for both young and old alike and a clean fish tank can be a beautiful focal point in any room. People who learn to care for fish often have a hobby that they can enjoy throughout their lives.

Taking care of fish and learning about their lives can be a great way for your child to explore the world of pets as well as teach them a bit about oceanography. The care of the fish tanks and the fish will give your child a sense of self worth and raise their self esteem. Your child may not be able to play with the fish or take them out for walks, but the sound of a fish tank is very soothing and has been recommended for people who have trouble going to sleep.

Starting off small with goldfish will give your child a chance to learn how to care for another creature and may open a whole new world for your child. Or, it may be a gateway to caring for bigger pets.

Chapter 3 – Hamsters and Gerbils – Beginner Pets

Hamsters and Gerbils are little rodents that children often want as pets. This can be a good way to get your child acclimated to caring for a mammal that he or she can actually pick up and pet. Hamsters and Gerbils require little care, but can be a fun pet for a child to have.

Many people do not know the difference between hamsters and gerbils. Both are members of the rodent family. Hamsters are larger and fluffier and larger. Gerbils are smaller and not as furry. Gerbils have tails that are fluffy and hamster tails are long and sleek.

There are certain rules to follow when getting hamsters or gerbils for your children:

- Hamsters and gerbils will not cohabit - you cannot put a hamster and a gerbil in the same cage;
- Hamsters and gerbils can be very territorial. If you want more than one creature, get two littermates and put them in the same cage from the start. Do not try to introduce a new hamster or gerbil into a cage with an existing pet;
- These creatures cannot be “trained” no matter what the guy at the pet store tells you ;
- Make sure you have a wheel in the cage, or something for the animal to do with their life;
- If you have two of the same creatures in the cage, make sure that they are the same sex, otherwise, you are going to have a lot of little gerbils or hamsters running around;
- Use a fish tank instead of a plastic rodent cage as the animal can actually gnaw through the plastic and will also kick the litter out of a wire cage;
- Expect the animal to live two years at the maximum.

Hamsters and gerbils can be fun pets for kids to have but do not allow yourself to be convinced that the animals can be “trained” to go in one spot in their cage. They can’t. The hamster or gerbil will go all over the cage, including close to where he or she eats. Rodents are not

known for their cleanliness, despite what the guy at the pet store tells you.

Both hamsters and gerbils are equally friendly and both will be nocturnal. You can teach the animal to live according to your clock by covering his cage at night with a towel. Many people simply take the wheel out of the cage when they are sleeping so that the animal learns to use it during the day and does not keep the entire house up during the night by running in the wheel.

A fish tank makes the best container for the hamster or gerbil. There are fish tanks that have a netted top that cost a little bit more money, but are well worth the investment. These are normally used to keep lizards, but work very well with a hamster. In addition to a wheel, you can also put an empty roll of toilet paper into the cage for the hamster or gerbil to run into.

To set up your hamster or gerbil cage, you need to have a bottle of water that will drip down whenever the creature sucks on the tube. These are sold in pet shops and come in a variety of sizes. The bottle will hook onto the side of the cage and you can easily refill it when it gets close to being empty.

You will also need litter and a bowl for food. Hamster and gerbil food as well as litter, are sold in pet stores and even discount stores. You should also make sure that the animal has something to gnaw on, such as wood. There are wood gnawing objects that are sold in pet stores for the animals as well.

It is important that your hamster or gerbil has something on which to gnaw because the teeth of rodents continue to grow. They have to keep gnawing at something in order to keep their teeth from growing to the point where they extend through the roof or bottom of their mouths. If the animal does not have something on which to gnaw, the teeth will continue to grow to the point where the animal gets an

infection and dies.

Care of the hamster or gerbil is not very difficult. You should have some sort of container in which to put the animal when you change the litter. Older children can easily learn how to change the litter in the cage, but should be aware of the hygienic factor and must be sure to wash their hands thoroughly afterwards. Younger children can observe the hamster or gerbil and can be taught to make sure that the animal has food and water.

The hamster or gerbil can be taken out of its cage and allowed to run around, however, they can get lost very easily. This is the reason why many people use a hamster ball. A hamster ball is a large, plastic ball that you can put the creature in, close up and allow it to roam around without the fear of the animal getting lost. The hamster ball has holes in it which allows the animal to breathe. However, the holes also allow waste from the animal to get all over the carpet. Make sure that you vacuum thoroughly after the hamster has been out among the family. If you have another animal in the house, particularly a cat, never allow the hamster out without the hamster ball. A cat will kill the hamster within seconds as this is their natural prey. Even having the little guy in the hamster ball with a cat around is likely to agitate the hamster or gerbil and frustrate the cat, so keep the two apart.

Younger children will enjoy playing with the hamster and gerbil and if they are handled often, they will not bite. Young children should be supervised around any type of animal, and particularly around a hamster or gerbil. Children must be sure not to squeeze the animal to death and you should also be sure that the animal does not bite. Again, the key to getting the animal not to bite is to make sure that it is handled in a tranquil manner in which the animal feels safe. Any animal will bite when they feel threatened, it is a natural reaction. Your children can also be in charge of making sure the animal has fresh water. Although the bottle will last for a week at least, it is nice to change the water every day to give the pet fresh water. You can

allow a child to do this on a daily basis to give him or her some responsibility towards the pet.

The animal must be fed every day and the normal rule of thumb is to just make sure the bowl is filled all of the time with food. Some hamsters and gerbils will knock over the bowl and scatter the contents. Again, these animals are not known for being neat. Never put two older animals together in the same cage as they will literally fight to the death. Expect the hamster or gerbil, if well cared for, to live for about two years.

Other members of the rodent family that people use as pets include mice, rats and guinea pigs. These creatures generally require the same type of care as hamster and gerbils but guinea pigs are much larger. Many schools will have a hamster, gerbil or guinea pig as the “class pet.”

Rats, despite the fact that they are feared by many people, actually make the best pets in the rodent family as they are generally the most intelligent of all the creatures. Mice are often used to feed snakes and other large pets and have a much shorter life span than the average gerbil or hamster.

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