

# The 10 essentials of pet care

**Like you, your pet needs important things – every day – to live a healthy, happy life.**

1. **Water:** Ensure that your pet always has fresh drinking water. Check that the water bowl is always full – and cleaned regularly – and is not left in the sun.
2. **Food:** Give your pets food that's made especially for them. Dogs should eat dog food; cats need cat food. Adding leftovers to your dog's food is fine, but do not feed bones.
3. **Shelter:** Ensure that your pet has appropriate shelter to protect him from rain, cold and heat. Some animals need protection from noise, wind and other conditions.
4. **Exercise:** Exercise improves the physical and mental health of dogs – and their owners. Playing is also a form of exercise and a great stress reliever, so have fun with your pets.
5. **Love:** Pets need attention. Give your pets the love they need.
6. **Sterilisation:** Dogs and cats should be sterilised when they're six months old – before they have a chance to have one litter. There are too many pets and too few homes. Unspayed females (and their offspring) eventually lead to thousands more unwanted animals being born.
7. **Vaccinations and veterinary care:** Just as children are immunised against life-threatening illnesses, pets also need vaccinations to protect them from disease. Your vet or SPCA can advise you on the correct vaccination schedule. Veterinary care is important to your pet's health – and life.
8. **Ticks, fleas, worms:** These are harmful and can cause illness. Use proper pet care products to control ticks and fleas. NEVER use dog products on cats and make sure the product is suitable for the age of the animal being treated. Ask your vet or SPCA for advice.
9. **Identification:** Make sure that your dog wears a collar and identity disc. You should be able to fit two fingers between your dog's collar and his neck. Cats should only wear special cat collars with a quick release clip, to ensure that they do not strangle themselves. You can also have your pet microchipped by a vet. A tiny microchip – the size of a grain of rice – is programmed with your contact details and injected under the skin. This information can be read with a scanner that most vets and animal shelters have. A microchip is an identification device; it can't be used to track an animal.
10. **Freedom from harm:** Mistreating animals is cruel – and it's against the law. If you know of an animal being neglected or abused in any way, please report it to your local SPCA.



fact sheet **1**

Can your pet say:

- I'm vaccinated
- Dewormed
- Have identification
- I'm sterilised
- No ticks and fleas
- I'm loved
- I can run and exercise
- I eat proper pet food
- Have shelter outdoors
- Always have fresh water

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