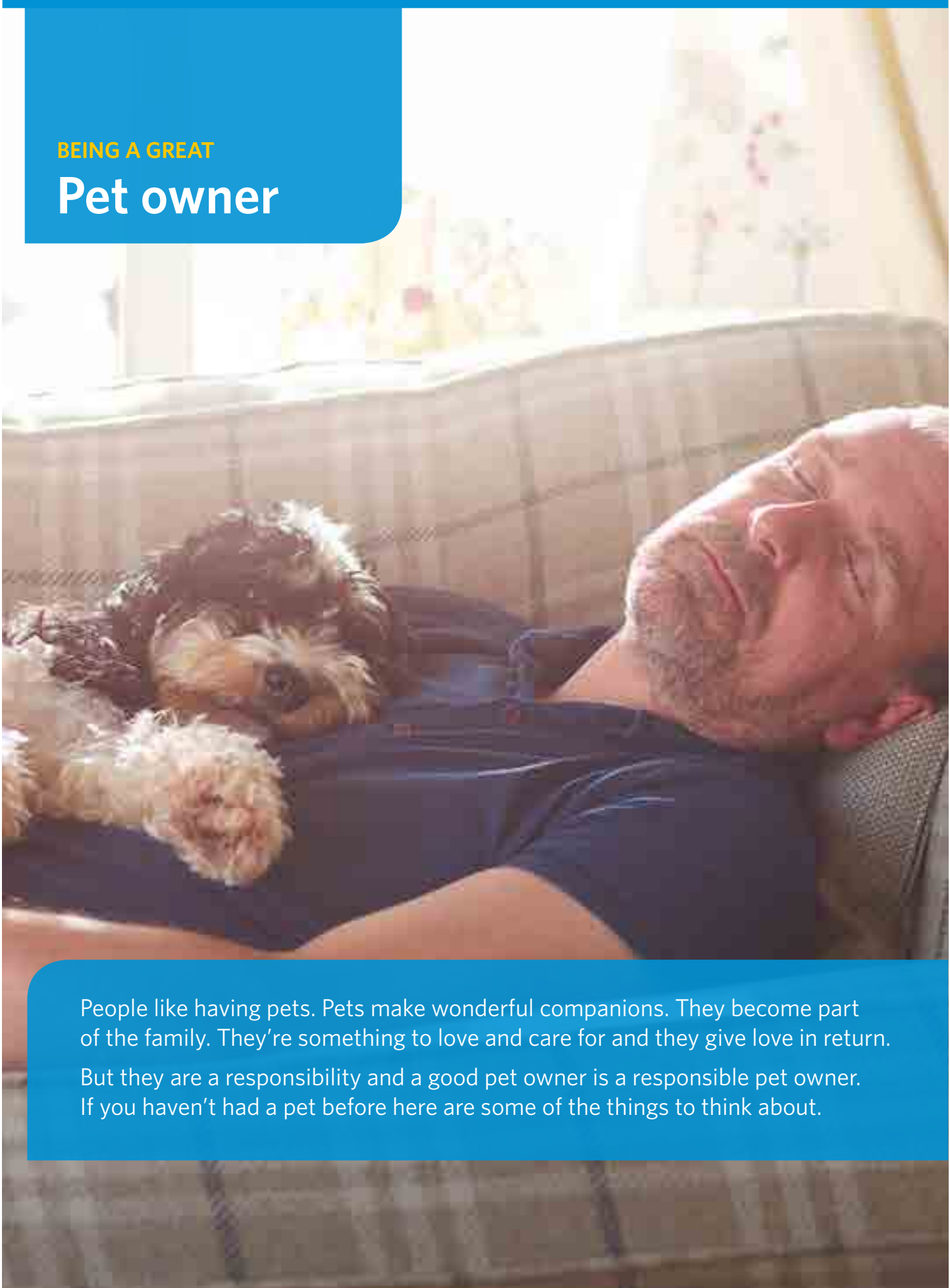


BEING A GREAT

# Pet owner



People like having pets. Pets make wonderful companions. They become part of the family. They're something to love and care for and they give love in return. But they are a responsibility and a good pet owner is a responsible pet owner. If you haven't had a pet before here are some of the things to think about.



### Pets take time and money

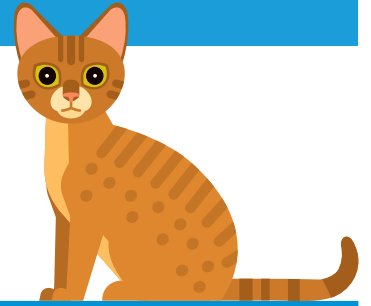
First things first – having a pet is quite a commitment. Pets need looking after. They need feeding and, if you have a dog, exercising. They need somebody to care for them if you're going away. They're all small things but they add up. As does the money. It's important that you think about the costs that come with owning a pet.

Food, vet bills, microchipping, vaccinations, registration of your pet, desexing, worming and flea treatments. If you have a dog it will need a leash and possibly a muzzle (to be safe around young children) and, if you keep it outside, a comfortable kennel.

### They need a good safe home

Before you choose a pet, think about whether your home is suitable. Some Housing New Zealand complexes or multi-story buildings cannot house a pet, or they may have body corporate rules that do not allow pets. Please check with your tenancy manager before getting a pet if you live in a complex.

Cats can be comfortable and happy in most places but dogs and livestock animals will usually need a larger outdoor space and a secure fenced area. If you don't have this sort of space, think twice about this type of pet, please.



Also remember our staff or contractors can't come into your home if your dog/livestock animal is not secure. We don't want this to happen as there might be important or urgent work we need to do to keep your home warm, dry and safe.

If you don't have a fence, or it does not contain your pet, another option is a kennel with an attached run or tether. More information on housing a pet can be found further on in this leaflet.

### Think about adopting your pet from the SPCA

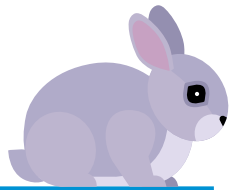
The people at the SPCA are experts on pets. Everything you need to know about pets, and looking after them, they can tell you. They're also very good at matching you to an animal that will suit you, your family/whānau, your home and your lifestyle.

All SPCA animals have been checked by a vet and are in good health for adoption.

SPCA animals' behaviour has been checked as being suitable for adoption.

SPCA animals have been desexed, vaccinated, wormed, treated for fleas, and microchipped. These are all covered by the adoption fee. Find more information on adopting pets or to find your local SPCA visit: [spca.nz](http://spca.nz)





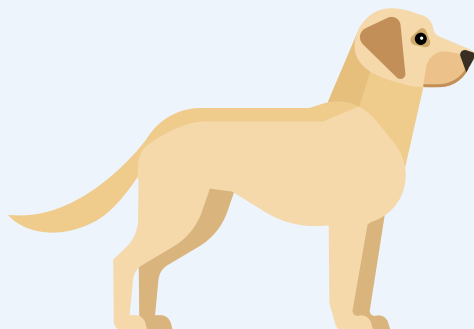
### Keeping your pet healthy and happy

It's good to do some research on how to keep your pet healthy and happy. For example, how much exercise your pet needs and what food they eat. Also it's good to register your pet with a veterinarian. The veterinarian will be able to help you manage your pet's health and wellbeing by:

- offering pet care, such as regular examinations, vaccinations, and worm/flea control.
- giving the right treatments for any illnesses and injuries your pet may suffer.

### Keeping children safe around your pets

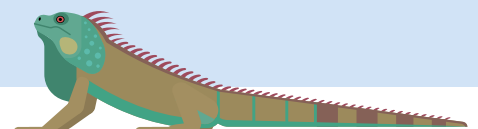
Keep a close eye on children around pets at all times, particularly if the children are babies, toddlers or younger, school-aged children.



### Having a dog as a pet

Dogs make wonderful pets. They're loyal, they love human company and they like pats, cuddles and exercise. But they also have needs that are quite different from, say, a cat.

- **Dogs need space.** Whether your dog is big or little, it needs a secure outside area where it can walk or run about and, yes, do its business. If your dog lives outside make sure it has a dry, shaded shelter which protects it from the heat and cold.
- **Cleaning up after your dog.** Remember dog poo needs to be removed daily.
- **Dogs do need exercise.** Exercise is a must for any dog. Like us, it keeps them healthy and happy, which is also a very good reason for having a dog; getting out every day for a walk. So you'll need to get a good leash, perhaps even a muzzle if you have any concerns about your dog around children. And you should also think about dog training. Having a dog which comes when it's called (at the very least) makes it easier to let it off-leash in designated dog areas.
- **Keeping them cool.** Never leave your dog in a car on a hot or sunny day and even in cooler weather always make sure you leave a window open so they have fresh air.
- **Taking them for a ride.** If you take your dog in the back of a ute, or on an open deck/trailer make sure it's securely tied up and the lead is short enough so it can't fall off (it's legs should not be able to reach over the sides of the open deck or ute).
- **Dogs need registration and microchipping.** This is a legal requirement for all dogs. Your dog must be microchipped - that's a one-off cost (which if you've





got your dog through the SPCA will already have been taken care of), but dog registration is an annual fee that you pay to the Council. If your dog is not registered, and is caught wandering, it will be taken to the pound. So registration is important. You can access information online about what it costs to register your dog by checking with your local council at: [localcouncils.govt.nz](http://localcouncils.govt.nz)

- **Dogs bark.** Barking dogs are one of the most common causes of complaint in our neighbourhoods. Dogs bark for many reasons; sometimes to alert you to something they think is a threat (which is a good thing) but also when they're bored, lonely or suffering separation anxiety. If you have a dog and leave it at home while you go to work, it may bark which can upset your neighbours. You can train dogs not to bark but it does take time and effort.
- **Dogs should be desexed.** Having your dog desexed is a responsible thing to do if you don't want puppies. If you've got your dog through the SPCA, this will already have been sorted, otherwise you will need to go to a vet. If you choose not to desex your dog (particularly if it's a female dog) you will need to be prepared to keep her confined when she is in season, in a place where male dogs cannot get to her.
- **Responsible dog owner status.** This recognises good and responsible dog owners and entitles them to a reduced annual dog registration fee. You can apply for responsible dog owner status at your local council, or on their website. To be given responsible dog owner status you must show a record of good and responsible dog ownership, payment of dog registration fees on time and a history of following relevant legal requirements.

### Safety around dogs

Like all of us, each dog has his/her own personality and things it likes and doesn't like. You will be aware of these but others may not. It's important to:

- keep a close eye on children around dogs at all times, particularly if the children are babies, toddlers or younger, school-aged children
- teach your own children how to play/pat/go near dogs in a safe, kind and gentle manner. Children are the most common victims of dog-related injuries. Children can put themselves at risk without thinking, or may not understand dog warning signs and behaviours
- if someone is afraid of dogs, don't try to force them to play with or pat your dog, even if you believe your dog is safe.

### Having a cat as a pet

Compared to dogs, cats are relatively easy to have as pets although they still need the care and attention that any pet should have. Also remember, if you live in a complex or multi-story building you need to check with your tenancy manager as there may be body corporate rules that do not allow pets such as cats.

- **Keep your cat healthy and happy.** It's important to keep your cat free from worms and fleas so regular vet check-ups and vaccinations are important.
- **Get your cat microchipped.** It's a good idea to have your cat microchipped should your cat wander or go missing. For some councils it is now compulsory to have your cat microchipped.
- **Get your cat desexed.** Kittens are lovely things but that's usually when someone else has them, not you. There is immense pressure on the SPCA and cat rescue groups from unwanted kittens. Just remember, a female cat can get pregnant from as young as four months old and can have as many as four litters of up to 6 kittens each year. You don't want this. We don't want this. Get your cat desexed.

### Safety around cats

Cats have distinct behaviours and personalities. Teach your children how to approach your cat and how to pat/play with them in a safe and gentle manner. Teach them the signs of when a cat does not want to be approached. A cat bite or scratch may not be as dangerous as a dog bite but they can still be nasty, particularly for a child.

Speaking of safety, of a different sort, cats are natural predators so if you have a garden with bird life, they will, by their very nature try and catch those birds. This is becoming an increasing issue and something to be aware of. Talk to the SPCA or your vet about ways that you might limit your cat's ability to catch birds.

### Lastly, enjoy your pet!

Handy websites for more information

[spca.nz](http://spca.nz)

[nziam.org.nz](http://nziam.org.nz)

[localcouncils.govt.nz](http://localcouncils.govt.nz)

