Top 10 Tips about adopting your new pet

1. Many of the animals in our Shelters come to us with little to no history about their overall health or behavior
If you have other pets at home, we recommend that you keep your new pet separate for a few days. Dog to dog introductions are best done at a neutral territory. Cat to cat introductions are best done in separate rooms letting them sniff each other under the door at first. For more information on introducing a new pet, please click here.

2. Never leave a child alone with any animal unsupervised
We believe that children should be raised with animals. When they learn kindness and compassion for family pets, they will know how to show those same qualities to everyone. It is the responsibility of the parent to make sure that the pet experience is good for the child and the pet.

3. Get the animal checked by a veterinarian
We urge you to bring your newly adopted pet to a veterinarian for an exam as soon as possible after adoption (many vets offer a free exam within 3 days of adopting a pet from a shelter). LA Animal Services CANNOT guarantee the health of ANY animal that we adopt out. In the event of illness, YOU will be responsible for the cost of any treatments that your veterinarian recommends. If your pet is ill, you may return the pet to us and we will allow you to adopt a replacement pet.

4. Spaying & Neutering
Some of our adopted animals will need to be spayed or neutered at a private, independently run, veterinary hospital prior to going home. When you pick up your pet from the hospital, please follow the instructions that the veterinarian provides you. If your pet experiences any complications after his/her surgery, please contact the hospital that performed the surgery and also let us know.

5. Our adoption fee includes a spayed or neutered pet.
It does not include any additional procedures that may be recommended by the veterinarian. The veterinary hospital your pet is taken to may require that you pay an additional fee if your pet has an umbilical hernia, an undescended testicle, is in heat or is found to be pregnant. The hospital may also offer you OPTIONAL services such as blood testing, antibiotics, an Elizabethan (“E”) collar, and prescription painkillers to take home with you after the surgery. Please contact the hospital directly to discuss these issues. Never give your pet any over-the-counter pain medication!
6. If you adopt a sick animal
We will provide you with a “deferral of surgery” form (D-300). On the form will be a date by which you must either have the surgery performed or contact us to get a further deferral (if your veterinarian feels that your pet needs more time). Unless your veterinarian provides us with written documentation that your pet cannot undergo surgery, you must have your pet sterilized-It’s the law!

7. Upper Respiratory Infections (URIs, “Kitty Colds” or “Kennel Cough”)
Our animals may be exposed to several different viruses that can cause a URI. In some cases, your pet may seem to be healthy at the time you adopt him/her, only to come down with an illness once you get him/her home. Luckily, most pets recover from an infection within a week or two. However, certain infections may turn out to be more dangerous. A dog’s URI may progress into a more serious pneumonia. Cats may end up with lifelong eye problems.

i. Distemper in dogs, in particular, will often begin by looking like a simple URI, only to then proceed into causing seizures and neurological problems and even death. Distemper most commonly infects young dogs (under 1 year) but dogs of any age can succumb to this tragic disease. All dogs entering any of our Centers are vaccinated against Distemper. Unfortunately, some dogs may become infected prior to entering the Shelter.

ii. Unfortunately, we are usually unable to determine which animals with URIs will worsen and which will get better. If you adopt a pet with a URI, or your pet becomes ill within days of being adopted, please bring him/her to your veterinarian as soon as possible or, if that is not practical, return the pet to the shelter and our staff will work with you to select another pet.

iii. Parvovirus in dogs, and the related Panleukopenia virus in cats, are viruses commonly found in the environment. All dogs and cats are vaccinated against these respective viruses upon entering our Centers. As with Dog Distemper though, some animals may be infected prior to entering the Center.

iv. Puppies and kittens less than a year old, in particular, are much more at risk. If you adopt a young pet, please make arrangements with your veterinarian to have booster vaccines given at the appropriate times. Do not allow your pet to be in contact with other unvaccinated animals (i.e. at a dog park) until your veterinarian permits it. Please bring your pet to your veterinarian immediately if
he/she becomes lethargic, doesn’t want to eat, and/or begins to vomit or have bloody diarrhea, or, if not practical, return the pet to us and we will help you select a different pet.

8. **Due to budgetary constraints, we are unable to test cats for Feline Leukemia (FeLV) or Feline Immunodeficiency (FIV) viruses.**

Neither of these viruses can infect people. They are strictly cat diseases. They are spread from cat to cat through direct contact, usually either by grooming (FeLV) or fighting (FIV).

If you have cats at home, they may be at risk if your newly adopted cat is positive.

A simple blood test can check for these viruses and we highly recommend that you have your veterinarian perform it, prior to introducing your cats.

9. **Some people are more likely than others to get diseases from an animal (zoonotic diseases).**

This includes children, the elderly, pregnant women and people who are immunocompromised due to a disease such as AIDS, cancer or due to taking certain medications such as steroids or chemotherapy. For these more susceptible individuals, certain precautions are recommended to decrease the risk of disease transmission. For additional information, contact the Center for Disease Control at [www.cdc.gov/healthypets/extra_risk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/extra_risk.htm) or the Los Angeles County Public Health Department. Common zoonotic diseases include intestinal parasites such as Hook/Round/Tapeworms and skin parasites such as Scabies and Ringworm.

10. **Your new pet has been through a lot of stress.**

Being brought to the shelter, living in the shelter, being spayed or neutered and then going to a new home with complete strangers is a lot to have to deal with. Amazingly, most pets seem to adapt perfectly to their new environment and instantly bond with their new family. Some though, do require more time and work to help begin their new life with you. If your pet is experiencing behavioral problems such as separation anxiety, destructive behaviors (i.e., chewing or clawing up the couch or your shoes) or elimination behaviors (i.e., pooping or peeing inside the house), you can find helpful information on our website, as well as many other websites.