Giving a Pet as a Gift? Is the Recipient Ready?

Puppies and kittens with bows and bells - movies and TV commercials make these little surprises look perfect under a tree or in a stocking! Unfortunately, many pets given as gifts end up in shelters, or abandoned because the recipient wasn't prepared to care for a pet. If you are planning on giving this season, do research before purchasing a pet as a present!

Before getting a pet as a gift, think about the following:

1. Make sure the person wants a pet! A pet should never be given as an "unexpected" gift.

2. A pet should not be an impulse purchase. Much research goes into selecting and choosing the right type of pet for a person or a family. Decisions regarding this should be made by the person who will be caring for the pet.

3. Consider a different time of year. Pets need to be properly introduced into a home. During the holiday season, there is little routine and a lot of 'hussle and bussle', pets may not adjust properly.

4. If the recipient is expecting a new addition to their household what type of pet will compliment their lifestyle best? Be realistic about the cost and time required to care for the pet, including grooming, exercise and veterinary care. For more information on selecting a pet click here
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5. A pet needs more than just food and water. What supplies are needed to care for the pet? Collar, leash, identification tag and specified place to sleep and eat are needed, but don't forget to pet proof your home! Find out more and how to pet proof from your veterinarian.

6. Select a veterinarian. Choose a veterinarian before getting a pet. Your veterinarian is a great resource to determine what pet would be best and what the pet will need for proper care. Discuss your pet's healthcare needs and requirements including vaccinations and well-check exams. To find a WVMA member veterinarian click here .

For more information call or visit your WVMA member veterinarian or find one online at www.wvma.org
. Remember, your veterinarian is your very best source for advice on keeping your pet safe, healthy, and happy!

Just Like You, Horses Need Dental Checkups Too!

You and your children see a dentist regularly. Did you know that horses also need to be seen for dental checkups?

Equines (including horses, donkeys and mules), like humans and other mammals, can suffer from dental disease and discomfort. A horse's tooth development and arrangement of their teeth is constantly changing. Depending on a horse's conformation, their teeth have the potential to develop sharp points that can injure their mouths.

Dental pathology (disease of the mouth, teeth and upper and lower jaws) is usually only diagnosed when the horse is suffering significant problems such as difficulty eating and severe swollen jaws.

"By having your horse get regular dental checkups these problems can be predetermined before they become a major health issue," says Dr. Travis Henry, WVMA member veterinarian with Midwest Equine Services in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. "Equine dental checkups should be performed annually, unless significant issues have been previously identified."

Dr. Henry says that when performing a dental checkup he looks at the external face for swelling or bone structure changes, checks the lips and gums for irritation, the spaces between the teeth for evidence of periodontal disease and the chewing surface for evidence of decay. Similar to what human dentists look for on their patients!

To stay ahead of dental pathology problems, Dr. Henry suggests horse owners follow two important guidelines.

"The number one defense for clients is to find a veterinary clinic that is equipped with the necessary instruments to properly examine the mouth and perform the necessary dental procedures."

There are many cases in where the onset of dental problems goes unnoticed.

"It has been shown that up to 80 percent of horses can have minor dental pathology." Equine with advanced dental problems will eat slowly and drop hay and feed from their mouth while chewing. Other signs include profuse salivating and drooling and an overall decrease in performance.

If you think your Black Beauty is suffering from dental decay, don't delay and call your licensed veterinarian today - Dr. Henry's second guideline.

"It is critical to have a licensed professional perform the dental work on your horse" explains Dr. Henry. Like all veterinarians, Dr. Henry has completed special training to get his license and attends continuing education events to learn more about veterinary medicine and equine dental pathology every year.

He explains that the dental procedure is much more that just removing sharp points that can injure a horse's mouth. It's about providing a thorough oral exam, followed by an appropriate diagnosis, potentially x-rays and more.

"State law requires all diagnoses to be made by a licensed veterinarian," says Dr. Henry. Just like a human dentist must be licensed. Laws about licensing are in place to protect people and animal's health and welfare.

The mouth is an integral part of whole horse health, so get your horse's checkup scheduled today!

For more information call or visit your WVMA member veterinarian or find one online at www.wvma.org
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