

# Pets

The pets who we share our homes with offer us friendship, joy and lots of fun! But we must remember that animals have needs and feelings of their own.



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In the UK there are around 13 million dogs, 12 million cats, 3.7 million birds, 1 million rabbits, 900,000 guinea pigs, 600,000 hamsters, 600,000 reptiles and 600,000 horses. If you add up all those pets, that's about half the number of humans in the UK!



**Sadly, not all these animals live happy lives with families who love and care for them...**



Thousands of animals end up in animal shelters every year. People might get bored or change their mind about wanting a pet. Some people find that they can't afford the food and vet bills for their pet. For example, it costs at least £35 per month to feed a rabbit, and vet bills can be very expensive.



**With so many unwanted animals in need of loving homes, it is important to adopt from rescue centres rather than buying from shops or breeders.**



# Could you give an abandoned animal a good home?

Remember, pets are not like toys which can be forgotten about when you're not playing with them! They are living, feeling creatures who need constant care throughout their whole life to keep them happy and healthy.



It is a serious decision. You must do your research and think carefully before bringing a companion animal into your family.



Will they have enough space?

How much will their food cost?

What will they eat?

Will they need a nonhuman friend?

How much could their vet bills cost?

Where will they sleep?

How long will they live?

How much exercise will they need?

Will they need to be trained?

Some people buy exotic animals such as reptiles and birds to keep as pets. Their natural habitat might be the rainforest or desert where they have lots of space and freedom, which is very different to living in a small cage or tank.

They are sometimes captured from the wild and brought to the UK to be sold. Lots of them suffer terribly or die during the journey. You should never buy any animals from shops; instead, adopt an unwanted animal from a rescue centre.



## Facts about pets



A dog's sense of smell is at least 1000 times stronger than ours.

Dogs' nose prints are unique, just like human fingerprints. So, if a dog committed a crime, the police would check for nose prints!



Hamsters are nocturnal; this means they are active at night and rest during the day.

In Ancient Egypt, members of a family would shave their eyebrows in mourning when their cats died.

In Switzerland it is illegal to own just one guinea pig because they become sad and lonely when they don't have any friends around.



Cats have very sensitive hearing. They have 32 muscles in their ears, whereas humans have only six. This explains why they can hear the cat food being opened from the bottom of the garden!



[www.animalkind.org.uk](http://www.animalkind.org.uk)

