

Adopting a pet is a year-round commitment

By Sarah Sobanski

It was a Tuesday, much like this one (Dec. 13). I was laying out the paper when I came upon a Home Again submission. Two young cats were up for adoption. I read the submission over, sent off the page and picked up my phone.

"I'm bringing home a cat," I texted my boyfriend. "He got in a catfight. His name is Oliver. It says no one likes black cats."

"You're allergic to cats," he replied.

"A runny nose and the odd asthma attack are a small price to pay for purring love."

"You can't afford a cat." He was right, of course. Generally, my spontaneous inhibitions need to be talked down but that didn't stop me from going on to prank him.

"What if I just showed up with him? Maybe I'll get him a leash and he'll never leave my side."

"Did you already adopt him?"

"Yes, he's on my lap right meow."

I hadn't adopted Oliver, of course. All the want in the world couldn't change my DNA or make room in my budget for a furry friend. It just seemed like such a nice thing to do. Every pet deserves a loving home - especially this time of year.

A lot of moms and dads and elves may be considering surprising their loved ones with pets this holiday season. They might aspire to the traditional Hallmark moment - little Jimmy or Susan running down the stairs on Christmas morning to find a golden retriever puppy in a red-bow collar, tail wagging with the sweetest little bark of greeting. There are, however, a lot of factors that need to be considered before becoming a pet parent.

The biggest consideration is whether you and your family can afford a pet. According to the Ontario SPCA, the cost to spay or neuter a cat in 2016 was \$67. (You'll be doing this in the new year, so I'll say was.) This is only one of the costs of having a cat. As you slowly start to fall more in love with your new pet, you will want to treat it to the best pet, toys and comfort that you can.

Furthermore, if you want to give your cat the best care you can, you might even look into pet nutrition products like [nutra thrive for cats](#) (and similar products) in order to keep them healthy. It goes beyond cats, too. Neutering a dog under 45 pounds was \$85, under 87 pounds \$120, over 88 pounds \$150. Spaying was more expensive at \$110 for a dog under 44 pounds, \$145 for a dog under 87 pounds and \$175 for a dog over 88 pounds. Additionally, a feline Rabies shot in 2016 was \$17. It was the same for canines.

That's excluding shots FVRCP and feline leukemia for cats, and distemper/parovirus for dogs, which are also recommended but not legally required. They're \$17 each. You'll also want to microchip your pet which will cost \$25.

When considering Oliver, I made a mental checkmark when I saw that he was neutered. It is so important to spay and neuter your pet.

According to the Ontario SPCA thousands of healthy cats and dogs are euthanized annually due to the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted companion animals. Spaying and neutering can reduce pet overpopulation to a level that can cease the euthanasia of healthy, adoptable animals.

I didn't however, consider all of these other costs that could have come up - they add up quick.

You have to think about the cost of food. A small bag of Performatrin cat food goes for \$18 or dog food goes for \$22 at Pet Valu. That's an additional \$20 a month for at least a decade. That's not to mention vet bills. My parents' cat dislocated her hip twice. My friend's pug swallowed his favorite toy - \$1,800 to have it surgically removed. Also, a proper diet is very essential for your pets to keep them healthy as well as improve their appearance (for example, by clearing up the skin). Nutrition varies from animal to animal as well. Therefore, you could do a little research and find the products and supplements for your pet that might help them to get the proper nutrition they need. For instance, supplements like Ultimate Pet Nutrition Nutra Thrive could be added to their diet to help keep them healthy and improve the skin and coat.

As equally important when considering getting a pet; having enough time for your animal. When I was living in Toronto, a friend of mine's roommate had a boxer puppy. The roommate worked 12 hours a day to support herself which meant the boxer was neglected. The dog developed behavioural problems. The roommate then had to give the dog up for adoption because she couldn't care for him anymore.

All pets need routine. I read an article once that suggested a dog knows what time you are supposed to come home. He or she will wait at the door from that regular time until you get home to greet you at the door.

If you can't give your animal the routine of regular walks, regular feeding times, and even regular bedtimes it may not be the right time for you to bring a pet into your home. Pets need stability just like we do. They need to be taken to the vet and have regular grooming sessions every now and then. If at all you're planning to adopt one, take the time to read up and understand what all needs

to be done in order to welcome a pet home. You might also go to PetCareRx (www.petcarerx.com) and other such websites to get everything you need for your pet.

If you have the extra cash and time to welcome a pet into your home then you should absolutely become a pet parent. Consider adopting a wayward pet. There are many organizations like Home Again and the Municipal Dog Pound that could use your help to give someone a special loving home. Just remember that we don't call pet owners "pet parents" for nothing. Adopting an animal isn't a seasonal commitment, it's Christmas all year long.