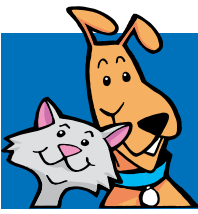




Southern Lakes Pet Connection



- How to choose pets
- Letting cats roam
- Adopt a pet



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Lifestyle should be a major consideration when deciding if the time is right to introduce a pet into a home. A pet that aligns with the household dynamic can increase the likelihood of a successful pet-owner relationship.

STOCK PHOTO Pet Connection

How to choose pets based on your lifestyle

Getting a pet can seem like a fabulous idea in the heat of the moment when puppy dog eyes are blinking back from behind the bars of a cage or when a cuddly hamster peeks out from his hiding spot and makes kids swoon.

Even though pets can make wonderful companions, approximately 6.3 million pets enter United States shelters nationwide every year, according to the ASPCA. In addition, around 80,000 cats and dogs entered shelters in Canada in 2021, according to Humane Canada. Such

figures suggest companion animals are not suitable to every animal lover's lifestyle.

Though many shelter pets find new homes, one of the ways to reduce the number of surrendered pets is to avoid impulse decisions. A careful consideration of lifestyle can ensure potential pet owners find an animal they're fully capable of caring for.

Consider time constraints

People can be honest about their schedules and how pets can fit in. A

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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JANNA BURHOP - DIRECTOR



329433

busy executive who works 12-hour days and travels often may not be able to have a high-maintenance pet. Animals that do not require much interaction, such as aquarium fish or reptiles, may be better fits.

Consider your interests

It can be beneficial to find a pet who aligns with one's interests and hobbies, as this can make the connection even stronger. A person who likes to hike may benefit from a pet that can handle long periods traversing the great outdoors.

Factor in budget

Pets can be expensive. The American Kennel Club says the lifetime costs of dog ownership can range from \$14,480 to \$15,051 depending on the size of the dog (which relates to life expectancy).

Exotic pets, such as macaws, may have large expenses for specialty vet care and cages. If money is tight, a pet that has minimal expenses might be a smarter move.

Assess your personal health

Someone with allergies may have to avoid furry pets because dander and fur may trigger allergic reactions. Mobility issues can make it challenging for someone to walk a dog every day, making a cat who is relatively independent a more practical choice.

(METRO CREATIVE)



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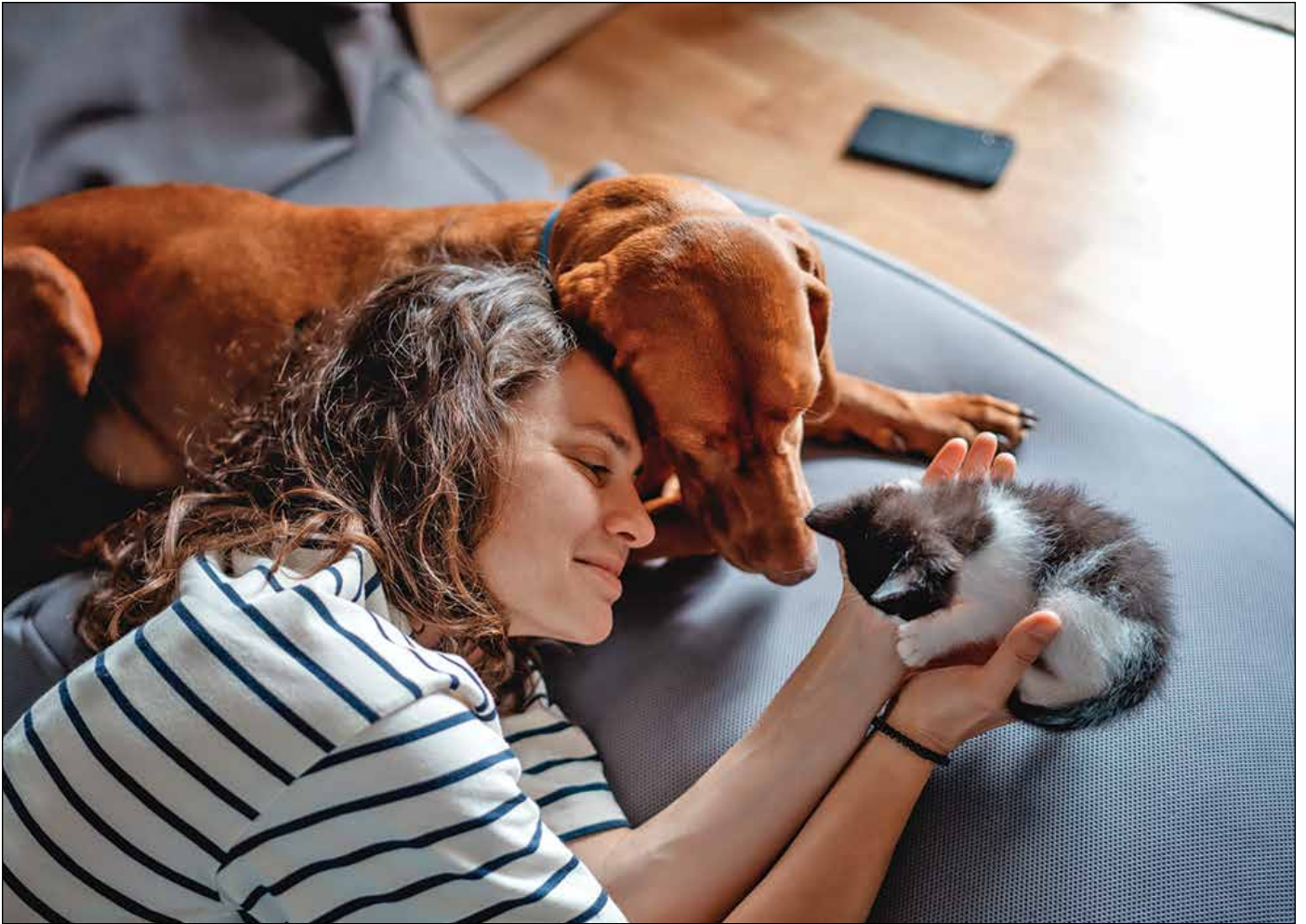
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HOW TO BE A pet parent on a budget

Whether you are a first-time or veteran pet owner, being a pet parent can be expensive. From daily needs like food, treats and toys to medicines, the costs can add up.

To help stretch your budget, the experts at Dollar General are providing cost-friendly ways to provide for your pet:

Food to fuel

Fueling your pet with nutritious food doesn't have to break your budget. By stocking up on options available exclusively at select retailers, you can feed your furry family member affordably.

For example, Nature's Menu is available only at Dollar General and offers dog and cat food free from artificial colors,

flavors or preservatives. Their dry pet food products also include pre and probiotics to support healthy digestion, along with added vitamins, minerals and other trace nutrients and a money-back satisfaction guarantee.

Hygiene how-to

Having a pup or feline companion comes with responsibility, especially when it pertains to their cleanliness and well-being. To maintain a groomed pet, create a care tote that includes such hygiene essentials as a brush or flea comb, shampoo, nail clippers and puppy pads, which can be used as clean-up tool for both dogs and cats. Also consider using a dual-action topical treatment to help

prevent fleas and ticks. Be sure to see a trusted veterinarian for annual checkups and other needs.

Paw-some accessories

All those accessories that enhance your pet's days and nights don't have to be costly. Consider new water and food bowls, a collar and a bed for a good night's rest after playful days.

Next, make playtime a bit more fun with a few new toys from Dollar General's private brand, Forever Pals, which include a variety toy pack for dogs and a feather wand for cats. With these accessories, your pet will be wagging their tail or purring with excitement all day long!

(STATEPOINT)

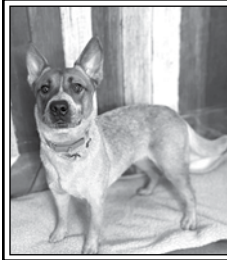
By shopping wisely for all your pet's needs, you can provide them with quality products while stretching your budget in the process.

STOCK PHOTO *Pet Connection*



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The dangers of letting cats roam outdoors

House cats make peculiar, interesting and lovable companions. Cat owners often go to great lengths to make their furry feline friends feel good, and some may allow cats to roam outside. Though such a decision may be well-intentioned, it could lead to some troubling consequences.

The animal welfare organization American Humane notes that allowing indoor cats outside could jeopardize their health and safety in a number of ways.

Health

Cats allowed to venture outside may encounter feral cats, which American Humane notes can be carriers of disease.

A 2014 study published in the journal *Zoonoses and Public Health* estimated that between 60 and 100 million feral cats live in the United States, and that figure could be even higher today.

The animal rights organization PETA notes that contagious diseases such as

herpes viral conjunctivitis, feline AIDS, leukemia, and infectious peritonitis are common in feral cats. Indoor and outdoor cats who catch these diseases could suffer serious consequences, including death.

Infection with parasites is another potential outcome for indoor cats allowed outdoors. Though American Humane notes parasites are not usually life-threatening for cats, they can cause a multitude of symptoms, including scratching, skin infections, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Fleas, ticks, ear mites, gastrointestinal worms, and ringworm, which can be passed on to people in certain situations, are just some of the parasites cats can pick up if allowed outside.

Safety

Safety is another factor cat owners must consider as they ponder whether or not to let their cats outside. American Human

disputes the notion that cats have an innate instinct to avoid busy streets.

Reliable estimates regarding how many cats are struck and killed by cars each year are hard to come by, but it bears noting that cats' small stature makes them hard for motorists to see, which could make them more vulnerable to being hit by cars than dogs.

Vehicles are not the only outdoor safety threat to cats. Loose dogs and wild animals, including raccoons and foxes, may hunt cats allowed outdoors.

Cats also could ingest toxins such as antifreeze, which has a pleasant taste but could prove fatal for cats. And though the image of firefighters saving cats from high perches in trees is common, trees are a significant threat to cat safety. Curious cats may climb trees and then be afraid to come down or struggle to come down safely, potentially leading to severe injuries.

(METRO CREATIVE)

Though owners may allow cats outdoors as an act of kindness, such a decision could place these pets in serious jeopardy.

STOCK PHOTO *Pet Connection*



What to know about having a bird as a pet

Did you know?

The Association of Avian Veterinarians notes that regular baths or showers are vital to bird health. According to the AAV, birds that are not fearful of bathing should be bathed a minimum of one to two times a week, even during the winter months. Regular bathing promotes the long-term health of a bird's feathers, skin and sinuses.

New bird owners may discover their bird prefers baths over showers, or vice versa.

The AAV urges bird owners to choose the bathing method their birds are most comfortable with. Some birds may not be comfortable with baths or showers. In such instances, the AAV recommends bird owners speak with an avian veterinarian, who may recommend certain training techniques to make birds more comfortable with bathing.



Pets make wonderful additions to a home and family. One of the best things about welcoming a new pet into a home is that no two pets are the same, which means pet owners will get an entirely unique experience each time they bring a new animal into their home.

Birds are among the most unique pets. Brightly colored feathers give pet birds their own distinctive look, but there's more to birds than just vivid plumage. Individuals considering adopting or purchasing a pet bird can consider these needs and character traits commonly associated with birds so they have a good idea of what to expect.

Birds have unique vet needs

The American Veterinary Medical Foundation notes that pet birds have special veterinary needs, and recognition of those needs can help prospective bird owners determine if a pet bird is for them. The Association of Avian Veterinarians (aav.org) can help individuals find an avian veterinarian in their area, and such professionals can discuss the



Birds make for wonderful pets. Recognition of their unique traits and needs can help prospective bird owners understand what bird ownership will be like.

STOCK PHOTOS Pet Connection

unique veterinary needs of various bird species. Familiarity with those needs can ensure individuals pick the right bird for their lifestyles.

Most pet birds are diurnal species

The AAV notes that most pet birds awake at dawn and settle in to sleep at dusk. Prospective bird owners should be comfortable with and willing and able to

accommodate that sleep-wake cycle. If they can't accommodate that, a pet bird could suffer as a result. The AAV reports that artificially long days resulting from household lights or televisions can cause sleep deprivation in birds and compromise the bird's health.

Before buying a pet bird, prospective owners should recognize that birds are generally best when they get between 10 and 12 hours of sleep per night.

Birds need exercise

Pet birds live well in a cage, but that does not mean they don't need exercise. The AAV notes that birds need exercise to maintain their cardiovascular and respiratory systems.

The AVMA recommends choosing a cage that affords birds space to climb, walk around and fly. Some cages may restrict a bird's ability to fly. In such instances, the AVMA urges bird owners to provide supervised access to an adequately sized exercise area outside of the cage.

The AAV notes that bird owners should be conscious of the potential for trauma if exercise rooms feature ceiling fans, mirrors or windows, which birds can fly into. If possible, find a room where this risk is minimal. Provide access to the exercise room for several hours each day if the cage does not feature ample room for the bird to fly.

Birds can be trained

Individuals may associate pet training with dogs, but birds, and their owners, can benefit from training, too. The AAV recommends reward-based training over punishment-based training and notes that some good resources for bird training include Goodbirdinc.com and the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators at iaate.org.

(METRO CREATIVE)



MAKE YOUR DOG A BETTER LEASH-WALKER

Walking a dog on a leash is required by law in many towns and cities. Leashing a dog prevents the animal from trespassing on neighbor's property and keeps it from jumping on people or other animals.

A leashed dog can be restrained from sniffing the waste of other animals, which may help curb the spread of diseases like distemper or parvo. Leashing also can reduce the propensity for the dog to run away from an owner and get lost.

Despite the benefits of walking dogs on a leash, some dogs are not too keen on the idea. Puppies may acclimate to it over time, but circumstances can make any dog want to escape a leash. The following are some issues that may arise and how to remedy them.

Pulling

The vast assortment of collars and harnesses billed as "no pull" suggests the issue of dogs pulling on the leash is common. Dogs on leashes that are too long may be distracted and pull more readily. Start out with a short leash and only allow a longer slack when the dog has exhibited an ability to walk diligently on the shorter leash.

Rather than punish bad behavior like pulling, many dog trainers recommend rewarding the good behavior, such as walking without pulling at your side. This praise can be delivered verbally and with plenty of treats.

Lunging and leash reactivity

Dogs may behave differently on a leash than they do when off them. Most dogs who lunge at passersby or bark or snarl may actually crave the attention of other companions but not have the social skills to engage in a proper meet and greet, according to the American Kennel Club. Should the dog be off-leash, he or she may

not behave in the same way.

Lunging and other behaviors may stem from aggression, but it's more likely a cause of fear, says the AKC. It's a mentality marked by an "I'll get that thing before it gets me" outlook designed to make the feared person, dog or object go away. A leash also may cause frustration that the dog can't get to a desired pet or person, and the animal loses emotional control.

A trainer can help owners learn to distract the dog on the leash from others with high quality treats. Strategies to remove leash tension also can cut down on leash reactivity.

Right equipment

Dog owners can experiment with gear to make leash-walking go more smoothly. Traditional collars may put too much pressure on a dog's throat, particularly those who pull.

A harness can be a better option. Gentle leaders are a type of head gear that enables pet owners to redirect their dogs more readily. Because they resemble muzzles, some owners may hesitate to use them despite their efficacy. Front clip harnesses and correctional collars might help as well. Consult with a veterinarian or trainer for the best options.

(METRO CREATIVE)



Dog owners will find it pays to invest some time teaching their pets to walk calmly on a leash.

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3892379



The various types of exotic pets

Cats and dogs may never be knocked off their perch as the most popular pets. And while it's impossible to argue the appeal of cats and dogs, some animal lovers are partial to exotic pets.

Exotic pets are unique and often fascinating creatures, which explains some of their appeal. That appeal grows even more after pet owners welcome an exotic pet into their families. Many different animals are categorized as exotic pets, and the following rundown can help prospective pet owners determine which one to bring home.

Amphibians

The organization Amphibian Ark, which is dedicated to ensuring the survival and diversity of amphibian species, urges anyone considering an amphibian as a pet to first speak with their local wildlife agency to ensure it is legal to keep.

AArk notes that cane toads, for example, are illegal in certain states. AArk also recommends asking for background health information on the animal, including how and where it was produced. Though amphibians are not considered high-maintenance pets, they will require a tank that provides access to both land and water, and that tank will require regular cleaning. AArk also notes the importance of not

mixing species in a terrarium if the animals don't live together in nature.

Birds

Birds are a popular exotic species that make for undeniably beautiful pets. Prior to welcoming a bird into their homes, individuals should study up to learn some general things about birds and more specific characteristics of the particular species they want to adopt.

The Association of Avian Veterinarians notes that most birds are diurnal species, which means they awake at dawn and go to sleep at dusk. Prospective bird owners should be able to accommodate that sleep cycle, as a failure to do so can contribute to health problems for diurnal birds. In addition, birds thrive when they get ample interaction with their owners, so it's incorrect to presume birds are hands-off pets.

Insects

Insects tend to be low-maintenance, particularly compared to other exotics. However, WebMD notes that certain insects, such as tarantulas, can live as long as a decade, so they require a potentially significant commitment of time that may surprise people who have never before kept an insect as a pet. The Smithsonian

Institution notes that certain insects, including field crickets, ant-lions and mealworms, make for practical pets.

Reptiles

Reptiles are sometimes sought out by individuals with pet allergies because they don't have fur or feathers, which are triggers for many people's pet allergies.

Reptiles also require little daily attention, though WebMD notes that this might actually turn some people off to reptiles as pets. Since they require little attention, reptiles are not meant to be cuddled or held. In addition, certain reptiles can gain considerable size over the course of their lifetimes.

Prospective reptile owners are urged to ask about how big a reptile may become before adopting it so they can be certain they can accommodate it as it grows and reaches maturity. Though various reptiles do not prefer to be held or cuddled, some still require significant effort.

For example, since reptiles are cold-blooded, most will require UV lighting to regulate their body temperature. In addition, the pet experts at Petco note that some reptiles require daily feeding, while others can thrive with a single weekly feeding.

(METRO CREATIVE)

Exotic pets can bring a lot of joy into a household. Anyone interested in owning such a pet should learn as much about a preferred species as possible prior to welcoming the animal into their homes.

STOCK PHOTO *Pet Connection*



adopt-a-pet

These lovable animals are all up for adoption and hoping you'll give them a happy new home!



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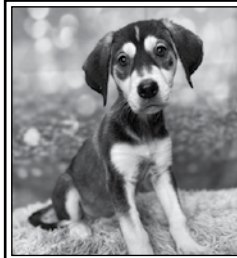
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Line of sight



HOW TO RECOGNIZE VISION LOSS IN DOGS

Sometimes it is challenging to realize a pet dog is losing its vision. That's because, unlike humans, dogs do not rely on sight as readily as other senses, like hearing and smell. A pup who is slowly going blind might be able to navigate quite well, as the other senses enable the dog to adapt to changes in eyesight, advises the American Kennel Club.

Pet parents who are concerned their dogs may be losing their vision can learn the risk factors for vision loss and keep an eye out for potential signs that such loss is present.

Breed risk

Certain breeds are at higher risk for health issues that can lead to vision loss. For example, cataracts are the leading cause of blindness in Cocker Spaniels, says HandicappedPets.com.

Both Golden Retrievers and Labrador Retrievers are genetically predisposed to

progressive retinal atrophy, which can cause blindness. Due to recessive genes, Siberian huskies can be susceptible to eye issues, including corneal dystrophy. Boston terriers may develop cherry eye, a condition caused by a prolapsed eyelid.

Pet owners should speak with their veterinarians to learn if their dogs have a genetic predisposition to eye diseases and conditions that may lead to blindness.

Conditions that cause blindness

Dogs who have had a cataract, which is a clouding of the eye that stops light from reaching the retina, may slowly lose their vision. Diabetes also can cause full or partial blindness.

Glaucoma, PRA and sudden acquired retinal degeneration syndrome all can lead to blindness in one or both eyes. If dogs have been diagnosed with these issues, it's best to work with a vet to carefully monitor and/or treat them, if possible.

Signs of diminished eyesight

Vision deterioration can produce certain signs, including:

- Cloudy appearance of the eye or eyes.
- Improper pupil response to light and darkness.
- Difficulty focusing on items or people's faces. Some dogs may have to come much closer to recognize a person's features.
- The dog seems dazed and confused, or gets surprised by someone suddenly when entering a room.
- Hesitancy running or moving around, or changes in mobility. The dog may no longer want to go up and down stairs.
- Difficulty finding the food bowl, as well as weight loss from not eating.
- Behavioral changes, such as acting more anxious, sullen or even scared.

Vision loss can occur in dogs, particularly aging canines. Pet owners can be attuned to signs of diminishing vision and take steps to help their furry friends.

(METRO CREATIVE)

Pet owners can give their dogs a helping paw by recognizing signs of vision loss as early as possible.

STOCK PHOTO *Pet Connection*

Types of fish that can share a tank

Parents with more than one child know that sometimes separation is the best solution when kids aren't getting along. Though that same approach can be applied to many pets, it's likely not an option for people with fish tanks.

Unless pet owners have a spare, clean and functioning fish tank on hand for those moments when fish aren't playing well together, they'll have to find species that can safely share the same tank.

The pet experts at PetSmart note that fish can become territorial, so there's no guarantee that typically neighborly species will get along. However, the following are some species that should be able to share the same tank without issue.

African cichlids

PetSmart describes these active fish in a somewhat paradoxical way, noting their territorial and aggressive tendencies while also noting they do better when crowded together. African cichlids should be monitored closely after introducing them

to a tank and removed if they become too aggressive. When choosing a tank, pick one that's at least four feet long.

South and Central American cichlids

PetSmart notes larger varieties of these cichlids can be very aggressive and, unlike their African counterparts, do not do well in overcrowded tanks.

When picking South and Central American cichlids, ask the pet store professional to select fish of similar sizes, diet and temperament. The tank for these fish should be able to accommodate their size as an adult.

Community fish

As their name suggests, community fish are compatible when placed in a tank with other non-aggressive species. PetSmart notes that schooling species do best in quantities of five or more. Examples of community fish include rasboras, danios and cory cats.

Semi-aggressive fish

Unlike community fish, the name of this category of fish suggests a peaceful tank might be difficult to establish. However, PetSmart notes that semi-aggressive fish can get along with others if all fish are the same size.

(METRO CREATIVE)



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How to make a backyard safe for dogs



Dogs, particularly puppies, can be full of boundless energy. Channeling that energy into exercise with long walks or play sessions can help stem dogs' propensity to get into trouble around the house as they burn off extra adrenaline. Pets who don't have an energy outlet may chew off-limits objects or get into other mischief.

According to the American Kennel Club, the amount of exercise a dog needs depends on the animal's age and breed. For example, border collies or Siberian huskies may require much more exercise than English bulldogs, simply because the former are working breeds. Pet owners with large backyards often find those outdoor spots are ideal for when their dogs get the Ozoomies, something that tends to be a daily occurrence. Letting their dogs run around yards, whether on their own or chasing tossed tennis balls, is an ideal way to provide exercise and tire out pups. In such scenarios, it's vital that pups have a dog-friendly yard in which to play.

Use safe lawn care products

An expanse of grass is the perfect place to frolic or enjoy some sunbathing for people or pets. But contact with chemically treated lawns can cause a number of health issues for dogs, such as allergies or

intestinal upset.

Switching to native grasses can reduce the need to use chemicals to get lush lawns. When supplementation is needed, homeowners can switch to organic products or natural compost as safer alternatives than chemical-based products.

Fence off the yard

Off-leash running and bounding through the yard will make any dog smile. However, a fence is a must-have to ensure a dog doesn't become an escape artist. Be sure the fence is high enough so that the pup cannot jump over it. Burying chicken wire in the dirt beneath the lower edge of the fence also can help prevent dogs who like to dig from exiting by crawling underneath the fence.

Consider installing a lock on the fence gate so that no one can wander in and surprise the dog, which may startle the animal and prompt it to defend the property. A lock also helps prevent dog theft.

Keep the yard tidy

Maintaining a clean yard also is key to safety. Inspect the yard regularly to make sure nothing is around that can prove harmful, whether it's poison ivy, felled branches or broken fence panels. Also, keep

shrubs and grass trimmed to reduce flea and tick populations on the property.

Avoid poisonous plants

Certain plants can be dangerous if they're consumed by curious pups. Chrysanthemums, peonies, irises, and hydrangeas are some plants that can be poisonous. For a full list of poisonous plants, visit the ASPCA website at aspcasite.org.

Keep an eye on animals

Dogs can spend some unattended time in the yard, but check in from time to time. Should wildlife get into the yard, dogs may get hurt by tussles or bites. Birds of prey, such as owls, hawks and even vultures, may attack small dogs in a yard.

Pat Silvosky, director of the Milford Nature Center in Kansas, says some birds can be territorial. While they might not view a dog as an easy meal, they could swoop down and attack to defend territory. The same may occur with other wild animals.

(METRO CREATIVE)

A dog friendly yard may require a little effort to create, but it's worth a little sweat equity to keep pups safe.

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