

OKINAWA VETERINARY  
TREATMENT FACILITY

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# Veterinary Vignettes

DECEMBER 2011

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## Home for the Holidays

The image of seeing your loved one's look of delight when you bring that cute furry friend home is enough to warm even Scrooge's heart. Opening your family to that animal is a tremendous gift, but here are a few things to think about before you bring Fluffy home, so that everyone is happy long after the holidays.



### ***Buying vs. Adopting***

The fact of the matter is that there are an estimated 3-4 million unwanted pets that end up being euthanized every year in the United States alone. There are multiple options for adoption, even here on Okinawa, from local shelters to rescue groups. If you do not find your ideal companion through these options, you may decide to purchase your pet through a breeder. In this case, you are usually buying a puppy or kitten and you need to be sure that they are not only healthy, but that they have been well-socialized. The more responsible breeders usually screen prospective owners and ensure that their puppies or kittens will be raised in a healthy environment.

### ***Dog vs. Cat vs. Other?***

When trying to answer this question, it is best to sit down and write out the ways adding a new member to the family will affect your daily life. If you get a cat, they can hang out in the house all day as long as they have water and a litter box, which will need a routine cleaning schedule. If you get a dog, they need to be taken outside routinely to go to the bathroom. If you get a fish, a bunny, a snake or a mouse, each of these pets have specific requirements for food, housing and cleanliness. It is also a good idea to think about how long a pet generally lives, and how it will affect your next PCS move. Macaws are beautiful, but they can live 80 years, and importing a bird to any country is difficult. A cat, on the other hand, can live 15-20 years, but they are generally easier to transport, as long as the process is started early. In any situation, your pet is completely dependent upon you for all of their needs.

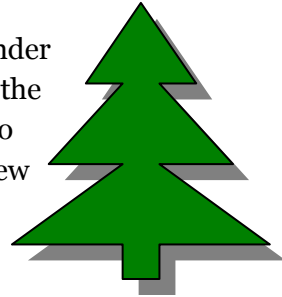


## **Adult vs. Youngling**

Any pet that is brought into the home is going to require some training and time to adjust. Young pets will have a lot of energy and will always need training. Older pets, however, may already have been exposed to training and may catch on quicker.

## **Bring Home a Kit First**

Instead of bringing home a new pet right away, try wrapping an “adoption kit” to place under the Christmas tree, with goodies such as a collar, a carrier, adoption fees, food and treats. Then, the whole family can visit the shelter together to find your next best friend. This is also a great way to check that you have all of the supplies you need so that you can spend plenty of time with your new friend when you get home, rather than rushing out to buy a food bowl.



## **Holiday Hazards**

Now that you are ready to bring your new friend home, here are a few tips to keep him or her safe, especially at this time of the year:

- **Food** = Keep the people food away from your pet, since over-indulging can lead to severe illness. Plus, some foods that are okay for people can be harmful to your pets. If your pet gets into the trash and gets a bone, that could lead to damage of the intestine requiring surgery!
- **Decorations** = Do not leave your pet alone with lit candles in the room. Make sure your Christmas tree is properly secured and that the strings of lights are out of reach. Consider leaving tinsel out of your decoration plans. That shiny string is tempting to your pet, and cats are known for swallowing it and getting it stuck in their intestines, requiring surgery!
- **Plants** = Keep the mistletoe, poinsettia and holly safely out of reach.
- **Safety Spot** = With lots of guests and noise, your pet may just need a chance to escape for a while. Find a quiet area and make sure your pet has plenty of food and water with maybe a blanket or his or her crate, so he or she doesn't get scared by the hustle and bustle.
- Check out the September 2011 article on “Everyday Evils” for more tips



## **Remember,**

***opening your home to a new friend is a beautiful gift,  
just do it responsibly and you will all be happier long after the holiday  
season!***

*The Okinawa VTF is located in building 731 on  
Kadena AB!*

*Regular hours are:*

*M, T, Th, F = 0800—1630*

*W = 1000—1630*

*Closed the last duty day for inventory*

### **The Holiday Hours are:**

*19, 20 DEC = 0800—1630*

*21, 22 DEC = 0800—1500*

*23 DEC = 0800—1200*

*26 DEC = **closed** (observed holiday)*

*27, 28, 29 DEC = 0800—1500*

*30 DEC = **closed***

*2 JAN = **closed** (observed holiday)*

