

Christmas school holidays, perfect time to adopt a pet?

Keeping the kids occupied throughout the Christmas school holidays is a daunting task for every parent. Animal Welfare League NSW (AWL NSW) has a solution – **adopt a pet!**

The message that “pets aren’t for Christmas” has been profusely shared in the community for a number of years, however, AWL NSW believes the Christmas school holiday’s mark a great time of year to adopt a pet as you’re most likely off work with the kids, so you’ll have extra time to help your new pet settle in and the kids will have a new playmate to keep them busy.

“Being able to be home with your new pet through the crucial introduction stage will make a big difference in the way your relationship is structured,” says AWL NSW Behaviourist, Rosalie Horton. “It also gives you the chance to properly introduce them to the family and ensure the kids and pet know how to interact with each other appropriately.”

Rosalie’s top tips for introducing a new pet this Christmas include:

- No rough play between kids and pets as this could lead to bad habits such as biting, scratching or stalking
- Be gentle, sudden noises or movements could distress your new pet
- Let your pet have time out as sometimes pets, kittens especially, need to have time alone to rest or sleep undisturbed
- Book your new pet in for puppy school or obedience training, this type of training will not only ensure you own a well behaved pet, but will also help you bond (the kids can even get involved in the training!)
- If you have other pets in your household already, it is very important you take it slowly and introduce the new and resident pet/s gradually. Separate your pets for the first few days, supervise the first meeting and spend extra time with your resident pet to ensure they feel secure and unthreatened. First impressions count when it comes to animal introductions!

Adopting a pet from a shelter over the Christmas school holiday’s also means you are saving the life of an animal and enabling an opening for another animal in need to come into care. AWL NSW has many dogs, cats, puppies and kittens looking for new homes right now, all of which have been desexed, vaccinated, microchipped and temperament tested (so you will be matched with the perfect pet for your lifestyle).

For more information on the cats, kittens, dogs or puppies available for adoption visit the AWL NSW adoption pages at www.awlnsw.com.au or call (02) 8899 3333. AWL NSW Shelters are open 7 days a week between 10.00am and 3.30pm, except Christmas and New Year’s Day. We also have regional branches all around NSW.

For media enquiries or further information please contact:

Animal Welfare League's top tips for adopting a pet these holidays:

- **Never buy a pet as a surprise gift or on impulse** - ensure all members of the household are involved.
- **Remember, puppies and kittens don't stay small for long** - make sure you're ready for the full growth potential of your adopted pet, and their personality and physical traits suit your lifestyle.
- **Be prepared for a life-long commitment** - cats and dogs can live up to 20 years, and along with bringing joy and love into your life, they also bring vet bills, food costs and need your attention.
- **Christmas Eve is not the best time** – the noise and bustle of Christmas Day can stress your new pet. Best to adopt now to get them settled in prior to Christmas, or wait until Boxing Day.
- **To make it fun for the kids** – why not wrap up pet toys, bowls and bedding for the kids to unwrap on Christmas Day, and then visit a Shelter after Christmas to bring your new family member home.
- **Avoid buying a pet online** - as this is a key distribution source for puppy farms. Best to adopt from a shelter.
- **Adopting from a Shelter like Animal Welfare League is the ideal solution** – you'll be saving a life, plus all pets are desexed, vaccinated, health checked, and temperament tested.

