

## **The green eyed monster called jealousy:**

One day you bring home another furry bundle of joy. The problem is, the dog currently in residence - the one you adore, who always came to you for pats and snuggles - suddenly decides he wants nothing to do with either you or the new family member. What to do?

### The Adjustment Period

Pets can display jealousy too, and to help smooth the transition to a more-than-one-pet household, try to:

- Continue to lavish attention on your "first" pets. It's so easy to get caught up with the newcomer ... but your other pets may be feeling a bit put out. Spend plenty of time with them reassuring them that they're still a special part of the family.
- Take things slowly; don't force your pets together. Introduce them in controlled situations, and give them time to adjust at their own pace. Allow them to gain confidence and decide when they'd like to face their new housemates.
- Feed them away from each other. Use separate food and water bowls, and keep them physically separated when eating. Do not tolerate aggressive behavior.

Always supervise your pets until you are sure they get along. For the first couple of months, we left one of the dogs in the kennel and the other free whenever we had to go out. Some pets will adjust quickly; others may take weeks or even months before they're fully adjusted.

## **Retiring with your pet:**

Every week or two my little dog Tonka and I go visit the residents of a local long-term care facility. The elderly residents are delighted by Tonka's visit; they pat him, sweet-talk him, hug him ... and in return, Tonka often puts his head down and begins snoring - something that never fails to delight them.

There's no doubt about it: pets have a positive effect on people. And now there's good news for older people with pets - if you're thinking of moving into a retirement community, you may be able to find one that will allow you to bring your four-legged friend with you.

### Types of Retirement Communities

Independent living communities are the type of retirement community most likely to allow pets. They are designed for healthy, active older adults who are able to live without assistance, and are thus able to care properly for their pets. You probably wouldn't be able to notice a difference between an independent living community and other residential communities except for the age of the residents.

Assisted living communities, on the other hand, are meant for older adults who need regular help with daily activities - but do not require the services of a nursing home.

## Bringing Your Pet to Your Retirement Home

Some assisted living communities will allow residents to bring their lifelong pets, while others may permit a "community pet": a pet that doesn't belong to any person in particular, but that lives within the community to provide companionship to all residents.

If you or a family member is looking for a retirement community that will allow you to bring your pet friend with you, be sure to get a copy of their pet policies. Some communities may require:

- An extra deposit to cover possible pet-related damages to the facilities.
- Pet care fees to cover anything that you cannot provide for your pet. This can include walking your dog, cleaning kitty litter, feeding or bathing your pet, and other such services.
- Only certain types of pets permitted. For example, some communities will allow dogs or cats but will not permit reptiles.
- Your pet be under a certain size. Some communities may only allow cats or small dogs below a certain weight or height.
- Pets to be socialized or screened. In communities where there may be a number of resident pets, it is in everyone's best interests that they all get along. Some communities may screen your pet to determine that they are properly socialized (can get along with other people and pets) and reasonably obedient.

It's not uncommon to see pets in retirement communities. And if you spend some time with the residents, they're sure to tell you what a delight it is to have a pet companion living with them. It's wonderful to see more and more communities catering to the health and well-being of its residents by permitting pets.

### **The tragedy of animal collectors:**

Cruelty can hit far too close to home.

A couple of weeks ago, neighbors of an elderly lady, concerned for her health, called authorities to check in on her. They discovered her in ailing health - along with approximately 50 diseased cats. The home was covered in feces, urine, and garbage, and the authorities stated that the stench was overwhelming. The local SPCA humanely put down all but two of the cats, to prevent them from spreading disease to the other animals at the shelter. The two remaining cats were put into isolation where they were being evaluated.

Unfortunately, this type of neglect and cruelty is not that uncommon. Within the last year or so:

community to provide companionship to all residents.

If you or a family member is looking for a retirement community that will allow you to bring your pet friend with you, be sure to get a copy of their pet policies. Some communities may require:

- Two elderly sisters were found with nearly 200 dead and diseased cats and one dead dog.
- Another lady willingly surrendered several cats, acknowledging that she simply did not have the resources to properly care for them. She took the initiative to try to "do the right thing". This type of voluntary surrender is rare.
- An elderly lady was found with over 20 Pomeranians in her "care". They were all ill, and were taken to the local humane society. Some were too sick and died, even with vet care; others were eventually adopted into new homes.

The cases mentioned above are just a small fraction of what happens far too often. The "keeper" of the animals, called "animal collectors", are often portrayed by the media as being loving "pet parents" who think of their pets as a part of their families.

Concerned citizens become outraged at the perceived heavy-handedness of the authorities; after all, how can they heartlessly separate the pet parent from their beloved family?

Now, I'm no psychologist and certainly no expert on the human mind. But I have to say that I just cannot fathom how someone who is supposed to love animals can cause them such suffering.

You see, I volunteer at the humane society that took in those Pomeranians. I saw the dogs with my very own eyes. I saw their fear. I saw their illness. I heard their cries.

And it made me sick. What's even worse is that it probably wasn't even as bad as what shelter staff have been exposed to in the past (or will be exposed to in the future).

What amazed me was how many people rallied around the lady who owned the dogs. They converged upon her home, cleaned it up, provided her with new furniture ... all in an effort to show the authorities that her place was now "fit for living". What was the point? They felt that she deserved better: they felt that she should have some of the dogs, her "family", returned to her!

I'm not saying that we shouldn't try to help her or others like her. If it can be done, it should be done.

But we shouldn't aggravate the situation by allowing a known animal collector to have pets again. These pets, no matter how much the collector claims to love them, are in very real danger. Animal collectors are known to have high relapse rates: that means that even if they've had their pets taken away once, they may go ahead and start collecting large numbers of animals again - animals that they are not equipped to care for.

I don't know what the answer is. But until someone finds a way to prevent animal collection, all we can do is try to help in whatever small way we can. It CAN happen in your neighborhood; it happened in mine. If you have reason to believe that you know of an animal collector, I encourage you to discuss the situation with your local humane society. Some indicators may include:

A strong urine or feces smell, detectable from outside the home;

An unusually large number of animals are always around, skulking around the house or scurrying about within the home;  
New animals seem to be appearing around the home regularly, or too often.  
Large piles of garbage, newspapers, or other material - animal collectors sometimes collect things other than just animals.  
By placing that one phone call, you may be saving the lives of the animals contained within the home and preventing them from needless suffering. Every pet deserves a happy home; let's all do our parts.

### **Pet heroes: Pet-assisted therapy:**

Studies have shown that pets help us to lead healthier, happier lives. It has been widely accepted that there are all sorts of health and emotional benefits when we are able to interact with these happy, loving bundles of fur.

Pet Assisted Therapy is usually performed by a group of volunteers and their pets. Suitable pets include cats, dogs, and rabbits.

These two- and four-legged volunteers visit long-term care facilities, hospitals, centers for youth in distress, and more. Volunteers visit with the residents, and through their pets communicate with these people.

Not every pet is suitable. Volunteer organizations that run pet assisted therapy groups typically screen both the volunteers and the pets. Your pet may be a candidate for pet assisted therapy if he or she:

- Loves people. This is essential, otherwise your pet will not enjoy itself. They should love attention and love simply being around people.
- Gets along with other pets. Your pet needs to be well-socialized and able to tolerate other dogs, cats, and possibly even rabbits. No chasing, no fighting ... playing is okay after "work hours".
- Is well-mannered. Your pet should respond to basic obedience commands such as sit, stay, down, and come. They should also know the word "no!".
- Responds okay to loud, sudden, or strange noises, unusual equipment, and all types of handling. The screening process will test your pet's reaction to these situations and more.

I've taken my little dog Tonka to a long-term care facility for nearly 4 years now. It is a fantastically rewarding experience. There are some people whose faces will light up as soon as they see Tonka. Some of them don't say a single word to me; but they talk to Tonka, and for a few minutes they're relaxed and happy. Others are quieter; they wait for us to come by, then sit and pet Tonka, a smile on their faces.

The nurses and nurses' assistants have said that after our visits, the residents are happier and healthier - there is noticeable change in their well-being, and for some even their blood pressure is lower.

If pet assisted therapy is something you'd like to try, contact your local organization. Many pets adore it (our dogs are always excited when it's "working night") ... and it's a wonderful way for both you and your pet to give back to your community!

## **Taking your pet to work:**

Stress is everywhere in the workplace these days. What better way to reduce this stress than by bringing your lovable pooch to work with you?

Researchers have discovered that pets provide many health benefits, one of which is lowering of the blood pressure. More and more companies are starting to allow you to bring your dog to work with you - but for this to be a success for you, the dog, and the company, here are a few tips to help pooch settle in:

- Only bring dogs that are properly socialized and well-behaved. Your pooch must be able to get along with other people and pets, and must not bark, fight, or otherwise misbehave. You are still at a place of business; your pet must not disrupt the work of your coworkers or clients.
- If you find your dog misbehaving, you can try providing him with more exercise. Tired dogs are good dogs! Take him out for a long walk before work so that he'll be calm when you get in. At lunch, play a game of fetch or take him for a jog. If you can't do provide him with enough exercise, think of hiring someone else to do it for you.
- Be sure to take him out regularly for bathroom breaks. You can't blame a dog for misbehaving when he's really got to go!
- Bring doggie essentials. Be sure he has a food and water bowl, some toys (no noisy ones!), a blanket or bed, a brush or comb, and some treats. You'll also want to bring a clean-up kit just in case poochie has an accident.
- Keep your dog confined to your space. Hard though it may be to believe, some people are not fond of dogs. Others may have allergies. Regardless of the reason, you should have a way of keeping your pooch beside you.
- Some examples are: tying his leash to your desk; erecting a pet gate; using a kennel; or simply shutting your office door.

There are thousands upon thousands of people who would love to have their pets beside them at work. If you're one of the lucky ones with this opportunity, take some time to help your pooch adjust. You'll be able to enjoy each other's companionship throughout the day - and your dog can bask in the attention of your pet-loving coworkers and his new doggie-friends!

If pet assisted therapy is something you'd like to try, contact your local organization. Many pets adore it (our dogs are always excited when it's "working night") ... and it's a wonderful way for both you and your pet to give back to your community!