

Pet Care



Benefits of Adopting

Unfortunately, the need to take in these pets has never been greater.

More than 6 million strays will arrive in U.S. shelters on any given year, according to the ASPCA. There's something you can do to help.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

It's impossible to know how many stray cats and dogs live in America, though estimates have played the numbers as high as 70 million. A fertile cat can quickly add to those numbers, producing two litters per year with as many as six kittens. Dogs, on the other hand may produce a litter with up to half a dozen puppies per year when fertile. This overpopulation can be addressed by spaying and neutering pets, a process that's handled either by owners or through the shelter where strays arrive.

AT THE SHELTER

Those in shelters are almost evenly divided between dogs and cats. Thankfully, the number of those being euthanized as been declining more recently. The ASPCA reports that shelter adoptions are playing a big role in those improving figures. Tags and technological improvements like microchipping have also reunited more runaways to their rightful owners. More than 800,000 animals are being

taken home annually, most of which are dogs. Some 4 million animals are adopted each year, with those numbers again being evenly divided between cats and dogs.

THE COSTS

Adopting a pet usually costs less than purchasing a cat or dog from a breeder, according to the Human Society of the United States. Adoption prices also usually cover critical services like initial vaccinations, spaying or neutering and sometimes even microchipping. There may be associated discounts for adopted animals with pet trainers and at local pet stores. In some cities, there are also additional municipal subsidies. Adopted pets are often house trained too, saving both time and money. Once you've taken your new furry friend home, Petfinder reports that every-day costs will be \$500 or more annually.

A BIGGER PICTURE

Shelters play an important role in getting innocent animals off the streets, where they may continue creating more homeless animals, become injured, or die of illness or hunger. When you adopt a pet, you're actually helping more than one animal. You're making room for another cat or dog who may be homeless, while also providing critical financial support for the shelter's important efforts.



Springtime Pet Safety

It's tempting to jump right back into the outdoors, but dangers lurk.

Enjoying the sun and even taking a relaxing dip are two hallmarks of warm-weather activity. But be sure to follow some simple but important rules to guarantee your time in the sun doesn't take a turn for the worse.

These tips should also be passed along to children who are around animals, family friends who may spend time with them, and any pet sitters you may employ. Take the time to work with your pet, so that he or she is never in any danger.

HEAT WARNING

Despite usually having a coat of fur, pets can be stricken with sunburn if not properly cared for in the warmer months. Be especially careful with dogs with short hair, exposed pink skin and white fur, since they are at the greatest risk of sunburn. Look for pet-friendly sunscreen for noses and ears, especially if you have are planning to be outside for a long period of time in full sun.

Be on the look out for signs of heatstroke, and immediately work to get your pet cooled off. The American Kennel Club recommends hosing dogs down with water, while allowing them to lick ice chips. Offer them a small amount of water, but not too much all at



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once. Pedialyte will also help with their thirst. In some cases, you may need to apply ice packs. If your worries continue, consult with your veterinarian.

SWIMMING CONCERNS

Many pets are scared of

water, or are not strong swimmers.

Be aware of their preferences and skill levels when pets are around a pool, lake or river.

It's a good idea to create barriers around pools, and sometimes a lawful requirement in

order to protect others. Make sure a pool cover is firmly in place when you are away or when the warm months are over.

Never throw a pet into the water. If your dog enjoys water activities, be careful that they don't overdo it.

Be aware of strong currents in rivers, and especially at the beach.

Never leave your dog unattended while swimming. If needed, a variety of pet floatation devices are also available, so discuss your options with your veterinarian.

The Best Pet Foods

Careful label reading will help guide you away from things they shouldn't eat.

You may not end up with the cheapest options, but you'll be helping your pet live a longer, healthier life through better nutrition. And isn't that the most important part of all?

WHAT'S INSIDE

The Association of Animal Feed Control Officials has a series of specific rules when it comes to pet-food ingredients. Those labeled with "chicken" must contain at least 95 percent chicken. If two ingredients are named, the first ingredient must be in a higher percentage and together the two listed ingredients must result in 95 percent of the product by weight.

Products with less than 95 percent of their labeled content must also include a descriptive term – like "liver dinner" or "liver entree" – and contain at least 25 percent of the listed ingredient. At the same time, pet foods that have the word "with" in the title are required to include at least 3 percent of that ingredient. Finally, "flavor" in the food branding requires a sufficient amount that the taste of the ingredient may be detected, but you should remember that there is no specific percentage requirement.

GOING ALL NATURAL

A good rule of thumb is to



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look for pet food that's been labeled "natural." These labels aren't just for marketing purposes. In fact the Association of Animal Feed Control Officials sets rigid standards for those labels, too. Only ingredients derived from plants, animals or mined sources may be used in order

to earn this designation. They also don't have often-used chemical or synthetic ingredients like preservatives, artificial flavors and coloring.

SMALL PRINT

Many pet foods are loaded with by products and meal, both of which aren't necessari-

ly healthy for pets. By products are typically the matter that remains after animals are processed for human consumption, including their organs. Meal is dried protein solids created from carcasses that have been rendered. Both are often added simply to help increase the protein levels in food.

Look for labels that include phrases like "complete and balanced," which means they can be served on a daily basis. Others with usage recommendations like "supplemental" or "intermittent" should be thought of as occasional treats, and make up 10 percent of less of a pet's daily caloric intake.

Rabbits 101

They have specific care requirements that are quite different than cats and dogs.

The popularity of rabbits as a pet has grown in leaps and bounds, according to the Humane Society of the United States. They're now the third most popular pet choice. Here's what you should know about their care and feeding:

FAMILY TIME

Rabbits typically live in large groups in the wild, so their habitats should take their social nature into account. They should have a cozy and quiet place to sleep, but at the same time have a space where they can interact with everyone. They love castles or other places to hide and to jump from. Make sure there's a large litter box, since they're very clean animals. Include grass and grass-based chew toys for them to play with and enjoy.

BUNNY PROOFING

Rabbits love to chew on things, and they're naturally curious. This can lead to some pretty destructive behavior in the average home, where they may have access to rugs, molding, wiring and important paperwork. Cover exposed wires and extension cords with flex tubing, and block areas where your pet can't play safely with baby barriers. Like their habitats, these gates should be

made of metal and have slats that aren't so wide that the bunny can slip through.

WHAT'S FOR DINNER

Rabbits actually need a lot more grass hay than they need carrots. Make sure they have plenty of fresh water. They love many vegetables, including

some lettuce and greens, celery, clover, basil and parsley, among others. Just make sure they are free of pesticides.

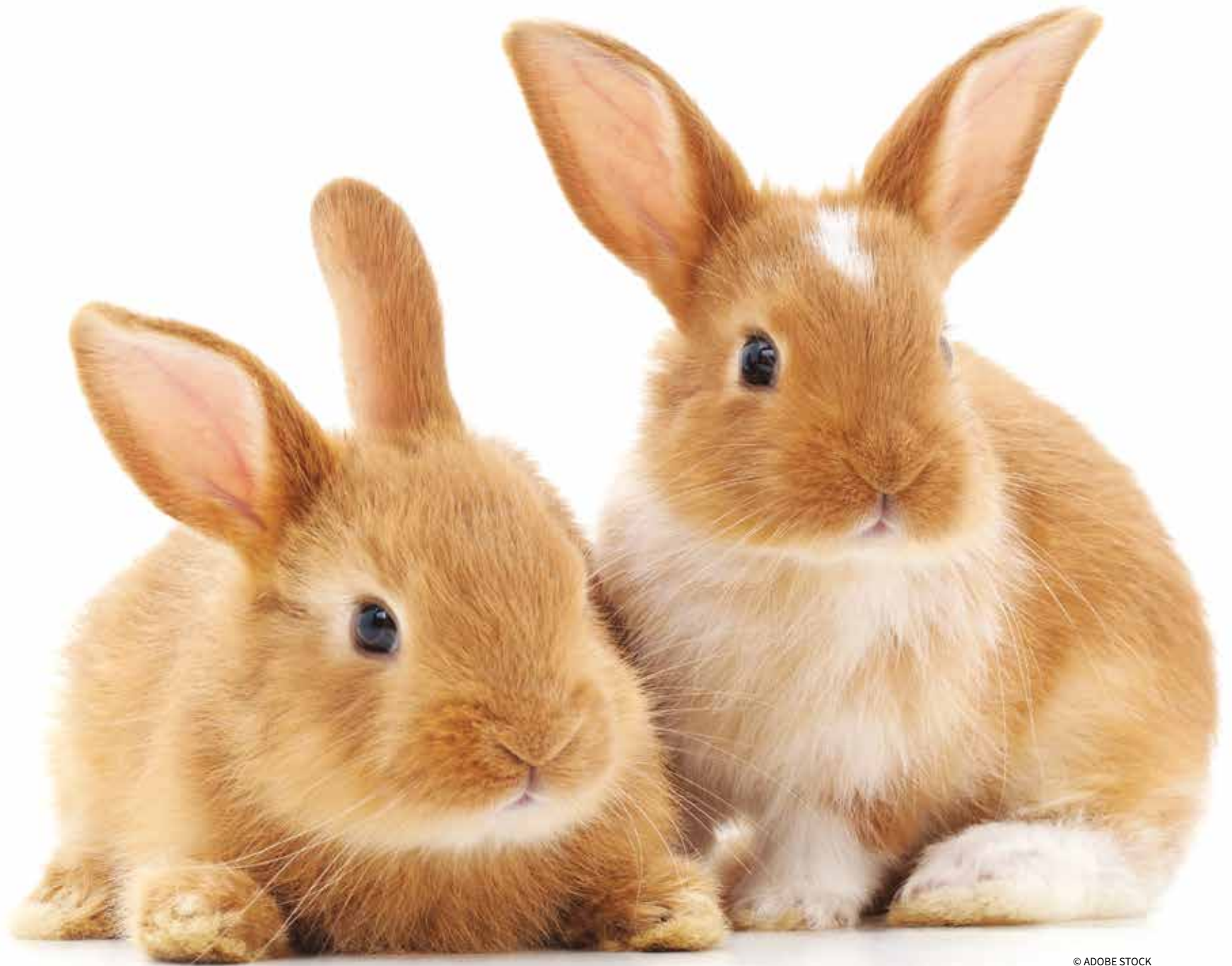
Commercial pellet foods often have many of these key ingredients; check with your veterinarian to see which one is right for your pet. Some fruits are great for use as an occasional

treat, including bananas, strawberries, apples with the seeds removed and raspberries, among others.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

The typical well-cared-for rabbit lives 7 to 10 years. They should be spayed or neutered, just like cats and dogs – and for

the same reasons: to limit their ever-growing population, and also to help with some behavioral issues. Just remember that they have specific other needs that are quite different from cats or dogs, and that you may have difficulty in finding a credentialed caregiver depending on where you live.



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Inside Microchipping

Gone are the days when a lost collar meant perhaps never seeing your pet again.

Upload key information about your dog or cat into these electronic chips to keep track of them forever. These tiny chips are roughly the size of a grain of rice, enclosed in glass and work after being implanted by a doctor into your pet. The chip is activated by a scanner, which then transmits whatever information you've included.

WHEN THEY GET LOST

Shelters, animal control officers and veterinarians now regularly scan for microchips as soon as they find a lost pet. If your information has been regularly updated, they'll quickly have access to critical contact information in order to reach you. This small but mighty invention has had a huge impact. One American Veterinary Medical Association study of almost 8,000 strays found that microchipped animals were returned more than half the time, while others without microchips only found their rightful owners some 22 percent of the time. Microchipped animals who weren't returned were typically those that didn't have updated owner details. So, it's critically important that you register the chip and keep those details constantly up to date, in case the worst happens.

HOW IT WORKS

Pets are microchipped at the vet's office. A medical professional will inject this device under your dog or cat's skin with a hypodermic needle in a process that's been described as roughly as painful as their regular vaccinations. There is no anesthesia or surgery required, though sometimes

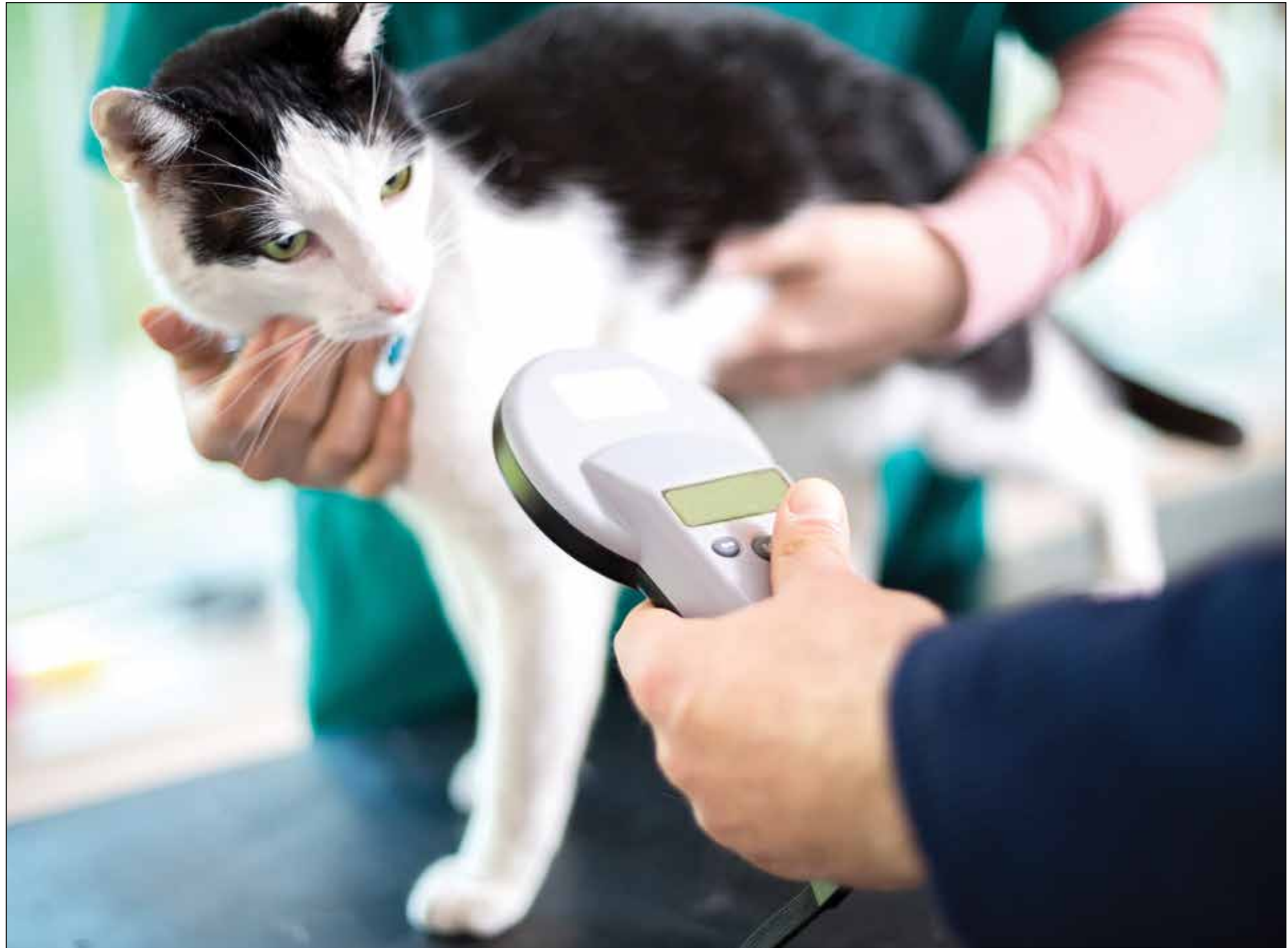
pet doctors elect to microchip animals while they are already under anesthesia for other procedures including spaying, neutering and dental treatments, simply for the comfort of your pet. The chip only includes contact information. There is no battery, so it can not track a lost pet. Instead, a scan reveals information that a veterinarian

then passes along to the maker of your pet's chip. The manufacturer in turn shares contact details, and the vet gets in touch with pet owners.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

They aren't tracking devices, and do not contain any other personal data. Contact information in the manufacturer's

registry is only to be used in the event your pet is lost. There may be other communications options from the chip maker, but they're typically paired with opt-out features. Details on how you may be contacted must be personally updated when this information changes, since manufacturers don't have access to your location.



Before You Get A Reptile

In the right situation, these long-living creatures can become a treasured family member. But the experience can be quite different from owning a cat or dog.

FOLLOW THE RULES

There are often rules and regulations about where certain kinds of pets can be kept, including amphibians and reptiles. Check with the management of your property, or contact local wildlife and fisheries personnel to find out more about what is, and isn't, prohibited in your building or town. Most places won't allow venomous snakes, for instance.

SMART CHOICES

A key element in deciding on a reptile is understanding how big the creature will get as it matures. You might not love that cute little Burmese python as much when he's grown to 30 feet long and up to 200 pounds. The size of your enclosure has nothing to do with how large reptiles will one day become, and that makes doing your research a critical element. The full-grown version is the one you'll have to share space with, so make sure there's plenty of it to go around. You also need to discuss your choice with roommates, family or others who may live with



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you or visit often. You may have to make special accommodations for them.

LIVING SPACES

Reptiles have specific temperature-based needs, so discuss proper heat sources with your local pet store. Aside from temperatures, you'll also have to monitor the enclosure's humidity

levels, since conditions that are too dry can dry out the skin of these cold-blooded creatures. (In the wild, snakes and lizards burrow deeper or find a new home when conditions become unfavorable.) At the same time, too much moisture can lead to bacteria and fungi growth. Regularly clean their enclosure, since some feces

may carry diseases like salmonella. Their tank will need to be large enough so that there is plenty of room to move around. Depending on the reptile, you may have to purchase a larger tank as they grow.

DINNER TIME

Pet food stores offer commercially available food

blends, but you should understand that many species of reptiles require live food sources. Mice and mealworms are popular food choices for pet owners with carnivorous reptiles. Other kinds of pets eat lots of vegetables. Because all of this food is fresh, it usually needs to be purchased a few times a week.

DNA Testing Your Pet

You'll start with a swab, then a company will begin making comparisons to learn more. The results might just surprise you.

Pet owners are suddenly able to describe their dog as a Labri-doodle or Cocka-poo, without worrying that it's only a guess. In some cases, the tests may reveal many more breed results. At the same time, there may be medical information revealed that can help doctors diagnose and treat certain health issues with cats.

HOW IT WORKS

Most popular testing companies run your pet's DNA against more than hundreds breeds from across the globe. Advanced new technology takes a detailed look at the animal's genome, then begins comparisons with millions and millions of possible ancestry combinations. Some have databases that are so extensive that they may cover more than 98 percent of the dogs in the U.S., including wolves, coyotes and even dingos. That makes it easier to pinpoint the exact breed, or mix of breeds.

YOUR PET'S HEALTH

Human DNA testing has become advanced enough that we can ascertain some looming health issues, offering doctors a chance to better under-

stand and treat illnesses. Dog genetics haven't necessarily reached that level quite yet. Scans may reveal genetic variants that have been associated with a disease but they won't necessarily confirm the chances of your dog actually being diagnosed with anything.

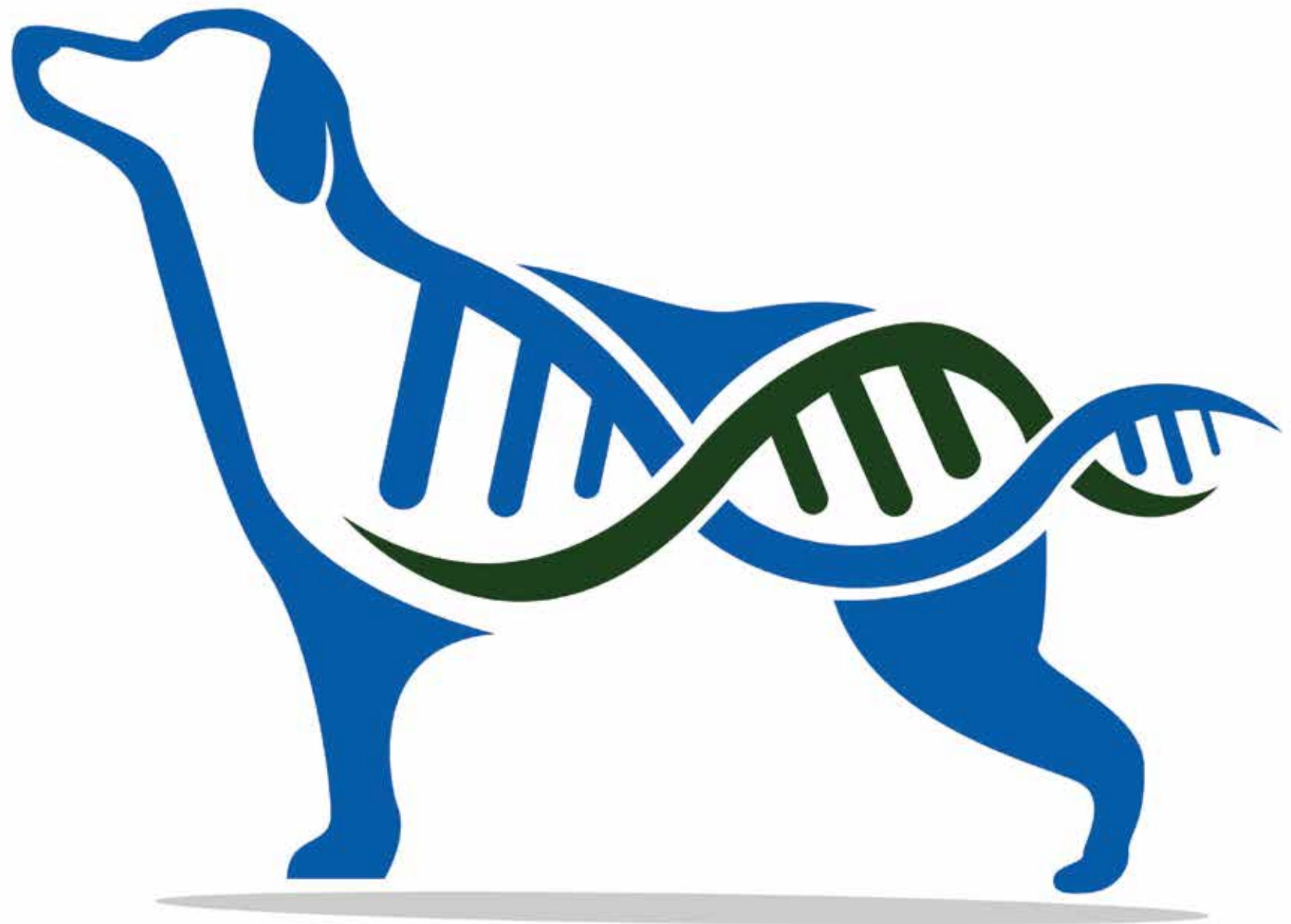
So be careful about making

critical health decisions based on company claims about identifying health issues with your pet. The best use of this information is to help guide your vet on what to look for as time goes by. Early diagnosis with pets, just like with humans, is often key to curing disease.

WHAT ABOUT MY CAT?

Though it's much more commonly associated with dog owners, companies have begun DNA testing in cats, too. In this case, it's more health focused than in trying to determine a breed or combination of breeds. Revealed information has allowed researchers to

identify more than 40 genetic conditions that lead to various conditions, while examining at a huge number of breed types across several regions. One vital detail that can be learned from these tests is your cat's blood type, which can be critical information in the event of an emergency.



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