

CHOOSING A PET

Gift-giving occasions, such as holidays, birthdays, etc., often have us searching for that “perfect gift” for ones we love. Some of us may be influenced by the fascinating stories we see on the Discovery and Nature channels that leave us infatuated by the exotic animals depicted. Some may get the idea that owning a lizard, monkey, or snake can make going home feel like a safari. Some may even consider surprising a loved one with an exotic pet as a gift. Unfortunately, it happens more often than you think. To capitalize on and profit from the public’s demand for such creatures, pet shops make them available for purchase and convince you that exotic “pets” are easy to care for.

Current fads and our desire to have what is fashionable and trendy do not match the slow process of adaptation when we talk about exotic pets. The tragic incident that happened last year when a chimpanzee attacked a woman and destroyed her face (and future) should make us think twice about the animals we choose as our companions. Some animals are simply not appropriate as pets for regular people. Domestication of cats and dogs did not happen in a mere ten or twenty years. These animals have been behaviorally and genetically modified (breeds’ creation) over **many** years to become good companions in our homes. Likewise, the medical profession needs time to learn about all aspects of husbandry and to develop treatments that will protect owners and provide quality care for pets.

There are plenty of puppies and kittens looking for wonderful, loving homes. They provide much better companionship, and we all know that their brains and their abilities to please us are far better developed than any lizard or snake can ever reward us with.