



Unit 12

Small Animal Care

OBJECTIVES

- Discuss the history and domestication of small animals.
- Determine the economic importance of small animals.
- Describe the types and uses of various small animals.
- Discuss how to properly feed and care for small animals.

KEY WORDS

common house cat	spaying
domestication	sporting dogs
euthanized	terriers
exotic pet	toy breeds
herding dogs	working dogs
hounds	
neutering	
non-sporting	
purebred cats	

Dog is man's best friend. Dogs along with many other small animals have become a large part of society and everyday living for many people. Examples of small animals include dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, and turtles. Basically a small animal is any animal not considered livestock that is used as a personal companion. All animals large and small require special attention and care to ensure proper health and growth. Just as in livestock animals, small animals often require specialized diets to maintain proper function.

Domestication of Small Animals

Throughout history, humans have used animals for a variety of uses. At first, humans simply hunted animals for food. Over time, humans shifted from being hunters to farmers. Humans began using animals for work, clothes, transportation, and companionship. As humans began to interact with animals, domestication occurred. **Domestication** is the process of animals being tamed by humans.

Historians agree that dogs were the first domesticated animal, followed by cats. One popular theory suggests that dogs evolved from wolf pups. Wolves may have lived around humans scavenging for food. The wolf pups became companion animals for humans and eventually evolved into today's dog. Fossils have been found that are believed to belong to dogs as far back as 15,000 years ago.



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Domestication of the cat occurred approximately 4,000 years ago. The solitary nature of cats probably prevented them from being domesticated earlier. Egyptians depicted cats in statues and inscriptions. Mummified cats have also been found in Egyptian tombs. Cats have long been known for their ability to control rats and mice. Domestication has played an important role in the development of human societies and has allowed for the shift of humans from hunters and gathers to the farmers we know today.

Economic Importance

The small-animal industry contributes billions of dollars to the U.S. economy. Approximately 65 percent of U.S. households own a pet according to the 2016 National Pet Owners Survey conducted by the American Pet Products Association. More than 163 million dogs and cats are pets in the United States.

SAE IDEA Entrepreneurship

Operate a kennel
cleaning service.

Pets require more than just a loving home. They require food, toys, grooming, boarding, and veterinary care. Each year, Americans spend over \$60 billion on pets including food, supplies, services and so on.

Total Number of Pets Owned in the U.S.*	
Birds	14.3 million
Cats	85.8 million
Dogs	77.8 million
Fish	105 million
Reptiles	9.3 million

*2015 American Pet Products Association Data

Breakdown of Pet Industry Sales*	
Food	\$23 billion
Supplies/OTC Medicine	\$14.4 billion
Vet Care	\$15.7 billion
Live animal purchases	\$2.2 billion
Pet Services: grooming & boarding	\$5.2 billion

Types and Uses of Small Animals

Small animals are used for everything from companionship to food. People enjoy the company of pets and many times they become part of the family. There is such a wide variety of small animals kept as pets that a person is sure to find one that will fit with his or her lifestyle.

Dogs

Dogs have been “man’s best friend” for hundreds and possibly even thousands of years. Dogs are typically companion animals or pets but are used for other purposes, too. There are 129 breeds recognized by the American Kennel Club. These breeds are divided into seven groups: sporting dogs, hounds, working dogs, terriers, toys, herding dogs, and non-sporting dogs.



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Sporting dogs are naturally active and alert. This group includes pointers, retrievers, setters, and spaniels. Sporting dogs are known for their instincts in the woods and water. Numerous breeds in this group are still used for hunting today. This group of dogs requires invigorating exercise on a regular basis.

Hounds are used for tracking either by scent or sight. Some use an acute sense of smell to follow a trail. Others are relentless in tracking animals or people. Examples of dogs in the hound group are beagles, bassets, dachshunds, and coonhounds. These dogs are used by hunters to track game and by law officials to track criminals.

Working dogs have been developed to perform jobs such as protecting property or livestock, or pulling sleds. This group also contains rescue dogs and police dogs. Working breeds are intelligent and quick learners. A few breeds included in the group are the Great Pyrenees, German Shepherd, and Siberian Husky.

Terriers are a group of energetic, feisty dogs. The terriers' ancestors were bred to hunt and kill vermin. A spunky attitude is still seen in terriers today. This group includes breeds such as the Fox Terrier and Miniature Schnauzer. Terriers usually do not have a tolerance for other dogs or animals.

The **toy breeds** are known for their companionship. Toy breeds are great city dogs as they are small, which tends to minimize shedding, messes, and cost. This group includes the Chihuahua, Pug, Shih Tzu, and Pekingese. These friendly breeds are great lap dogs.



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Herding dogs are known for their instincts to herd other animals. These dogs have a great ability to control where other animals move. This group includes breeds such as the Australian Shepherd, Collie, Border Collie, and Old English Sheepdog. These dogs are very intelligent and are easily trained.

The **non-sporting** group consists of numerous breeds with a great diversity of characteristics. These dogs range in terms of appearance, size, and personality. Examples of this group are the Boston Terrier, Dalmatian, Poodle, and Bulldog. Overall, this group makes great companion animals.

There are many options for dog lovers when it comes to choosing a pet. When selecting a breed there are many things to consider including space requirements and breed characteristics. Choose wisely when getting a dog. Many dogs are abandoned because their owners were not able to care for them properly and did not realize the responsibility required.



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SPAYING AND NEUTERING

Nationwide, more than 3 million cats and dogs are **euthanized**, or medically put to sleep, in shelters. Homeless animals have to be euthanized because there is not enough space in shelters. One method of controlling the animal population is to spay or neuter pets.

Spaying is the process of preventing female animals from reproducing by removing the reproductive organs. **Neutering** is the removal of the male reproductive organs.

Spaying and neutering not only prevents unwanted offspring, but it may also reduce the risk of some health problems. Spaying and neutering can also have a calming affect on the animal. Although spaying and neutering can be expensive if you have multiple animals, there are assistance programs to help cover the cost of the surgery.

Cats

Cats are loving and playful, as well as independent and self-sufficient. Cats are kept for companionship or pest control and many times are used for both purposes. Most cats are social animals that adapt well as indoor animals. Those used for pest control have a natural hunting instinct. Cats will catch birds, mice, and other small animals. Because cats have an independent nature, they tend to require less care than dogs.



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Cats fall into one of two categories: purebred cats and common house cats. **Purebred cats** have stayed true to breed lines and are commonly divided into two groups: short-haired breeds and long-haired breeds. Short-haired breeds require less maintenance as these cats have, as their name indicates, short hair. Brushing is not as necessary on short-haired cats. Long-haired breeds require more grooming to maintain their hair coat. There are 36 breeds of cats recognized in the United States.

SAE IDEA

Research

Research the best diet to help obese pets lose weight.

Most people are probably most familiar with the **common house cat**, which is a mix or cross of various breeds. The roaming nature of cats has allowed purebred cats to breed and repopulate. The common house cat can be a variety of colors ranging from a solid to multi-colored.

Rabbits

Rabbits can be raised commercially or as a hobby. Commercially raised rabbits are used for meat production, fur and wool production, laboratory research, and as pets. Rabbits that are raised as a hobby are often shown or used for home companionship.

Rabbits raised for meat production are marketed to grocery stores and restaurants. Rabbit meat is a very fine textured, mainly white meat. The fiber content in rabbit meat is low, making it easily digestible. Americans have a certain image of rabbits and, therefore, eating rabbit is not as popular in the United States as in Europe. It is estimated that more than 35 million pounds of rabbit meat is eaten by Americans each year.



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Clothing, hats, gloves, and yarn are items that can be made with rabbit fur. There are specific wool-breed rabbits that can produce fur or wool, although the wool can vary among the different breeds. The most common rabbit breeds raised for wool or fur are the Rex, Satin, and Angora. The Rex produces short fur that is very soft. Satin fur has an intense color and tends to have a slick, shiny appearance because of the transparent outer shell of the fur. The wool from Angora breeds is softer, warmer, and lighter than sheep's wool. This wool is used primarily by hand spinners in the United States.

Rabbits have been used for research for many years. The use of rabbits as research animals has allowed scientists to produce drugs for treatment of disease, as well as to determine the skin irritability of cosmetics. Nutrition and genetic research has also been conducted on rabbits. In recent years, some testing on rabbits has become controversial. Due to this controversy there has been a decrease in rabbit use in the laboratory. In 1991, almost 400,000 rabbits were used for research compared to approximately 240,000 used in 2006. The USDA now provides guidelines for laboratory techniques to protect the welfare of the rabbit.



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Rabbits make lovable pets. They are playful but gentle. Rabbits tend to be clean animals and can be trained to use a litter box. This makes them a great small indoor pet. There are more than 45 breeds of rabbits recognized by the American Rabbit Breeders Association, which range in size from dwarf to large. Depending on the breed, a dwarf rabbit will weigh 4 pounds or less. A large breed can weigh 16 pounds or more.



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Exotic Pets

People keep a variety of animals as pets. Most have a cat or dog, but some want a unique companion. An **exotic pet** is a rare or unusual animal that is kept as a pet. An exotic pet can range from a snake or reptile to a hamster or gerbil. Many times exotic pets are not actually domesticated but just tamed wild animals. This is an important fact to remember if you choose to own an exotic animal.



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Before purchasing an exotic pet, one must research the needs extensively. It can be challenging to own an exotic pet. Veterinary care is not as readily available for exotic pets as it is for dogs and cats. Exotic companion animals tend to require additional care not common to traditional pets. It is also important to research the laws in the area in which you live. Many times there are restrictions on the types of pets a person can own.

Care of Small Animals

Small animals, like any domesticated animal, rely on humans to care for them. Unfortunately, many pets are abandoned each year. Before purchasing or adopting a small animal, you must be prepared to provide for its needs – food, water, shelter, and attention.

There are many questions one should ask before becoming a small-animal owner. These questions must be answered honestly. A pet is a commitment and responsibility. This domesticated animal relies solely on a person to provide for its needs. Below are a few questions one should answer before accepting the responsibility of a pet:

1. What type of pet is right for me?
2. What type of shelter can I provide?
3. What will I need to do on a daily basis to take care of my pet?
4. Does my lifestyle allow the time for a pet?
5. How much will a pet cost?

SAE IDEA

Exploratory

Take small animals to nursing homes for visits.

Choosing a Pet

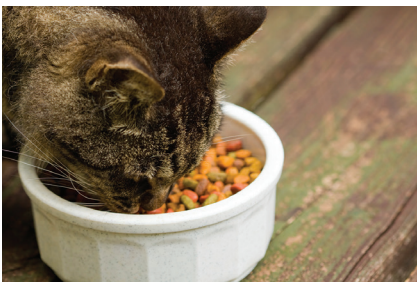
Choosing the right type of pet is essential when taking on the responsibility of a small animal. Animals are perfect for companionship, but a person must determine the ideal pet for his or her situation. What are the living quarters: an apartment in the city or a large farm? What is the amount of living space the pet will have? Is there enough room for a large dog to exercise? Is there a backyard where a dog house could be placed or will it be necessary for the pet to be kept inside the house? These questions should be asked before investing in a pet.



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Routine Care

Routine care requirements depend on the animal. Each type of pet requires different amounts of care. A person's lifestyle will determine the type of pet that he or she can care for responsibly. Dogs need exercise daily and tend to be more dependent on their owner. Cats require less care and, therefore, require less time. A fish or hamster might make a better pet for someone who is away from home a lot.



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All pets require basic maintenance including feeding, bathing, grooming and health care. Some animals require more time than others. The health of your pets depends upon your willingness to care for it. Animals can become sick if not properly fed or vaccinated. Dogs and cats have a vaccination schedule that should be followed to ensure the health of the animal. Many of these vaccines are given to prevent life-threatening illnesses. Other animals may not require vaccinations, but through proper feeding and protection from the elements, they can stay healthy and avoid disease.

Puppy and Dog Vaccinations	
Age	Vaccination
6- to 8-week old puppy	Distemper-Measles-Parainfluenza (CPI), Parvovirus
8- to 12-week old puppy	DHLPP (Distemper, Hepatitis, Leptospirosis, Parainfluenza, Parvovirus)
12 weeks	Rabies
16 weeks	DHLPP
12 months	Rabies
Boosters of some vaccinations such as rabies will be needed.	

Kitten and Cat Vaccinations	
Age	Vaccination
6-8 weeks	Panleukopenia (FPV), Pinotracheitis (FVR), Calicivirus (FCV)
12 weeks	2nd FPV, FVR, and FCV; 1st Feline Leukemia (FeLV) if negative to ELISA test
16 weeks	1st Rabies; 2nd FeLV; 3rd FPV, FVR, and FCV
16 months and each year	FPV, FVR, VCV, FeLV, Rabies

All animals require proper facilities and equipment; however, these will be different for each species of pet. Dogs kept outside need to be fenced to keep them from straying along with proper housing to keep them cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Cats should be provided a place to sleep and play, as well as a litter box to urinate and defecate. Other pets such as birds, rodents, and reptiles will need proper housing according to the type of animal.

Dogs and cats especially need regular grooming. This could be brushing a cat daily to rid it of excess hair, or bathing a dog when it becomes dirty. The nails of animals should also be examined and trimmed when needed. Ears, eyes, teeth and gums should also be checked to make sure there is no excess discharge, mites, ticks, infection, and so on. A change in any of these areas may cause an animal to become sick or feel lethargic, which will lead to not eating. Proper maintenance in all areas will keep your animal healthy and energetic.

One of the most important aspects to routine maintenance is feeding. Just like humans, dogs, cats, hamsters, snakes, and birds all get hungry. Feeds have been developed to target the needs of each particular species. There are certain vitamins and minerals found in some food rations that you may not find in others. For example, dog food does not contain as much protein as cat food and should not be fed to cats for this reason. There are also special rations for puppies and dogs, which should be fed accordingly. If you have questions about the feeding or care of your animal, there are many pet stores that offer assistance or contact your local veterinarian.



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Cost

Many times people do not consider the cost of a pet past the initial purchase price. Buying a puppy, kitten, or other small animal can be rather inexpensive when compared to the cost of food, grooming, veterinary bills, and other related expenses. In the first year, a puppy can cost \$500 - \$1000. Kitten care for the first year will cost \$400 - \$800, where a small bird such as a finch would be less expensive, costing approximately \$250 for the first year.

It is important to research the associated costs of the pet you choose. The first year will cost more because of the need to purchase new equipment. Yearly costs that should be expected are food, vaccinations, and veterinary expenses.



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Unit Summary

The domestication of animals has allowed humans to use small animals for companionship, service, sporting, work, and food. This use is a billion-dollar industry in the United States. Over half of the households in the U.S. own a pet. When deciding on what type is best, a person should determine the amount of money he or she wants to spend, the time able to devote to the animal, and if the pet will fit into his or her lifestyle. Pets of all kinds require routine care such as feeding, grooming, and health care. Researching different types of pets will allow one to provide a loving home.

Unit Review

1. What are small animals used for?
2. What is domestication?
3. How is it believed dogs were domesticated?
4. Explain the economic importance of the small animal industry.
5. Name and describe three groups of dogs.
6. Describe the two types of cats.
7. How have rabbits been used for research?
8. Why might an exotic pet not be the best for everyone?
9. Explain three things that should be considered before owning a pet.
10. What basic maintenance is required for all pets?
11. Why should a person estimate the cost of owning a pet before purchasing?