

BEST BET

Picking a vet for your pet

by Blythe Thimsen



Skipper Cimijotti enjoys relaxing on the couch in his new home.

JERRY AND COURTNEY CIMIJOTTI expanded their family this last spring—not with another child, but with a dog. Skipper, a two-year-old Jack Russell Terrier, was adopted from SPOKANIMAL at the beginning of April and quickly became a part of the family. For the Cimijotti's three children, it was a dream come true to finally have a pet. As the weather warms, they are often found outside chasing Skipper—or vice versa—through the yard, walking him to the park, or wrestling with him on the living room floor.

“It is so great watching the kids with him, and listening to their laughter as they play with him,” says Courtney touching on one of the greatest joys she and her husband have found in having a family pet. It wasn't a snap decision to adopt Skipper. “We thought about getting a dog at great length off and on for several years,” she says. There were pros and cons to getting a family pet, but after much consideration, they took the plunge, considering this a great opportunity for their 10 year-old to learn about responsibility with a living, furry and loving dog.

The Cimijotti's aren't alone. According to

the American Veterinary Medical Association (AMVA), 63 percent of all households in the United States have a pet, breaking down to 75 million dogs and 85 million cats. While it may seem like everyone is doing it, veterinarians and animal support organizations alike lift a chorus of caution, encouraging people to thoughtfully consider if they are truly able to care for a pet before proceeding with the decision.

“Be honest with yourself regarding how much time you have to devote to a pet,” says Dr. Greg Benoit, of SouthCare Animal Medical Center in Spokane. “If you are someone who travels a lot, you might consider a cat, which is much more independent. Dogs like a good walk once or twice a day and are very social creatures. You can't just put them on a leash and hook them to the doghouse in the yard for the day.”

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) International notes, “Dogs, cats and other companion animals cannot be ignored just because you or the children are too tired or too busy. They require food, water, exercise, care and companionship every day of every year. Thousands of animals end up in

shelters because their owners did not realize how much time it takes to properly care for a pet.”

Additionally, Benoit encourages potential pet owners to consider the financial cost of properly caring for a pet. According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), “the average cost of basic food, supplies, medical care and training for a dog or cat is \$700 to \$875 annually.”

Some of that cost is for medical care. If you are taking on this financial responsibility, you want to have a quality veterinarian. “Depend on friends for referrals,” says Benoit, who adds that one of his best suggestions is to go and meet a prospective veterinarian to see if their philosophy and personality are a good fit for your family and pet.

Once you select a veterinarian, “establish a relationship with them so that the vet knows your pet when they are healthy,” says Benoit. “That gives them a healthy baseline from which to gauge their health on future visits.” Your pet will be seeing their vet for an annual visit and vaccinations, but also for maintenance issues as they age, such as dental care and weight control.

In order to manage appointments and some of those maintenance needs, Benoit's SouthCare Animal Medical Center launched a “pet portal” on their website six months ago, which creates an online account for each animal, to which owners can log in. “It gives our client's the ability to access their pet's medical records,” says Benoit. Additionally, patients can email for prescription refills, appointments or to check on vaccines, and there are links to animal health articles.

Having a good relationship with your veterinarian is a tool to help your pet live a healthy and happy life, and to bring increased happiness to your family. After his first visit to his veterinarian, Skipper walked out the door in tip-top shape, ready for a healthy and happy life with the Cimijotti's. “He is part of our family now, and it is our responsibility to take the best care possible of him,” says Courtney. “He is a good dog!”

SOUTH CARE ANIMAL MEDICAL CENTER

509-448-4480 www.southcarevet.com



Susan Wada, DVM



Greg Benoit, DVM, MS



Suzanne Coulson, DVM

Dedicated to compassionate
comprehensive veterinary medical care.

Our Services Include:

- Comprehensive Wellness Exams & Vaccinations
- Surgery:
 - Soft Tissue Surgery
 - Orthopedic
- Dentistry
- Geriatric Care
- Cancer Management
- Radiology
- Full in-house Laboratory Services
- Puppy/Kitten/New Pet Exams

NEW!

Visit our website and log in to your "Pet Portal" www.southcarevet.com

- Pet Portals offer direct, 24hr, private & secure access to your pet's information.
- You can request appointments, prescription refills
- Post photos and pet stories
- View reliable information on pet health topics.
- And much more...

topVets2011



Dedicated to
Veterinary
Excellence

2915 E Palouse Hwy
South Hill Spokane WA 99223