

Think Before Giving Dogs as Holiday Gifts

Those thinking of surprising someone with a dog or puppy should ask themselves a few questions before making any purchases.

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Gift-givers who plan on surprising someone with a pet for the holidays should plan ahead, ask questions and take a few things into consideration before adopting or purchasing a new dog or puppy for another person as a holiday surprise.

The ASPCA has compiled a list of questions people should consider before making any surprise pet purchases for another. They are: Has this person expressed an interest in adopting a dog? Do any members of the household have pet allergies? Is this person aware of the many years of responsibility and care associated with having a pet? Will this person be bothered by having pet hair on everything? Does this person's landlord allow dogs? Will everyone in the household be happy to receive a new dog? Are there other pets in the home? Will current pets welcome another? Does this person understand the financial responsibility of caring for a dog?

As an alternative, many shelters and pet stores offer gift certificates, which would allow intended recipients to pick out their own pets.

If the decision to purchase a pet is well thought out, the gift-giver may want to consider giving the new pet a few days before or after the holidays.

"Christmas Day is not the best day to introduce a new pet into the family," said Julie Washburn, public relations coordinator for pet retailer Petland Inc. "Young pets are like babies, and they need some time and extra attention to adjust to the family routine ... If a pet is brought into the home a week or so before the holiday, it has time to adjust to the family."

For those who want the recipient to have something special to open on Christmas morning, possibilities include a gift-wrapped photo of the new pet, a dog care book, or grooming supplies. If a pet must be given on Christmas Day, Petland recommends that the pet should be kept occupied with their own toys, away from holiday traffic and provided with a safe and quiet location where they can rest.