



Tips on Bringing Home a New Pet

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Adding a new pet to your household is an exciting event! Maybe you're planning to visit the local shelter this weekend to meet your newest furry companion. Shelters are a great place to get to know a pet and determine if you have match made in heaven.

Did you know that many shelters will import pets from other shelters that have fewer resources? It's possible that your new pet may have moved from several states, or even overseas! This system is a great way for pets from all parts of the world to find their fur-ever home. As shelter exchanges and pet transports become more accessible, we vets take that travel history into account when caring for your pet. As a practitioner in the Pacific Northwest, a sick pet from the Southeast may have a different set of potential health risks than a pet with no travel history.

Take heartworm, for example. (No seriously, take it away!) Heartworm is a parasite that can be fatal, if left untreated. Heartworm is transmitted to dogs and cats through mosquitos. Mosquitos transmit the larval stage of the parasite into the bloodstream of cats and dogs when they bite. Over the next six months, the larvae develop into adult heartworms, which live within the chambers of the heart. As the heartworms reproduce, they can cause serious health problems as they fill the heart. Additionally, they can cause problems, such as infection or blood clots, when they die off. Even treating heartworms can be life-threatening. The treatment of an adult heartworm infection is significantly more expensive and hazardous than routine heartworm prevention protocols.

Though we have mosquitos in the Pacific Northwest, heartworms aren't considered endemic or native to this area. However, with the increased numbers of travelling pets, we have seen a rise in the number of animals who are testing positive for heartworms. Where we once would not have immediately considered heartworm as a potential cause of a newly diagnosed heart murmur, we now need to be extra vigilant about considering this possibility.

At this point you may be asking yourself what you can do to keep your new addition healthy. Well, I'm glad you asked! Our jobs as vets get much easier and more fun if fur parents can be active members of their pet's healthcare team. And as we know, preventive care is essential in the longevity of your pet. If you are aware, let us know where your pet has traveled or where your pet originally lived. This will help us determine the best and most effective preventive care plan. Circling back to my heartworm example, if your pet moved from a heartworm endemic area, our recommendations may be a bit different than if your pet had never left the Pacific Northwest. Our goal as vets is to keep your pet as healthy as possible so you and your pet can benefit from the Human-Animal Bond. With this goal in mind, I wish you the best of luck in finding your next canine, feline or other furry companion!

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