

## Advanced Planning for Animal Welfare



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For many Jamaicans, before we make any major additions or changes in our lives, careful planning is required. We must consider if we can afford a new car or home, is it the right time to have a baby, can one dedicate the time, effort and finances that are required?

So why don't we take similar consideration when adding a new pet to our household? Even the noblest of motives without due deliberation may lead to an animal being neglected or abandoned. Animals have the right to five welfare freedoms: freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition; from discomfort; from pain, injury and disease; to express normal behaviour and freedom from fear and distress.

Many animals are abandoned because no consideration beyond the ability of the dog to protect the home, or the cuteness of a curled up kitten is given. Dogs are discarded because owners didn't consider the frequent grooming costs associated with some breeds, euthanized because an emergency procedure is required and the owner refuses to spend the money on the animal, or the cat has diabetes and the owner is unprepared for the lifelong commitment required. We need to take

the time to contemplate the financial and emotional investment of owning an animal.

Can I afford to feed this animal for the next fifteen years? Do I have adequate facilities to house this animal, the time and patience required to housetrain this puppy? The tolerance when my male cat or dog strays, when the cat is shedding hair everywhere, or my female dog is attracting every male dog within a 15 mile radius. Can I afford the medical care: vaccines for my puppy and regular check-ups?

Should my animal have a medical emergency, do I have the financial resources set aside to address this? So before you buy that puppy, adopt that cat or even collect the hamster from the pet store, stop to consider, can I ensure this animal will receive the above freedoms? Can I truly offer a home where its welfare will be one of my priorities?

