

# Care For Your PET

## SHOULD I GET A PET?

Do you love animals and can you provide a good home? Getting a pet “to guard the house” or “because it is cute” are poor reasons that may result in a neglected, unwanted pet.

## ROVER OR KITTY?

What kind of pet do you prefer? Who will look after it? What kind of home do you live in? Does your family support your decision? You should find out about the characteristics of the animal and know how long it lives.

In Singapore, dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, mice, chinchillas, red-eared sliders (a terrapin) and many types of birds and fish are sold at pet shops. The average lifespan of the various animals is as follows:

Dog & Cat	:	up to 20 years
Rabbit	:	6 to 8 years
Guinea pig	:	4 to 8 years
Hamster	:	2 to 2½ years
Gerbil	:	2 to 4 years
Mouse	:	1½ to 2 years
Chinchilla	:	up to 18 years
Terrapin	:	longer than 20 years

## CHOOSING A HEALTHY PET

Look for the following signs of good health:

- bright and alert and moves comfortably when awake; restful when resting
- good appetite
- well-fleshed with full, healthy coat / external body covering and no excessive body odour
- clean, bright and clear eyes
- clean nose, ears and mouth

# ANIMAL WELFARE GUIDELINES

Animals need shelter, food and water, normal activity and exercise, and healthcare to stay well.

## SHELTER (HOUSING)

Pet housing should be clean, dry, well-ventilated and protected against sun, rain and strong winds. Communal housing should not be overcrowded. The pet should not be confined or unattended for longer than 24 hours. For convenience we can categorise housing as free-range, semi confinement and total confinement.

Free-range housing (where the pet has unrestricted access to the owner's home) is the preferred type of housing for dogs and cats. Be aware to protect the pet from hazards such as falls, poisonous plants or pesticides.

Semi-confinement housing is where the pet is confined for less than 12 hours in a 24-hour period. Proper confinement with space for the pet to move freely (including stand and stretch), sleep and eat should be provided. Non-slip flooring should be provided for dogs.

Total confinement housing is where the pet is confined for 12 hours or more in a 24-hour period. A specially constructed structure or area with separate sleeping, eating and exercise areas should be provided. The pet should be able to sun itself. Dogs should be provided with non-slip flooring. Pet birds should be able to spread their wings and fly short distances.

Tethering (i.e. tying a pet to a fixed object) is NOT appropriate housing but is for restraining a pet for short periods. The pet should have shelter and be able to move easily without risk of strangulation.

## FOOD AND WATER

Provide food of good nutritional value and quality. At all times give fresh clean drinking water. Never feed spoilt leftover food or swill.

## NORMAL ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE

Animals need normal activity and exercise. They should be able to move freely, groom themselves and perform bodily functions. Pets kept in semi or total confinement should be let out to exercise for not less than 1/2 hour each time.

## HEALTHCARE

Prevention is better than cure so provide your pet with a minimal-stress environment, proper food and free-choice drinking water. Dogs and cats with long, fine hair should be groomed daily and periodically sent for a professional groom. Your dog or cat should be vaccinated against infectious diseases and, if necessary, treated for external and internal parasites. Go to a regular veterinary clinic for advice on preventive healthcare measures. Know your pet's normal routine, behaviour and eating habits, as any deviation from these can signal illness. If your pet appears off-colour, you should watch it closely for the next 48 hours. If it does not improve, you should take it to see your veterinarian. On the other hand if you pet is obviously sick, diseased or injured, you should not delay in taking it to your veterinarian.

## DOGS

The dog makes a good pet, companion and co-worker. It is often regarded as man's best friend because of its renowned loyalty to its owner. This stems from its pack animal instinct which it derives from its ancestor the wolf.

### PUREBREED OR CROSSBREED?

Purebreed dogs have well-defined breed-specific physical, temperamental and behavioural characteristics. Fanciful selective breeding and unscrupulous in-breeding however have resulted in purebreed dogs with congenital abnormalities and weaker constitutions. Many popular breeds have long coats that need daily grooming and periodic

professional grooming.

Crossbreed dogs on the other hand are hardier, easier to look after and more adaptable.



## MALE OR FEMALE?

An unsterilised female dog comes on heat about once every 6 months and can leave one with a litter of unwanted puppies. Sterilisation prevents this. Female dogs are more loving and homely and easier to manage while male dogs are more territorial and aggressive. Male dogs are often kept to guard premises and are more likely to bite. Sterilisation makes both male and female dogs better pets (see the section on sterilisation).

## PUPPY OR DOG? WHERE FROM?

A puppy needs more care and attention but is easier to train and socialise while the adult dog comes with set behaviours. Decide whether you want a playful and active companion, or a quiet and homely one. There are many puppies/dogs looking for good homes at the SPCA. You can also check with friends, dog breeders, pet shops or adopt a stray.

## LOOKING AFTER YOUR PET DOG

When your puppy first arrives it should be quickly familiarised with its new home and made to feel that it belongs. It should be taught the house rules which should be agreed by your family and enforced consistently.

Socialise your dog with your family, friends and other animals so that it will grow up well-adjusted and behaved. It can be socialised with most animals if it understands that they are all one family. It is best to socialise them when young. This should be done gradually and in a relaxed atmosphere.

Discipline and train it well. Training requires a lot of patience on your part. Reward your dog for each instruction correctly followed. Food or attention is commonly used as reward. Regularly repeat the instruction to reinforce what has been learnt.

Punishment of a wrong behaviour may sometimes be needed and if done should be immediate, i.e. at the time of the wrong behaviour. You do not have to beat the dog to punish it. A stern scolding or a very firm scruffing of the neck may be enough. The punishment should not harm the dog.



You can also take your dog for formal obedience training conducted by a professional dog trainer. As the training builds on the m a s t e r - d o g relationship, both you and the dog must attend the training together. Following the



formal training, you should reinforce the lessons by periodically repeating the training exercises at home.

Your dog should preferably be allowed unrestricted access of your whole house but it is good to have an area where you can confine it for those occasions when it cannot be let loose.

You can feed your dog homecooked food or commercial dog food. If you feed homecooked food it should be balanced and varied to include grain staples, meats and vegetables. Leftover food from the dinner table is acceptable so long as it retains the nutrients and is fit for human consumption. Never feed your dog spoiled food or swill.

Commercial dog food is formulated to cater to the dog's needs. It is convenient and can be stored. Dry food is preferred over canned food because dry food contains nutrients in much greater concentration (for the same weight of food) and the dog will only eat what it needs and not more. This helps to prevent obesity. Dry food also aids dental health and oral hygiene.

Dogs with long fine hair should be groomed daily to ensure that the hairs do not get matted. Mats form especially after a bath if the wet hair is not brushed and dried properly. The nails should be clipped regularly to prevent in-growth. This is usually not necessary if the dog gets regular exercise on rough, hard ground. If your pet has a short coat regular bathing with a suitable dog shampoo will suffice. You should not need to bathe your dog more than once a week.

It is recommended that a longhaired dog be sent for professional grooming once every 3 months. Professional grooming usually consists of a bath (and a de-ticking wash if necessary), emptying of the anal sacs, cleaning of the ears, clipping of the nails and a suitable haircut.

Your dog should be vaccinated against distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, kennel cough, influenza and parvovirus at 6 weeks, 10 weeks and 14 weeks of age (or 8 weeks and 12 weeks of age), and once a year after that. It should be dewormed against roundworm, hookworm and tapeworm. Consult your veterinarian.

## BIODATA - DOGS

Lifespan:	up to 20 years
Reproductive age:	from 5 months
Gestation period:	58 to 64 days
Average litter:	2 to 6
Weaning age:	6 weeks
Age when eyes open:	about 10 to 14 days

## DOG RULES

All dogs older than 3 months must be licensed. Licences can be obtained from the Centre for Animal Welfare and Control (CAWC) located at 75 Pasir Panjang Road, Singapore 118507. Applications can also be done in person or by mail or fax. Licences are valid for 1 year. The current fee for a male dog and a sterilised female dog is \$14.00. The fee for an unsterilised female dog is \$70.00. There is a one-time registration fee of \$6.50 for each application.

Private premises are allowed a maximum of 3 dogs. HDB apartments are allowed 1 dog of an approved small breed or its cross. The cross should be 40 cm or less at the shoulders and weigh 10 kg or less.

All dogs have to be leashed when in a public area. In addition, the Pit Bull, Akita, Neapolitan Mastiff, Tosa and their crosses, and the Bull Mastiff, Bull Terrier, Doberman Pinscher, German Shepherd Dog (and related breeds), Rottweiler and Perro de Presa Canario must also be muzzled.

Owners should not allow their pets to run at persons, vehicles or bicycles in public places or cause injury to any persons. They should also not allow their pets to become a nuisance (e.g. uncontrolled barking, defaecating in public places, etc).

# CATS

The cat has an independent nature and makes a good pet for someone with a busy lifestyle. Like the dog, crossbreed cats are hardier and easier to look after. Our local street cat is well-suited to our climate and makes an excellent pet.

## LOOKING AFTER YOUR PET CAT

As with the dog, you should familiarise your cat with your home and get it to socialise properly. However as the cat is not a pack animal and is more independent, it may require more effort and ingenuity to train.

Feed your cat with either homecooked or commercial cat food. Contrary to popular belief, cats are carnivorous and can eat any kind of meat although they prefer fish. The local fish that is so often fed to cats - the 'ikan kuning' - can actually be unhealthy if it is the only food fed. This fish has high levels of unsaturated fatty acids and low levels of Vitamin E and other anti-oxidants when overcooked. Feeding a mostly 'ikan kuning' diet can result in 'yellow fat disease', a painful affliction which is sometimes associated with kidney problems. Also, this fish has a bone near the bottom of the gill flaps shaped like a 3-pointed star. This could get stuck in the throat and if not removed can cause serious infection and starvation. Anesthesia is usually required to remove the bone.

A variety of homecooked foods should be given, comprising grain such as rice, meats and vegetables. However cats are very finicky eaters and often will only eat one kind of food. So, it is important to feed your cat dry food to guarantee that it gets a correctly balanced diet that includes Vitamin A and taurine which have to be supplied pre-formed in its diet. Most commercial brands on the market are acceptable since they are formulated to cater to the cat's needs. Dry food is again preferred over canned. Do not feed your cat commercial foods formulated for other animals.



Most owners let their cats wander freely around the house. If you live in a highrise apartment, you should put up suitable grills on the windows and balconies to prevent your cat from falling off the building. If grills are not an acceptable option, then avoid hanging things that might attract your pet's attention (e.g. wind chimes) on or near the ledge. You can also make the ledge wider and cage your pet when you are not in.

If your cat likes to leave your premises and this disturbs your neighbours, you may need to keep your cat in a large cage. Ensure that the cage is big enough and there are objects for your cat to play with. Cats spend much of their time resting and snoozing, so confinement does no harm. However cats like to climb so you should make the cage multi-tiered. When you are home, allow your cat out to interact with you. Do not leave your cat unattended for more than 24 hours.

A healthy cat spends much time grooming, so bathing is not usually necessary. Longhaired cats should however be groomed daily.



Cats adopted from the streets or a communal environment should be bathed with an anti-parasitic shampoo to remove fleas and fur or ear mites that might be present. To bathe your cat, firmly hold its front paws with one hand. Use warm water and avoid getting water or shampoo into the ears, eyes and nostrils. There will be some struggling and possibly scratches but with practice the sessions can become quite enjoyable. Some cats may need periodic professional bathing and grooming. If sedation is necessary, make sure it is done by a veterinarian or under his/her supervision. If it has ear mites, have your veterinarian prescribe some eardrops.

Get your cat vaccinated against cat flu and enteritis at 6 weeks, 10 weeks and 14 weeks of age (or 8 weeks and 12 weeks of age), after which it should receive a booster once a year. It should also be dewormed against roundworm, hookworm and tapeworm. Consult your veterinarian.

## BIODATA - CATS

Lifespan:	up to 20 years
Reproductive age:	from 4 months
Gestation period:	58 to 64 days
Average litter:	4 to 6
Weaning age:	6 weeks
Age when eyes open:	about 10 to 14 days

## SMALL MAMMALS

Small mammals include rodents like the guinea pig, hamster, gerbil, mouse and chinchilla, and the rabbit. They require less attention and are suitable as pets for people with busy lifestyles or who can only keep a pet for a few years. Again, proper socialisation is important in ensuring that your pet is tame and can be handled.

### LOOKING AFTER YOUR PET SMALL MAMMAL

All small mammals commonly kept as pets chew and gnaw, so the cage should be designed or made to withstand chewing. Cages of hard plastic and steel or wire are best.

The rabbit and guinea pig should be kept in a cage with enough room to exercise, eat and sleep. They can also be kept in open-top enclosures placed on the floor. You may place the enclosure in the garden but do ensure that your pet has proper shelter and protection against stray animals.

The hamster, gerbil, mouse and chinchilla are climbers and should be kept in a cage that is tall and closed at the top. There should be space for exercise, eating and sleeping. A running wheel or similar exercise item should be provided.

Always provide sufficient clean bedding in the form of straw or hay, wood shavings, sawdust or shredded paper. The bedding will absorb wet waste and allow the animals to build a 'nest' for security. Wet or soiled bedding should be regularly discarded. Do not use shredded newspaper as the newsprint may be toxic to some of the smaller animals. Chinchillas should be provided with a dust bath, which helps to remove excess moisture and oil in their fur and keeps the chinchillas clean.

Most small mammals can be kept in pairs or small groups so long as they have sufficient space and are compatible. Personality clashes between individual animals are less likely if the animals have been kept together from young.

The chinchilla has a very thick luxuriant coat that makes it more suited to a cool, dry environment. Air-conditioning should therefore be provided wherever possible. At the very least, a fan should be provided to circulate the air. However the fan should be faced away from the cage or set on oscillation mode.

Commercial pellets are readily available for feeding different types of small mammals. Feed the pellets suited to the respective animals. The animals are herbivorous and should be provided with hay (as bedding and food), greens, cabbage and salad crops, carrots, apple, etc. Dried fruits and nuts also add variety to the diet. Guinea pigs need Vitamin C in their diet. As Vitamin C in commercial foods is stable for up to 3 months only, supplementation should be considered if the date of manufacture is not known.

These animals have teeth that grow continuously throughout their lives hence you should provide a piece of chalk (calcium carbonate), cuttlefish bone or softwood for them to chew on so that their incisors do not overgrow. Overgrown incisors can result in the animal starving because it cannot eat. Periodically, the incisors may need to be trimmed by your veterinarian.

The hamster has two cheek pouches for storing and transporting food. Check periodically that these are not impacted or infected. Consult your veterinarian if necessary.

Clean, fresh drinking water can be dispensed in heavy water bowls which cannot overturn or in commercial water droppers hung on the cage.

Be gentle when handling your pet as it is fragile and can be prone to injury. Hamsters and mice may bite. Do not pick up your pet rabbit by its ears, but scruff it and quickly support its body with the other hand. Cradle it in your arm with its head in the crook of your elbow.



## 'POPULATION EXPLOSION'

Hamsters, gerbils and mice are especially prolific. It is therefore best to start with just one animal. If you want to keep two, choose two of the same sex. To sex the animal turn it belly up and look for 2 'openings'. In the male the openings are further apart while in the female they are closer together. Young animals can be difficult to sex. The shop owner should be able to help you choose; if he cannot you should not be buying from him. Your veterinarian can also confirm the animal's sex.

### BIODATA

Lifespan	Rabbit	6 - 8 years
	Guinea pig	4 - 8 years
	Hamster	2 - 2½ years
	Gerbil	2 - 4 years
	Mouse	1½ - 2 years
	Chinchilla	up to 18 years
Reproductive age	Rabbit	from 4 months
	Guinea pig	from 1 month
	Hamster	from 6 weeks
	Gerbil	from 10 weeks
	Mouse	from 6 weeks
	Chinchilla	from 8 months
Gestation period	Rabbit	30 - 33 days
	Guinea pig	59 - 72 days
	Hamster	15 - 21 days
	Gerbil	24 - 26 days
	Mouse	19 - 21 days
	Chinchilla	111 days
Average litter size	Rabbit	4 - 12
	Guinea pig	1 to 6
	Hamster	4 - 7
	Gerbil	5
	Mouse	8 - 12
	Chinchilla	usually 2
Weaning age	Rabbit	7 - 8 weeks
	Guinea pig	3 weeks
	Hamster	20 -25 days
	Gerbil	21 - 24 days
	Mouse	3 - 4 weeks
	Chinchilla	6 - 8 weeks

# BIRDS



Birds are popular for their beauty, colour and ability to sing and mimic sounds and human speech. Some with exceptional singing or mimicry talents can be very valuable. Not all birds are suitable as pets. For example, the cockatoo can be very noisy and bite; the lorikeet ('lory' in short) although colourful and pretty produces unpleasant, liquid faeces because of its fruit and nectar diet.

## LOOKING AFTER YOUR PET BIRD

A well-socialised bird is easy to handle and manage. As many birds these days are bred on farms they are used to humans and make good pets. Birds hand-reared from young are very tame and attached to their owners.

Cages should be large enough to permit the birds to stand comfortably, stretch their wings and fly short distances. Rectangular cages that are long rather than tall are best. There should be perches (can be sticks of softwood or branches of suitable diameter) and containers for food and water. Groups of birds that are compatible can be housed in an outdoor aviary.

Clean the cage daily preferably at a certain time and in a certain way, as birds like the security of familiarity. Lay newspaper on the cage bottom to allow easier disposal of waste. Disinfect the cage weekly. Most commercial disinfectants like Dettol can be used but make sure that it is washed off and the cage dried thoroughly.

Provide food and water in a regular, consistent manner. Ideally, feed your bird a little in the morning and a little at night. In this way the bird is usually hungry and will eat most of what you offer and it will not become a fussy eater. Morning and night feeding simulates conditions in the wild and will produce a healthier bird overall. Regulated feeding is often also used as a means of taming birds. A bird that is slightly hungry will come to you for food and soon learn to associate you with the pleasure of receiving food.

Be familiar with your bird's normal eating pattern, i.e. the variety and amount of food that it consumes. Any deviation from this could be an early sign of illness.

The major cause of illness and disease problems in pet birds is an improper diet leading to malnutrition, dietary deficiencies and often death. A balanced diet comprising a variety of foodstuffs should be given. If your pet is a seed eater, a good seed mixture is the basic ingredient in its total dietary needs. Buy only quality products that have a sufficient variety of seeds. Your pet will be malnourished if it has a habit of eating only 1 or 2 types of seeds,

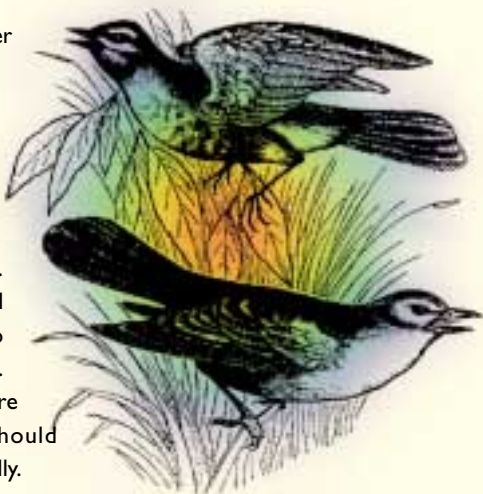
Many pet birds 'de-husk' the seeds before eating them, leaving the husks on top of the uneaten seeds. So, you should regularly remove the husks so that your pet can get to the uneaten food below.

Ensure that the seed you feed is fresh and not mouldy. Beetles and their larvae, which can occasionally be found in the feed, are not harmful.

Fruit, vegetables and leafy greens should be fed to your pet every day. Generally your pet can eat any fruit or vegetable that you can eat. Ensure that you wash them thoroughly. Ripe fruits and vegetables should not form more than 25% of your pet's total diet.

Provide a shallow saucer of clean water for the birds to bathe in. This daily routine is a good way to know whether your pet is sick, as it will stop taking baths if it is unwell.

Besides an improper diet, another major cause of illness or disease is stress. Birds are easily stressed by unfamiliar people or other birds. Therefore, avoid making changes to its environment. Where changes are necessary you should make them gradually.



If you purchase a new bird to add to your multi-bird aviary, quarantine it for at least 2 weeks to ensure that it is disease-free.

## BIODATA

### BUDGERIGAR

Lifespan	6 to 8 years; can reach 20 years
Brood size	3 - 6 eggs
Incubation	about 18 days
Brood leaves nest at	4 - 5 weeks of age

### CANARY

Lifespan	6 - 9 years; can reach 20 years
Brood size	3 - 6 eggs
Incubation	about 14 days
Brood leaves nest at	about 16 days of age

### FINCH

Lifespan	5 - 8 years
Brood size	3 - 7 eggs
Incubation	12 -14 days
Brood leaves nest at	about 2 -3 weeks of age

### PARAKEET

Lifespan	10 - 15 years
Brood size	2 - 7 eggs (small parakeets) 2 - 4 eggs (large parakeets)
Incubation	18 -21 days (small parakeets) 21 - 28 days (large parakeets)
Brood leaves nest at	6 - 8 weeks of age

### COCKATIEL

Lifespan	10 - 14 years; can reach 30 years
Brood size	4 - 8 eggs
Incubation	18 - 20 days
Brood leaves nest at	5 weeks of age

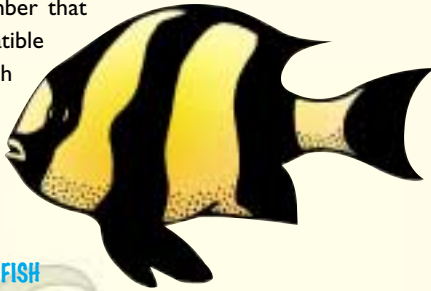
### INDIAN HILL MYNAH

Lifespan	up to 25 years
Brood size	3 eggs
Incubation	14 days
Brood leaves nest at	4 weeks of age

# FISH

Most hobbyists keep tropical freshwater fish although recently tropical marine fish have become popular with easier tank maintenance as a result of technological improvements in salt mixes and filtration systems. In this booklet we will deal only with tropical freshwater fish as the keeping of marine fish often require the assistance of professional companies that specialise in marine aquarium systems.

Fish are generally not difficult to keep. You can set up an aquarium by investing in a decent tank, air pump and filtration system. When choosing the fish, remember that some fish are not compatible with others e.g. angelfish and cichlids can be aggressive towards other fish. Ask the shop owner for advice.



## LOOKING AFTER YOUR PET FISH

Choose the tank according to the space that you have and the type and number of fish that you intend to keep. A tank of 60 x 40 x 45 cm or larger is preferred over a smaller one because it allows for a greater margin of management error. Keep the tank away from direct sunlight and sheltered from rain as excessive sunlight will result in algae overgrowth and excess rainwater may cause overflow and loss of fish. Place the tank on a stand strong enough to hold its weight. The tank described above would weigh over 68 kg.

Most hobbyists like to keep different types of fish to give more colour to the tank. Choose fish that are compatible and that will live at different depths so that they do not compete for living space. A good combination would be tetras, barbs, loaches and corydoras (catfish).

It is good to place some gravel at the bottom to give a 'natural' look to the tank. The amount of gravel used will depend on the kind of filtration system that you intend to use. Inert rocks and natural plants also offer security for the fish. Any 'natural' additions to the tank should first be soaked in 2 ppm of potassium permanganate for 2 to 3 days to eliminate any potentially harmful organisms. Other aquarium accessories include artificial lighting, thermostat or 'temperature strip', artificial plants and artifacts.

Filtration can be mechanical, biological or chemical. Mechanical filters physically remove particulate matter by settlement or straining through filter wool; biological filters utilise bacteria to break down solid and soluble waste; chemical filters such as activated carbon absorb potentially harmful substances. Filters are classified as corner box, polyfoam, external box, trickle or undergravel. These filters are combined with an air pump to circulate the water for effective filtration at the same time effecting aeration of the water. Most filters develop some degree of biological filtration capability with time. To promote this, do not scrub the filter clean but only rinse off gross debris. Filters that rely on bacterial action (such as undergravel filters) should not be turned off because the bacterial slime that develops on it need a continual flow of water. If the filter is turned off, this slime will die and contaminate the water when the filter is turned back on. Therefore, if the filter has to be turned off, you should ensure that it is properly scrubbed and cleaned.

The tank should be allowed to settle for at least 1 week before adding fish. When adding fish, place the bag in which the fish were transported into the tank for about an hour to allow the fish to acclimatise to the water temperature of the tank.

Regular water changes once a fortnight is encouraged. Each time not more than 1/3 of the water should be changed. Changes can also be made weekly in which case not more than 1/10 of the water should be changed. Tap water should be dechlorinated either by leaving it to stand for 24 hours or by using a proprietary dechlorinator (or one granule of sodium thiosulphate per gallon).

Alternatively, rainwater that has been safely collected without contamination can be used.

Water quality is critical for the health and well-being of the fish.

The water parameters that need to be regularly monitored and correctly maintained include pH, hardness, free ammonia and nitrite. There are commercial kits easily available for measuring these. The preferred pH is 6 to 8. Generally hard water is preferred. Water becomes harder with evaporation



and should be topped up with distilled or softened water. Levels of free ammonia in excess of 0.02 mg/litre for prolonged periods can be harmful; levels reaching 0.1 mg/litre (as can happen when the filter bed is not operating efficiently) are harmful even for short periods.

Commercial fish foods (in pellet, flake or crumb form) are easily available and preferred because they are balanced, safe and convenient.

Some live foods such as daphnia (water fleas), artemia (brine shrimp), tubifex (bloodworm) and mealworm can also be given for variety and to encourage activity. However, beware of introducing parasites and other undesirable things with such natural foods.

Feed the fish, not the tank. Many novice hobbyists overfeed resulting in the water being fouled by leftover food. Feed so that all the food is finished within 2 minutes.

When adding new fish to the tank, follow strict quarantine procedures to prevent diseases from being introduced to your existing fish. New fish should be quarantined in a small tank for 2 to 3 weeks (remember to place a few rocks for shelter and use a foam or box filter).

If your fish falls ill you can assist the diagnosis by looking out for uncharacteristic or odd behaviour, changes in colour or appearance, changes in feeding frequency and pattern. Also test the water quality for pH, hardness, free ammonia, nitrite levels. You should consult a veterinarian who has experience with fish diseases, or approach a fish club for advice.

## TERRAPINS

Most land and all marine turtles are protected species because they are endangered. The red-eared slider is the only type of terrapin allowed to be imported and sold as a pet in Singapore.

### LOOKING AFTER YOUR PET TERRAPIN

The terrapin needs a tank in which it can swim comfortably and which has a dry area for it to leave the water to rest and dry itself. The dry area can be a large piece of smooth stone or some sand or gravel compacted to form a beach. The water in the tank should be kept clean.

The terrapin is omnivorous i.e. its natural diet consists of both animal and plant matter. The young can be fed a variety of chopped fruits, vegetables, cold hard-boiled egg, whole sprats and small pieces of raw meat. Sprinkle onto each meal mixture a liberal amount of vitamin and mineral supplement. You can also give small cubes of chopped whole fish, crustaceans, prawns, shrimps and snails.

The mature terrapin can be fed the same except that the food can be given whole, or it can be given commercial pellet food. Juveniles should be fed daily while mature terrapins can be fed daily or every other day. As terrapins usually feed in water, the water can become dirty with leftover food and fecal waste. To avoid this, feeding should be done in a separate tank or container. As a rule, feed only enough food so that it can all be finished within 20 minutes.

### THE PROBLEM OF ABANDONMENT

Many people buy terrapins without serious consideration. After sometime, it becomes a liability and gets conveniently abandoned in ponds and reservoirs. The pet terrapin is used to being fed and looked after and cannot fend for itself in the wild. Many do not survive. Those that survive disrupt the ecosystem. There are now ponds where terrapins have completely replaced native species like the Malayan Box Turtle. So do think very carefully before getting a terrapin.



## STERILISATION OF PETS

Surgical sterilisation of the pet is important to prevent unwanted litters. This procedure is usually performed for the dog and cat and sometimes for the rabbit. The ovaries and uterus in the female animal are removed while the testicles are removed in the male. It is a routine surgical procedure performed by the veterinarian while the animal is under general anesthesia and has minimal risks. The animal usually resumes normal activity within 48 hours of waking up from the procedure.

Sterilised dogs and cats make better pets and are easier to care for. Females no longer come on heat and males not only lose the urge to roam and mate, they also have less of an urge to mark territory with urine and to “mount objects”.

Surgical sterilisation makes pets healthier. The female is not stressed by heat periods and does not run the risk of developing womb infection. It is also less likely to get mammary cancers.

Sterilisation has minimal side effects. It does not change the pet's character or intelligence as some claim. However it can cause the pet to become less active. For this reason it should be fed less to prevent obesity.

## OTHER RULES THAT APPLY TO PET OWNERSHIP

### PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Owners should ensure that they do not subject their pets to cruelty or permit cruelty to be inflicted on their pets. Cruelty to animals includes:

- cruelly beating, kicking, ill-treating, over-riding, overdriving, overloading, torturing, infuriating or terrifying an animal
- neglecting to supply an animal in confinement with sufficient food and water
- causing or permitting unnecessary pain or suffering to an animal.

### PET SHOPS AND ANIMAL EXHIBITIONS

A licence is required from AVA in order to operate a pet shop or hold any animal exhibition in Singapore.

### OWNING OTHER TYPES OF ANIMALS

Animals, birds or eggs should not be taken from nature reserves in Singapore.

Wild animals (e.g. monkeys, snakes) are not allowed as pets. CITES-listed animals and birds should not be kept as pets unless they have been legally imported with a permit from AVA.

## IMPORT AND EXPORT

The import or export of a pet animal or bird into or from Singapore requires a licence from AVA.

Dogs and cats imported from countries other than Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Ireland are required to undergo quarantine for not less than 30 days.

Dog breeds such as the Pit Bull, Akita, Neapolitan Mastiff, Tosa and their crosses cannot be imported.

## ANY QUERIES?

On matters relating to animal welfare, pet ownership, pet shops and animal exhibitions, please contact the Centre for Animal Welfare & Control (CAWC).

Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority  
Centre for Animal Welfare & Control  
75 Pasir Panjang Road  
Singapore 118507  
Tel: 6471 9987  
Fax: 6473 3687  
E-mail: [ava\\_cawc@ava.gov.sg](mailto:ava_cawc@ava.gov.sg)  
<http://www.ava.gov.sg>

On import, export or CITES matters, please contact the Import & Export Division (IED).

Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority  
Import & Export Division  
5 Maxwell Road #02-03  
Tower Block MND Complex  
Singapore 069110  
Tel: 6227 0670  
Fax: 6227 6305  
E-mail (Import/Export): [tan\\_yeow\\_fong@ava.gov.sg](mailto:tan_yeow_fong@ava.gov.sg)  
E-mail (CITES): [lye\\_fong\\_keng@ava.gov.sg](mailto:lye_fong_keng@ava.gov.sg)  
<http://www.ava.gov.sg>