



YOLO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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(530) 668-5206
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Animal Services
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Leinberger Detention
(530) 668-5254
Corrections
Inmate Work Programs

Monroe Detention
(530) 668-5245
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Press Release

Subject: Yolo County Sheriff's Office – Animal Services Section - Keeping Children, Cats, and Dogs Safe during the Holidays

**Contact: Vicky Fletcher Chief Animal Services Officer
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Date: November 27, 2013

Pets can complete a family. They bring companionship, joy, and stress relief. Pets offer an opportunity to teach children the responsibility of caring for another living thing. A pet can also have a therapeutic effect for children coping with difficulties.

Parents have the ultimate responsibility when deciding to add a pet to the family. Many different kinds of animals are available as pets suitable for children. Cats and dogs are among the most popular family pets. Safety for both the animal and the children has to be top priority.

Families choosing a cat or dog as a pet usually are attracted to breeds that are characteristically good with families and tolerant to children. It is important for parents to remember that all pets, no matter how easy going the breed, will bite or scratch if provoked enough. Parents must put in place safety measures for the benefit of both the pet and the child.

Babies, toddlers and preschoolers have to be supervised constantly with pets. Children of this age are extremely impulsive and do not understand the consequences to their actions. They pull hair, ears and tails; poke eyes, noses and mouths; and step or jump on legs, tails and bodies. Even the most docile animal that has put up with this treatment before could suddenly bite. Expecting an animal to tolerate this treatment is cruel and abusive. With children under 5, focus on teaching the child gentle touching.

“Service Without Limitations”



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. Show children how to pet the cat or dog from the neck to the back and stop at the tail. It doesn't feel good for the animal's fur to be ruffled backwards. Also, do not allow the child to pet the tail since his hands could touch the anal area.

. Make a firm rule not to touch the animal's face. This will lessen the chance of the child poking the dog's eyes or the cat's nose.

. Do not allow the child to put his or her face to close to the animal's face. Many animals do not like their space invaded. A dog can snap. A cat can scratch.

. Another rule you cannot waver from is not allowing a small child to pick up the cat or small dog. Hugs can easily turn into strangle holds and the pet may be dropped. Young children should only be allowed to hold a pet when they are sitting.

As children get older, they can be trusted with more independence when in the company of their pets. Even children in the lower elementary grades need to be monitored when playing with their pets. They like to include their cat and dog in their imaginative play and when reacting to what they see on television. Children like to play dress up or bad guy versus good guy shooting games.

Parents need to always take the responsibility for the pet and child's safety. More things to think about for children of all ages include:

. Never, ever allow a child to jump over an animal. The pet may move at the last minute and the child may jump on top of the animal causing serious injury.

. Teach children to allow their pet to get away. This is particularly true for cats. When you see your dog or cat getting up and moving away from your child and he or she keeps going over to the pet, intervene. This is the pet's message that the pet does not want to play. Also, do not allow your child to chase their pet when it's trying to get away. When an animal feels cornered it can attack.

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. Plan ahead and provide your pet with an escape route and safe place to go. Do not allow your child to disturb your pet when in its safe place.

. Many pets can become overwhelmed with holiday gathering. Having their beds or crate, favorite toys, food and water in a quiet room creates a welcome refuge where they can relax away from the foot traffic and unfamiliar faces in their homes.

For more information regarding this topic, please contact Yolo County Animal Services at 530.668.5287

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