

**Salt Lake County
Animal Services**



**The Principles of Responsible
Pet Ownership**



Salt Lake Valley A Pet Loving Community

It is estimated that approximately 300,000 dogs and cats live in Salt Lake County.

These pets are playmates to our children, loyal companions and an important part of our families.

In order to create a more pet friendly, accepting and safe community, it is important that we focus on ensuring we are all responsible pet owners.

Of those, 175,000 dogs and cats live in jurisdictions served by Salt Lake County Animal Services.

Where is the problem?

10,500 lost dogs and cats will enter the county shelter in 2011. Of those only 44% of dogs and 4% of cats will find their way back home.

In 2011 we estimate that 650 bites will be reported for the 381,000 people we serve.

However, our problem is not pet overpopulation, stray animals, nuisance or vicious animals. These very real issues are just the symptoms. *The actual problem is irresponsible pet ownership.*

What does it mean to be a responsible pet owner?

Five Principles of Responsible Ownership

1. License and provide permanent identification for pets.
2. Unless your pet is part of a responsible breeding program, spay or neuter pets.
3. Provide training, physical care, socialization and medical attention for companion pets.
4. Do not allow pets to become a threat or nuisance in the community.
5. Procure pets only from ethical and responsible sources.

Responsible Pet Owner Principle #1

License and provide permanent identification for pets.

1. A pet license and proof of current rabies vaccination is extremely important for community safety.
2. A license and identification (tags or microchip) are a ticket home for a lost pet.
3. Permanent identification for pets in the form of a microchip or tattoo is critical since pets often lose collars and tags.
4. It's the law.

1. Rabies is a preventable but deadly virus that can affect any mammal, including humans.
2. A possible rabies exposure for a pet that is not current on its rabies vaccination can mean six months of strict, isolated quarantine. Six months in isolated quarantine is very difficult and traumatic for a family pet and extremely expensive for the owners.
3. The information on the microchip or tattoo allows us to connect the pet to their license and owner information in the event a collar or tag is lost. This is particularly important for cats that rarely enter the shelter wearing a collar.
4. Violation of the County pet license ordinance is a Class B misdemeanor carrying a maximum penalty of up to 6 months in jail and up to a \$1,000 fine.

Responsible Pet Owner Principle #2

Unless your pet is part of a responsible breeding program, spay or neuter pets.

1. Over 30,000 lost and abandoned dogs and cats will enter shelters in the Salt Lake Valley in 2011.
2. If you decide to breed your pet, please do so responsibly. At minimum, a responsible breeder:
 - Follows all guidelines and recommendations for breed specific health and medical testing,
 - Does not sell, trade or barter of an animal that is sick, or ship or deliver to the buyer a puppy or kitten less than eight (8) weeks of age,
 - Will take back or make rescue/placement arrangements for any pet produced that has been displaced or abandoned at any time during its life.

1. There are many pets, of all ages, in our community that are waiting for homes. Every new litter produced has an impact.
2. The definition of a responsible breeder has changed over time.
3. The current standards and code of ethics that define a responsible breeder translate into significant investment and long term commitment on the part of the breeder.
4. For more information on the “Hallmarks of a Responsible Breeder” visit the Salt Lake County Website at www.AdoptUtahPets.com.

Responsible Pet Owner Principle #3

Provide training, physical care, socialization and medical attention for the entire life of their companion pets.

- ✓ Responsible ownership is much more than providing food, water and basic shelter.
- ✓ For pets to be happy, well adjusted and safe members of our community they must receive proper and ongoing training and socialization as well as proper physical and medical care.
- ✓ Commit to keep your pet for its entire life.

1. Training, physical care, socialization and medical attention can no longer be considered optional.
2. Dogs that have not been properly cared for develop behavioral issues that are unsafe for the community.
3. Pets become attached to their owners and it is very difficult on them when owners chose to give them up. Commit to training and socialization to prevent behavior issues and address any behavior issues as they arise.

Responsible Pet Owner Principle #4

Do not allow pets to become a threat or a nuisance.

- Provide proper and ongoing training and socialization as well as proper physical and medical care.
- Ensure your dogs are properly contained and in control whether in your yard, on a walk or in an off leash area.
- Be a good neighbor and ensure your pets do not become a noise or odor nuisance.



1. Socialize, socialize, socialize! It is unfair and unreasonable to expect a dog to react appropriately when he hasn't had any prior exposure and training.
2. Know your dog and don't set him up for failure. For example, if your dog doesn't come back immediately when you call or doesn't get along with other dogs then he or she is not ready for the off leash dog park.
3. Address behavior issues immediately and expose them to new situations involving people and other animals regularly.

Responsible Pet Owner Principle #5

Procure your pets only from responsible sources.

- Public and Private Shelters
 - Rescue Groups
 - Responsible Breeders



1. Obtaining pets only from responsible sources not only supports the work and philosophy of these sources but it encourages people to become educated and become more responsible.

It's All About Responsible Ownership

*Working together we can create a
community that is safe for both people
and pets.*

