

Giving Pets as Gifts

By Sherry Woodard

Are you thinking about giving your beloved a chocolate Lab puppy for Valentine's Day? Or maybe you're considering a furry chinchilla as a Christmas gift for your child. Give it a bit more thought – animals given as presents often end up unwanted and discarded at the local shelter.



Bunnies and chicks are popular animals to give to children at Easter. But, rabbits are sensitive creatures that require a considerable amount of care and those cute chicks grow up to be chickens (or roosters), which can be very messy. Unless you are prepared to take care of a full-grown chicken, real chicks are not a good idea. Stick with peeps (the marshmallow kind) instead!

Here's a better option if you would like to give the gift of a pet: Create a gift certificate stating that you will cover the cost of a future adoption. (Please offer to cover adoption costs rather than the cost of buying a pet from a breeder or pet store. Breed rescue groups exist for almost every type of animal.) Include some information to help your friend or family member make a wise decision. This strategy allows the recipients of your gift to choose their own pet and to decide when they are ready to care for a pet.

The recipients of your gift will appreciate being able to make these decisions themselves. Each type of pet is different in terms of care, feeding, behavior, cost, housing and demands on one's time. Puppies, for instance, need a lot of care. They cannot be properly socialized and house-trained if left alone all day during the regular work hours kept by most adults.

The gift recipient needs to take into account the commitment that he or she is making to care for an animal for the rest of that animal's life. For some animals, the commitment may be 15 years or more. There will also be future costs (food, supplies medical attention, etc.) for all types of animals, so the gift recipient must be aware that getting a pet is a financial commitment as well as a time commitment.

Sherry Woodard is the dog training and care consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.

See also: [Choosing the Right Pet for You](#)