

FACTSHEET

Assisting with pet care

The way we live has changed – our society is getting older, more people are living alone, and families often live in different cities or states. At some time, we all need support and help from someone else. Building good relationships with neighbours is a great way to create a support network.

For many people living alone, their cat (or dog) is truly their best friend and may even be their only companion. Helping them stay together healthily and happily is vitally important.

The Cat Protection Society of NSW has developed a program to assist community care workers help people and their pets stay together. However, not everyone needing help is receiving formal care services and there is still much we can do as a community to help our friends, relatives, and neighbours enjoy the benefits of their companion animals.

The daily pet care chart was designed to assist people with memory loss better care for their pets. It is a simple chart that reminds the pet owner of the things they must do each day to look after their cat or dog. A calendar should be used to note all the things that need to be done monthly (e.g. flea treatment) and annually (e.g. vet health check; vaccination). Charts and calendars can be adapted to the individual person and pet's needs. It is also a useful chart to help children learn responsible pet care.

Older, frail people might find it difficult to administer tablets and pastes to their pets. There are excellent flea and worm products available that are easy to apply ('spot-on' treatments). These come in single-dose tubes and are applied to the back of the cat or dog's neck. An all-in-one flea & worm treatment such as Advocate can make life easier. Remember, **never use flea treatment intended for dogs on a cat – it could be fatal.**

Kitty litter and pet food are heavy! Are you able to help a neighbour or relative simply by picking up supplies for them when you go shopping? There are many different types of kitty litter available. Suddenly changing the type of litter used could cause the cat to not use the tray, so if a different product is preferred it should be introduced gradually (mixed in with the litter the cat is used to, gradually increasing the amounts over time).

The frequency of kitty litter changes will depend on the type of litter used: crystal litter lasts longest and a full tray of crystal litter will generally last one cat for two weeks, as long as solid waste is removed at least daily. It is very important that litter is kept clean because cats won't use a dirty litter tray – it is a simpler task to assist a cat owner by changing the kitty litter each week than to deal with the mess that will result if the litter is not changed.

Automatic feeders (kibble dispensers) are good for cats and dogs who will self-regulate their diet, but for others can lead to overeating and unhealthy weight gain. There are more expensive feeders with timers that will deliver set amounts of food at set times.

For people living alone especially, there should be a sign near the phone with the emergency contacts listing how many and what species/breeds of pet/s live in the house. It would also be a good idea to help the person with creating files for each pet and assisting them to develop contingency plans in the event they can no longer (temporarily or permanently) care for their pet.

Sometimes we can feel shy talking to strangers but if we don't, we isolate ourselves and others. **A simple offer to pick up some shopping for a neighbour could be the beginning of a life-long friendship and also help a person and their beloved companion animal stay together.**

Sample daily pet care chart:

[Pet's name]	Morning	✓	Afternoon	✓
Sunday	- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play		- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play	
Monday	- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play		- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play	
Tuesday	- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play		- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play	
Wednesday	- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play		- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play	
Thursday	- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play		- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play	
Friday	- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play		- Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play	

Saturday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play - Check collar & lead - Brush [pet's name] 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wash food bowl - Feed [name food & quantity] - Change water - Dispose of any poo - Walk/play - Change litter tray 	
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While all care has been taken in preparing this document, it is intended to provide general information only and should not be taken as constituting professional advice. Mention of a product or business does not mean endorsement by Cat Protection.