

When my mother was a child - only seven or eight years old - she found a young dog. It was a small spaniel , about 1yr old. She found it one day walking home from school. She'd never had a dog and wanted to keep it, so she carried it home. She was afraid her father wouldn't allow her to keep it so she hid it in their garage. Later that night she crept out quietly and fed the dog, gave it a blanket and said goodnight. It was dark in the garage and the dog soon became lonely and frightened. It began to bark. Of course, my mother's family heard it and went out to see where the noise was coming from. My mother was really worried as she thought her father would be angry at her for bringing the dog home. When he found the dog in the garage, he was angry. But he was angry at my mother for leaving it in there by itself. He lectured her and explained to her the things she should and shouldn't do if she wanted to keep a dog as a pet. My mother was allowed to keep the dog and it became a very important family member - everyone loved it and it lived with them for 14 years until it died. My mother never forgot that lesson from her father and she told me (and my brother and sister) the same things when we were young. Before we were allowed to keep a pet we were taught how to be responsible and take proper care of them. We learned very quickly that animals are not the same as our bicycles and books but alive with feelings - just like us!

Since then I've had a special love for animals, and for many years now I've been working with them and trying to help the unlucky ones. During my last two years in Asia I've been a volunteer for animal welfare . While doing this I've seen a lot of differences in people's attitudes to animals.

In Japan the law to protect animals is very weak and as a result a lot of cruel takes place. Mostly the cruelty is through people's lack of knowledge and thoughtless-ness. The public aren't aware of the extent of cruelty that goes on so nothing is ever done to change the situation.

Children are often given puppies/kittens by their parents because they think they are cute and would like to play with them. When they grow into big dogs and cats the children are bored with them and no longer love them. Usually the parent's don't really want them either so they are either ignored, and spend their lives tied on chains, bored and unhappy, or they will be thrown away.

As you can see, if parent's don't teach their children pet-responsibility it is very sad for the pet and bad education for the children.

Adults too aren't responsible when they keep a pet. Before buying one everyone should think of all the things involved. If this was this case there would be less reasons for throwing them away later. The following things should be considered before getting a dog

1. How big it will become and do they have enough space to keep it.

2. How much will it cost to feed.
3. Do they have time and somewhere to exercise it. (all dogs need DAILY exercise)
- What will they do with it when they go on holiday - dog hotels and kennels can be expensive.
5. Are they prepared to look after it or pay vet fees if it becomes sick or old
6. A well-cared for dog can live 12yrs or more.