



Guest Column

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Responsible Pet Ownership Encouraged

As manager of the Galveston County Health District's Animal Services Division I would like to take this opportunity to reach out to the citizens of Galveston County concerning the subject of responsible pet ownership. This comes as many readers have expressed concerns over dogs roaming the streets, the nuisances created by these animals and public safety issues.

A pet can provide you and your family members with more unconditional love than you can imagine. But please remember that acquiring a pet is a lifetime commitment and should not be taken lightly.

Our staff at the Joe Vickery Galveston County Animal Shelter regularly sees many examples of pet ownership – some good and some which could be improved. The shelter holds an average of 150 animals or more at all times and our staff responds to an average of 50 calls per day for assistance.

District animal control officers are responsible for picking up stray dogs off of the streets in the unincorporated areas of the county and in the cities of Bayou Vista, Clear Lake Shores, Dickinson, Hitchcock, Kemah, La Marque, Santa Fe, Texas City and Tiki Island. Residents living in other communities may contact their city government directly for questions concerning animal services and regulations.

Caring properly for a pet takes commitment, time and work, but there are real rewards to be enjoyed from owning a well cared for pet.

We encourage all residents to be responsible pet owners and:

- Spay and neuter your pets
- Register your pet with the appropriate agency in your community.

- Protect the health of your pet by having them vaccinated against rabies and other diseases which is required by law
- Confine your pet to your property at all times
- Provide a cozy, dry sleeping area for you pet
- Keep dogs on a leash when not in a fenced in area to avoid bites and fights
- Feed your pets good, healthy food and make sure they have clean water to drink
- Always keep an ID tag on your pet
- Train your pets not to be a nuisance and train them to be good with people.

Concerning registration of animals the owners of all dogs and cats located in our service area can register their animals at the Joe Vickery Galveston County Animal Shelter, 3412 N. Loop 197 in Texas City. You can visit our web site at www.gchd.org for hours of operations or call them at (409) 948-2485.

Owning a pet is not just a privilege-it's a responsibility. These animals depend on us for, at minimum, food and shelter, and deserve much more. If you are considering taking a pet into your life, you need to think seriously about the commitment that pet ownership entails.

If you already have a pet, you need to consider if you are fulfilling all of your obligations as its owner. Not only is it the law, it is the right thing to do.

Kim Schoolcraft
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