





Get The Facts:

Ten Fast Facts about Companion Animals

- Approximately 63% of U.S. households — nearly 70 million homes — have at least one companion animal. The American Pet Products Manufacturers Association estimates that there are 43 million dogs, 37 million cats, 6 million birds, and 29 million other animals living in homes across the country.
- Because irresponsible people accidentally or intentionally allow their animals to reproduce, about 10 million “excess” dogs and cats will be killed in shelters this year, while millions of homeless animals live short, hard, hungry lives on the streets, only to die miserably from disease, injury, or predation.
- Always spay or neuter your companion animal to help reduce the tragic problem of overpopulation. Learn more about [spaying and neutering companion animals](#).
- Adopting a companion animal is not a decision that should be taken lightly. Anyone considering adopting a companion animal should seriously consider the lifelong commitment involved. Dogs may live 12-15 years and cats 15-18 years or more.
- People who care about animals should *never* purchase a companion animal from a pet store or breeder. Always adopt from a shelter or rescue group, or take in an animal from someone unable to provide adequate care. Learn about the problems with pet shops that sell animals through API’s [Little Shops of Sorrows](#) campaign.
- Even if you want a special breed of animal, always adopt rather than purchase. As many as a third of animals entering shelters are purebreds, and there are many purebred rescue groups, so there is a good chance you can get the animal you want and save a life at the same time.
- Most dogs sold in pet stores, through multiple breed newspaper ads, or over the Internet come from “puppy mills,” where dogs are bred solely for profit, are kept in abhorrent

conditions, and are frequently denied adequate veterinary care.

- Many procedures routinely practiced on companion animals in the United States — including declawing, ear cropping, and tail docking — are cruel and unnecessary and are illegal in other countries. Learn more in [A Rational Look at Declawing](#).
- In some localities, animals who end up in shelters may be sold into research through a practice known as pound seizure.
- Many commercial pet foods contain poor quality or potentially dangerous ingredients. Pet food provides a market for slaughterhouse offal, grains considered “unfit for human consumption,” and similar waste products. Learn more in Born Free USA united with API’s [What’s Really in Pet Food](#) report, and our guide to [choosing a commercial pet food](#).

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