Caring for Your Companion Animal

ANIMAL PROTECTION NEW MEXICO

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Companion animals such as dogs, cats, birds, chickens, and horses depend on their guardian to meet all their needs to keep them happy and healthy.

When caring for companion animals, we should put ourselves in their place. If you lived in their circumstances, would you feel cold, hungry, scared, or lonely? Animals experience those things, too. Make the necessary changes that allow your animals to become members of the family.

NEW MEXICO STATE LAW requires meeting a companion animal's basic needs: food, water, shade, and shelter, as well as rabies vaccinations for dogs, cats, and ferrets. Local laws are more detailed and specific to their communities' needs. Learn more about them at **apnm.org/animal-laws**

Food and Water

Your veterinarian can suggest the best food for your animal, how much to feed, and how many times a day the animal should be fed.

Food must be:
- nutritious
- appropriate for the animal

Drinking water must be:
- clean
- available at all times
- in winter, check for icing
- in summer, check the water temperature and refill often

Vaccinations

All animals should receive regular veterinary care to prevent and treat diseases or injuries and stay current on basic disease-preventing vaccinations.

State law requires current rabies vaccines for dogs, cats, and ferrets.

Spay and Neuter

Many counties and cities limit the number of animals that can be kept on a guardian's property and have laws requiring a permit for breeding. This helps control the overpopulation of unwanted dogs and cats.

Spaying and neutering surgeries:
- prevent animals from having offspring
- help prevent shelter overcrowding and unnecessary euthanasia (humanely ending an animal's life)
- make the animal less likely to contract cancer
- make the animal less likely to roam

Visit **apnm.org/spay-neuter-resources** for information on free or low-cost spay/neuter services throughout New Mexico.

Train, Don't Chain

It is against the law to allow dogs to run at large. But chaining for long periods of time is cruel and can cause:

- excessive barking and aggression (as they become overly protective of their limited space)
- dog bite injuries to people

(And most counties and cities limit the amount of time and methods by which an animal can be tethered or staked.)

Dogs are, by nature, intelligent and social. Train them and they will be happier and safer, indoors, with your family. Visit **apnm.org/training** for training resources.

Identification

Microchipping is the best way to ensure your lost animal can be returned to you. It involves the injection of a tiny chip beneath your animal's skin, between the shoulder blades.

Veterinary clinics and animal welfare officers have scanners that can read an animal's chip and provide the needed information to return the animal to their home. **Be sure to keep your contact information up to date with the provider of your animal's microchip.**

An ID tag on the animal's collar is also recommended. It should provide the animal's name and your contact information. To prevent accidental injury, cats' ID tags should be attached to a breakaway-type collar.

Because collars can be removed by a thief or accidentally pulled off by the animal, microchipping is much more reliable.

Shelter

With positive training, attention, exercise, and playtime, cats and dogs become wonderful family members and can easily be kept in the home.

When outside, companion animals must be provided with:
- shade (a doghouse isn't enough as it can become very hot inside on a warm day)
- weatherproof shelter to protect the animal from rain, snow, and wind (plastic shelters aren't recommended since they retain cold in winter and heat in summer)
- clean, dry straw for bedding (not blankets or towels, which stay wet and can freeze)
- large enough space for the animal to turn around and stand up but small enough to retain the animal's body heat

Horses and other larger animals should be provided a place to get out of harsh weather if they choose.