



**ANIMAL CARE AND WELL-BEING
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

COMPANION ANIMAL



Q. What are companion animals?

A. Companion animals are animals people own and care for as pets rather than raise for other purposes, such as food or work. Dogs and cats are traditionally considered companion animals, but other animals also fit into this category.

Q. Is it easy to train companion animals to participate in shows or other events?

A. Training animals can be easy, but it takes a lot of patience and time to do it correctly. In most cases, training should start long before the event. Do not try to teach a dog or cat everything at once. Instead, break down what you want them to do into smaller steps. Use rewards, such as treats or praise, to show the animal they are doing the correct action. Training sessions are also a great way to form trust with an animal and bond with it.

Q. Why don't companion animals live at the fair like other animals?

A. Living at the fair would be stressful for dogs and cats and that may make them sick. It is also a safety concern for fair visitors and the animals. All the people and noises as well as the different environment might overwhelm dogs and cats – even those that are very social. This could lead to their acting in a fearful manner possibly causing harm to other animals or to people. It is best for companion animals to come to the fair for a few hours to compete in their events and then return home.

Q. How can you tell when a dog or cat is sick?

A. Pet owners know how their animal normally behaves and can tell right away when something is not right. Sick dogs and cats eat and drink less, and rest a lot more than usual. They may also have a fever, throw up, show other symptoms or not want to play. When dog or cat owners recognize any of these signs of illness, they should take their pet to the veterinarian.



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Q. Do dogs like to be around other animals?

A. Yes, dogs generally enjoy the company of animals, especially other dogs. Dogs evolved from wolves, which are *pack* animals. This means they live in groups. Dogs do not have the same social structure as wolves, but they do like to be around other dogs, other animals or people. However, not all dogs will get along. People need to be careful when introducing animals that have not met before.

Q. Do cats like to be around other animals?

A. Cats are different from dogs and may prefer to be the only pet in a home. Domestic cats evolved from big cats (such as tigers and mountain lions), most of which are solitary animals. This means they live alone most of the time. Some cats enjoy the company of cats or other animals, but it will take time to know what a cat prefers. When introducing a cat to other animals, especially another cat, you must do it slowly and in a way that allows both cats to hide and escape from each other if they want to.

Q. Are companion animals part of the fair?

A. Yes, many fairs involve 4-H companion animal projects. These may be live events, such as showing or agility trials for dogs, or still projects, such as photography.

Q. Can I feed fair food to a companion animal that's at the fair?

A. No. Do not feed companion animals fair food. It could make them sick. Some foods are toxic for animals. This means these foods act like a poison for the animals. The food could hurt them. You should never feed a dog, cat or any animal anything without asking the owner's permission.

Q. Can I touch or pet a companion animal that is at the fair?

A. You should always ask the animal's owner before you try to pet it. Some animals may be friendly and enjoy the attention, while other animals may feel uncomfortable. It's possible they could hurt someone as a result. Animals face many new sights, sounds and smells they are not used to at the fair. This may cause them to be nervous. Because of this, an animal might scare easily if surprised by a person's touch. Even the most well-trained, friendly animals can be startled sometimes.

Q. Can I get sick from a companion animal?

A. Yes, there are some illnesses, called *zoonotic diseases*, or parasites, such as fleas or ticks, that a cat or dog can spread to people. Wash your hands after petting or being around animals before you eat, or before you touch your mouth, nose, eyes, ears or any open cuts. Keeping your hands clean will help keep both animals and humans healthy.



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