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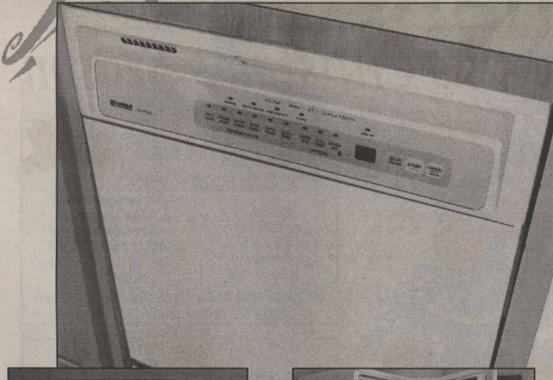




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## Be wary of giving pets as Christmas presents

How much is that doggie in the window? At this time of year, the short answer is more than either you or the doggie (or kitty) can afford.

Owning a pet is at least a 14-year responsibility that is one of the most rewarding relationships you will ever experience. Dogs and cats have a special trusting relationship with people and offer unconditional companionship and affection.

However, all of the best intentions in the world will not help that relationship if it gets off to a rocky start.

How many of us have thought that a puppy or kitten would be just the right thing for a lonely friend or family member? Or as we take a hard look at our aging dog or cat, think that perhaps he/she could use a playful young friend? These thoughts are not at all uncommon, and they should set off alarm bells for the following reasons.

During the holiday season everyone plays catch-up with friends and family, which means lots of visitors going in and out of your home, which creates the right circumstances for a new pet to slip outside unnoticed and become lost in an unfamiliar neighbourhood. In their eagerness to play with the new addition to your household, small children will often handle your pet too roughly.

Older pets in their twilight years become even more attached to their owners, and become jealous of a new young, playful puppy or kitten.

While a kitten can be easily trained to use a litterbox indoors, the cold blustery weather presents a significant obstacle to house training a shivering young puppy.

Tinsel, tree ornaments, turkey and chicken bones and leftovers given by well meaning humans are just a few of the hazards which your new kitten or puppy will have to navigate around.

All of this hustle and bustle causes stress which may lower your pet's resistance to disease and cause a variety of ailments which will necessitate a trip to an emergency clinic, because you may not yet have had time to find and develop a relationship with a veterinarian.

The word of advice for adopting a pet as a surprise gift for a friend or a member of your family if "never".

You may have to take into account apartment or rental leases, allergies, the person's work and leisure lifestyle and a whole host of other reasons which send a clear signal that at this point in time, for this particular person, having a pet just wouldn't work out.

Perhaps, the most important single reason against a surprise gift is that owning a pet is a lifetime commitment and each person should have the right to choose for him/herself the new member of their family with which they will forge a special bond of trust and friend-

There is nothing to prevent you or your friends from giving a good home to a pet (especially if adopted from an animal shelter) before or after the holiday season when you have the time and patience to work out any problems which may arise.

For information on the Humane Society of Canada call 1-800-641-

## CORRECTION

The incorrect price appeared in the

## Sea & Craft ad

in Sunday December 5th's edition of

> The Oakville Beaver. The ad should have

read:

All seven Trisha Romance Plates on sale for \$39.99 each.

Looking for a way to apply your skills and enthusiasm to help our community?



**Requires Volunteers POSITIONS OPEN:** • FUNDRAISERS SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE

& MANY OTHER POSITIONS For Information call