

JUNE 2014

# Good Housekeeping

EAST

## Are you Raising Them Right?

The unique challenges of expat family life

**LIVE LONGER**  
A FAD-FREE PLAN

**Frizz Factor**  
How to tame your mane

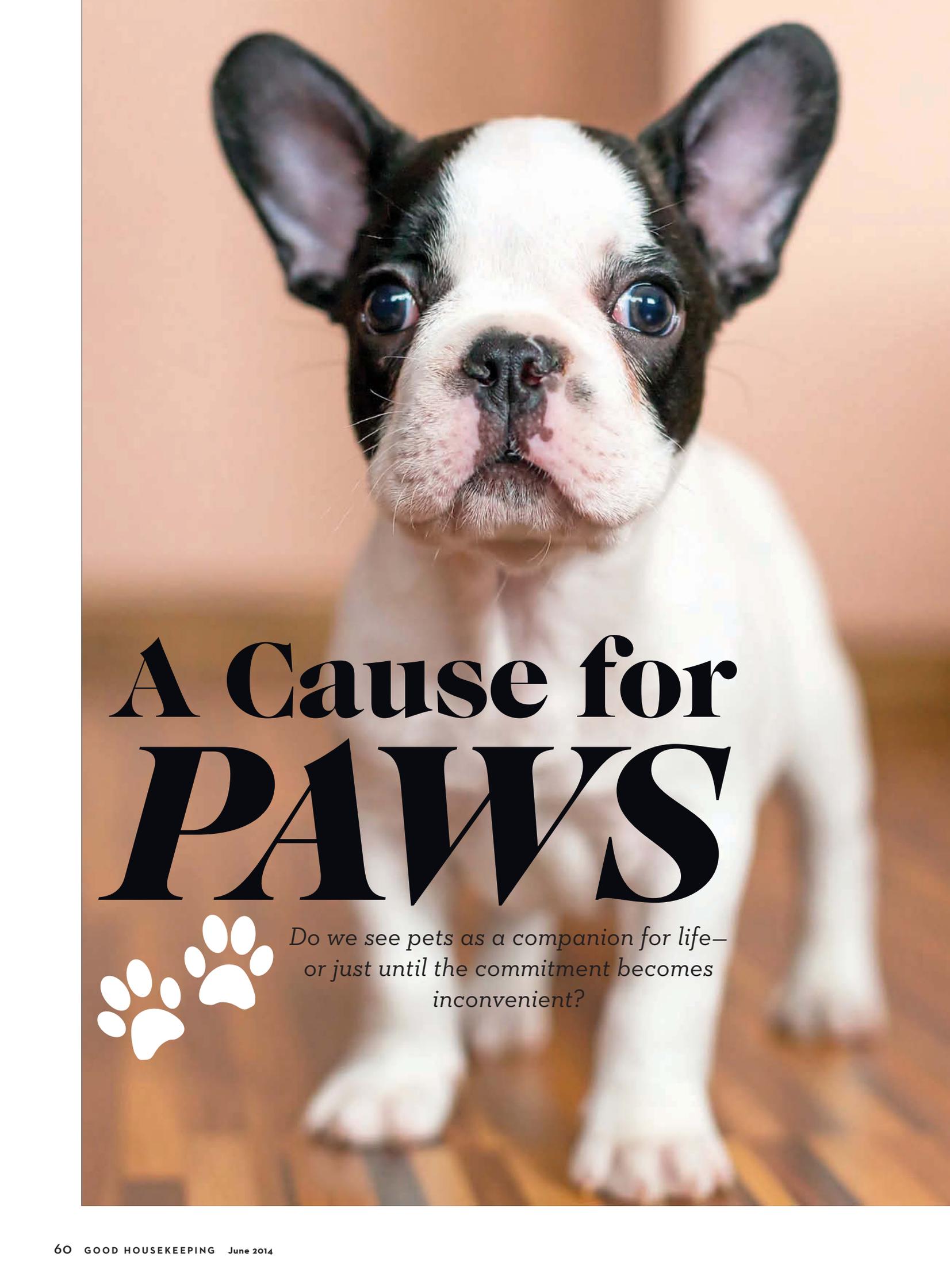
**7** EXPERT TIPS TO AVOID KIDS' DENTAL DRAMA

**Cause for Paws**  
Summertime petcare

21 clever ways to tackle clutter

**CHRISTY TURLINGTON-BURNS**  
Life lessons from the supermodel, mother and humanitarian





# A Cause for **PAWS**



*Do we see pets as a companion for life—  
or just until the commitment becomes  
inconvenient?*

**THERE'S A TWINSET** of cats that lives in a neighbouring building's car park. They're not like the usual strays you see lurking around, eyeing passersby with suspicion, but are instead quite friendly, purring and curling around my ankles when I pause to coo at them. "Left behind by the family," the building reception tells me. When their owners decided to move back to their home country, they made the choice to deliberately leave their two cats behind to defend for themselves. Still tame, the duo seek out the human attention that they have previously lapped up, as well as scraps taken from the communal bins and concerned residents they encounter. Each time I see them, they have shrunk in size and demeanor, becoming increasingly skittish, and with visible spines and knobby ribs poking up through thinning fur, until one day, they've disappeared completely. Reception doesn't know what happened to them, but suspects they were hit by a car or simply wasted away, one of the many fuzzy corpses picked up by security doing their early morning rounds. Sadly, this scenario is playing out over and over in residential areas, as the number of previously wanted pets being turfed curbside or left behind at shelters is steadily increasing.

### SUMMERTIME SADNESS

In a region where there are no official statistics on pet ownership, it's difficult to keep track of the exact number of displaced family pets local animal organisations see through their doors every year. However, anecdotal evidence is enough to reveal the disturbing increased rate of pet owners ridding themselves of their trusting companions. While owners may like to think their once-beloved family pet will easily find a new family to love and care for them, often this couldn't be further from the truth, with a large majority of rejected pets meeting an early demise.

Ellen Quanjer, manager of the Ras Al Khaimah Animal Welfare Centre, says that something as frivolous as holiday plans can be a deciding factor in ditching the family pet. "The number of surrenders peaks at the beginning of summer, as this is the time that people leave the country for either a long holiday and they can't or won't pay for long-term boarding, or they are leaving the country full stop and along with their furniture, they sell or give away their pets," she says.

Peta Wittig, founder of Adopt-Me.ae, an organisation that compiles adoption information from local shelters to simplify the rehoming process, agrees that the summer months bring an added workload to the already swamped shelters. "Speaking to many of the welfare groups and shelters, this time of the year is the toughest," she confirms. "With many of their foster families

leaving for holidays, the decrease in adoptions due to potential adopters doing the same thing (and in addition to) pets being abandoned, it all gets too much." Add in a lack of desexing regulations and lax owners, and the stray population has exploded, with the estimated quarter of a million feral cats now living on the streets being more than shelters can cope with.

### HOLIDAYS FOR HOUNDS

Committed to pet ownership, but need some guidance on preparing to holiday without them? Planning ahead is key, and a little prior organisation will keep both you and your four-legged friend happy and stress-free. The first step is to treat your pets as you would a dependent child, and ensure they will be cared for during your holiday. While the ideal situation is to take Fido along with you, many holiday plans aren't pet-friendly and you'll have to find someone to care for them to an acceptable standard. An animal-loving friend, close relative or home staff member are all responsible options. Make sure to raise the prospect of them caring for your pet while you're on a family vacay well ahead of your flight date (and that they have enthusiastically agreed!) to avoid a late-minute cancellation. If your friends have taken off on their own holidays, it's time to turn to a boarding facility. Book in at the same time you book your own hotels to guarantee a place as summer is one of the toughest months to get boarding secured. Look for positive

**"The summer months bring an added workload to the already swamped shelters"**



## Shiba's Story

**Shiba, an eight year old German Shepard has a story that is sadly now familiar to shelter workers, with her case passing through Adopt-Me.ae this March.**

Shiba's owners contacted Dubai Senior Dogs Project, with a familiar story about the family moving away. With no warning, they asked for her to be taken the next day. DSDP immediately agreed to help and asked for the dog to be brought in straight away. After this, there was no reply and no answer from owner despite multiple attempts. A few days later a neighbor informed the welfare group that the dog had been left abandoned outside in the heat in the family's backyard and the family had moved to Ajman. The neighbor, upon calling the owners, was told to do "whatever she wanted" with the dog. The DSDP immediately took the dog into their custody and took her to a vet. She was malnourished, nails overgrown, severe ear and eye infections and a large mammary tumour to boot. She wasn't spayed, and was in heat. This beautiful girl received the care she needed and is now in a foster home, waiting for guardians she now deserves.



online reviews or trusted word of mouth suggestions, and calculate the cost of board into your overall travel costs to ensure the budget won't be blown.

### HOMeward BOUND

For those relocating overseas, Quanjer says that responsible pet ownership begins before you bring home a fluffy ball of joy. "If you think in your line of work, or with your nationality, it is likely for you to move to a country in which it really wouldn't be easy to have a pet, don't take in a pet," she says. "You have to plan 15 years ahead. Does that country allow you to walk your dog? Does it have a vet? These are all questions you have to answer before you take on the responsibility for a pet." As the risks of abandonment are higher when families are under pressure to pack up their lives and relocate, it pays to be educated on what's required before your move. "Start reading up on the rules and regulations of exporting and importing a pet. Rules differ per country and change throughout time," says Quanjer. "We advise people to always hire a professional company to help you with the paper work. You don't want anything to go wrong when relocating your pets. You might have to pay a bit extra, but it saves you a lot of stress," she recommends.

Quanjer says that the stories and reasons given for pet abandonment are simply not acceptable in relation to how their decision will impact on the animal, listing the most egregious examples she's come across: "We recently had a man return the cat that belonged to his ex-wife, as his new girlfriend did not want anything that belonged to her—she wanted a new one. A couple moved back to the UK without their two cats, a year later they are now moving back to the UAE. Another couple were moving to Europe and felt that their dog was too old and would be far too expensive to

accommodate as they wanted to travel a lot—this dog had already been surrendered twice in its life."

### LOVE ME, DON'T LEAVE ME

Feel like leaving your pet to fend for itself—shelters often hear the phrase "returning them to nature"—is the humane think to do? Think again. "If you push the cat or dog out the door and hope for the best—I can tell you right now, your pet will die a slow and painful death. Domesticated pets are not equipped to fend for themselves and they will be attacked by other strays and most likely starve to death," says Wittig. Discarded pets have often lost most of their natural survival instincts thanks to domestication, and find it difficult to hunt for their own food and find shelter. If lucky, they may revert to the pack mentality and scavenge in urban areas, until they meet an untimely and terrifying death thanks to infection, disease, traffic accidents or malnutrition.

Along with rescued strays, animal welfare groups are also seeing a rise in pets checked in for boarding with owners never returning to claim their pets after the agreed upon period. "A couple booked their cats in for boarding while they were on holiday, a week into their stay they informed us that we could keep them as they would not be returning to the UAE, they had absconded," recalls Quanjer.

While shelter employees and volunteers are tireless animal advocates and lovers, there is a finite end to their resources, meaning euthanasia, not rehoming, is often on the cards for the unlucky ones. Even if your former pet manages to find a place at a shelter, it's a long road to recovery. Quanjer notes that all pets will be affected by being abandoned. "Cats are very territorial and struggle to get used to a new environment. This may make them

## How You Can Help

Cheat sheet for responsible pet owners

### Do your research before adding a pet to your family

Make sure that you can provide food, water, bed, vet care, love, safety, attention, company and everything a pet might need before taking the plunge. Not 100% sure? Hold off until you are.



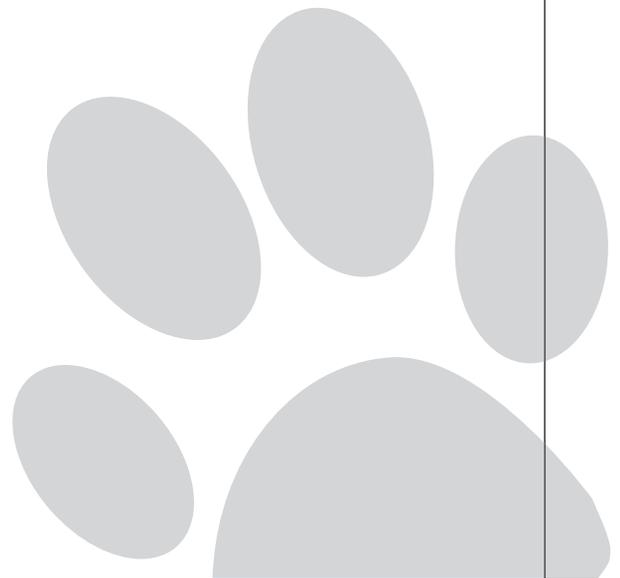
appear fearful or aggressive towards other cats and even people, when they would ordinarily be very sociable and loving. Dogs become really attached to their owners and will miss them immensely. Caretakers may be really nice, but they only have a limited amount of time to spend with them during the day and the dogs can become what is classed as ‘kennel crazy,’” she says.

The bottom line? Think long and hard before deciding to bring a pet into your family, and make sure you can cater to their wellbeing. Pets can greatly enrich your family’s life, but be aware of the lengthy commitment required to raise a happy and healthy furry friend.

## Lending Paws

### ANIMAL SHELTERS AND SOCIETIES IN THE REGION:

- Abu Dhabi Animal Shelter  
[www.abudhabianimalshelter.com](http://www.abudhabianimalshelter.com)
- Adopt-Me [www.adopt-me.ae](http://www.adopt-me.ae)
- Bahrain Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [www.bspca.org](http://www.bspca.org)
  - Feline Friends UAE  
[www.felinefriendsuae.com](http://www.felinefriendsuae.com)
  - Open Paws Riyadh  
[www.openpaws.org](http://www.openpaws.org)
- Ras Al Khaimah Animal Welfare Centre [www.rakawc.com](http://www.rakawc.com)
- Sharjah Cat and Dog Shelter  
[www.scads.ae](http://www.scads.ae)



### Choose adoption over breeders and pet shops

Buying rather than adopting just adds to the demand for puppy mills and unscrupulous backyard breeding. All breeds are available for adoption, and you’ll be sure to find the dog, cat or even parrot that best fits in with your lifestyle.

### Can’t commit to the 15+ years pet ownership often entails?

Foster a pet, and reap the same benefits of looking after a loving companion while preparing them for their forever home. Fostering is also a great way to test out if you’re cut out for pet ownership.

### Be sure to desex your pet ASAP

This simple procedure is the most responsible thing you can do for your pet’s health and your own peace of mind. RAKAWC offers free desexing from their mobile clinic, see [www.rakawc.com](http://www.rakawc.com) for more details.