

ANIMALS FIJI

# What Do I Need to Consider Before I Get a Dog?



Opinion



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New pups Max and Saffy in their new home in Taveuni.



Spike at his home in Taveuni.

Being a dog owner or pet parent requires commitment and responsibility. But while owning a dog requires time, effort and money, the rewards are the companionship, love and joy that the dog will bring to your life.

If you are considering getting a dog or a puppy that will turn into a dog, it is important to consider all the needs of the new pet. Also if you can, it is best to meet the dog before you bring one into your home.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU COULD CONSIDER:

Should I get a puppy or an older dog?

Puppies need a lot of time to train and to manage their high energy levels, but they can be a lot of fun while they are learning.

They can also be destructive when teething by chewing shoes and other items or digging holes in your garden until they are trained not to do that.

They will also need to be house-trained (to learn to go to the toilet outside not inside the house) and learn basic commands if you intend them to be house dogs.

A dog will usually grow out of those destructive behaviours when they are socially mature at around two years of age.

An older dog (over two years) will be calmer and have had some training but will still need to understand your commands.

They may have some learned behaviours and health issues, which may need extra time, care and money.

Given veterinary care and a balanced dog, the average lifespan of a dog is around 12-15 years and although you never know how long any dog will live, deciding on a more senior dog may mean you will need to deal with losing a pet sooner.

Can I afford to have a dog?

Owning a dog comes with financial responsibilities such as regular visits to the vet for vaccinations, worm and flea (parasite prevention) management.

If not already done, desexing so that your dog does not become pregnant or cause another dog to become pregnant will be necessary.



Spike enjoying his time at the beach in Taveuni.

You need to supply the dog with food and put some money aside for unexpected emergencies. If you bring home a more mature dog, you need to consider any possible pre-existing health conditions.

Will the dog suit my lifestyle?

When deciding what type of dog you get, it is essential to consider why you want a dog. Do you want a dog that runs around or would rather lie around? Do you want a guard dog, a hunting or herding dog, or one for companionship? Many Fiji dogs are called 'Fiji Specials', a mix of several breeds, so it may be hard to know their background.

SO, A SUMMARY OF THINGS TO CONSIDER ARE:

- 1. Time:** Dogs need time for daily walks, play, training and companionship. The amount of time depends on the breed – the bigger the dog – the more attention it needs.
- 2. Money:** Dogs have expenses such as food, veterinary care, toys and other supplies. Also unexpected medical costs can arise so you need to consider that in your yearly budget.
- 3. Training:** Dogs need training to behave correctly, to follow commands and to behave well in the company of other dogs and humans. Training requires time, patience and being

consistent in what you are asking them to do.

4. Health care:

Dogs need regular veterinary checkups, vaccinations and other preventative care to keep them healthy. Desexing your dog will help them live longer, be more loyal and

less likely to roam.

5. Exercise and playtime:

Dogs need exercise and playtime to stay healthy and mentally active.

6. Suitable living space:

Do you have enough room at your house or where you live for a dog to live? Is your home safe, secure, and suitable for a dog? A dog needs room to run around and a safe place to sleep.

7. Socialisation:

Dogs are social animals and enjoy interacting with people and other animals. Teaching them to act well with other people and animals is important for their well-being.

8. Long-term:

Dogs typically live for many years, some up to 15 years or older. It is important to consider this when getting a dog, as you will need to be prepared to care for it for its entire life.

Taking time to consider all the things that are listed is important so that you can make sure that you and your new dog have a happy and healthy life together.

Source: Animals Fiji

must read

ANIMALS FIJI

As a non-profit charity, Animals Fiji depends on the kindness of donations to continue in their work to support animals across Fiji.

To find out more about Animals Fiji's services and how you can help please contact their Savusavu Clinic at (+679) 998 6253 or Nadi Clinic at (+679) 993 6647 or visit their website at [www.animalsfiji.org](http://www.animalsfiji.org).  
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## Annie and Lee's story

Annie and Lee had never owned a dog. So, when they settled in Taveuni, they decided owning a dog would be a good idea.

They chose a puppy named Spike, who became a beloved member of their family.

They enjoyed typical puppy days and spent lots of time training and playing with Spike and taking him for long walks. "Spike truly brought us joy and a sense of security", Annie said.

Regular Veterinary Clinic visits through Animals Fiji's then clinic on Taveuni and via our Animals Fiji Savusavu Clinic ensured Spike received all the treatments he needed.

Around 2-3 years old, Spike did develop a severe allergy that needed a lot of attention to work out the best way to treat the al-

lergy to help Spike feel okay.

Unfortunately, when he was just over seven years old, Spike was found to have untreatable cancer. "I don't know how I would have coped without Animals Fiji's support and advice," Annie said.

And so, after a long illness, Spike passed, leaving Annie and Lee sad and alone.

After taking time to mourn Spike, Annie and Lee decided to adopt from Animals Fiji Nadi Shelter and Max and Saffy joined their family. Quickly settling in and becoming part of the family, the pups particularly like going on long walks and digging up the garden, much to Annie's dismay.

Annie and Lee love their new life with Max and Saffy and the continued support and advice from Animals Fiji will keep their new pups healthy and strong.

The decision to wait: Miriama's

story

Seven-year-old Miriama desperately wanted a dog of her own. Her parents lived in a small house which was also their place of business and were always very busy.

Miriama was young and had lots of interests and the parents were concerned that she might not look after the dog or lose interest in caring for it.

At their house there was no way to keep a dog in their yard and it was surrounded by busy streets and a lot of other dogs.

As the family were contemplating moving house in a year or two and they were not sure of suitability of the new house as a home for a dog, the decision was made to not get a dog until Miriama was a little older.

This will make sure that Miriama is ready to look after a dog and that their new house will be a safe place for a dog to live.

Feedback: [www.animalsfiji.org](http://www.animalsfiji.org)