



**PRESS RELEASE  
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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CELEBRATE NATIONAL PET WEEK!**

*By M. Kathleen Shaw, DVM  
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Always the first full week in May, National Pet Week is dedicated to celebrating the over 200 million pets that enrich our lives. This is especially true in Vermont, which tops the nation in pet ownership per capita. Created in 1981 by the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Auxiliary AVMA, National Pet Week is a time to honor the many roles pets have in our lives and to promote responsible pet ownership.

Whether your pet is a horse, bird, cat, dog, rodent, or any other of the amazing creatures in our world, our pets are there for us and don't ask much in return. During National Pet Week, we encourage pet owners to celebrate the bond and provide their pets with all that they need for a healthy and enriched life every week of the year.

Keeping your pet happy and healthy involves providing three important things: proper housing and nutrition, appropriate exercise and environmental enrichment, and providing medical care to keep them healthy and disease free.

Many of our pets have been domesticated from their wild roots, and so it is important to provide them with ways to keep their minds and bodies active. Make the time to play with your cat or walk your dog several times a day. Buy or make them a new toy and use interactive play to help them keep their minds busy. Owners of birds and exotic pets can research ways to modify their pets' living space to provide variety and entertainment. This doesn't have to be buying expensive toys - appropriate homemade toys are just as good.

Nutrition and medical care are an important part of responsible pet ownership. One aspect that many pet owners should consider before adopting a pet of any type is the ability to afford veterinary care to prevent parasites and disease and treat any that may occur in the pet. Annual physical exams and preventative medications are not without cost, but are critical to pets' well-being. Before you get a new pet or if you have one and aren't sure what its needs are, talk to your veterinarian. They can provide you with accurate information to help you keep your pet healthy and happy.

So, whether your pet is a horse or a gerbil or any size animal in between, take time during National Pet week to celebrate the bond! Take your dog for a walk, brush out your horse and go for a ride, play with the cat, or make some additions to your caged pets' environment to challenge their minds! They give us so much love and comfort: let's make sure we provide what they need this week and every day of the year. For more information, go to [www.petweek.org](http://www.petweek.org).

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