Top 10 New Year's Resolutions For Pets
10 Simple Things To Improve Your Pet's Health and Happiness

1. Measure your pet's food

Most people owners are overfeeding their pets without even knowing it. Make sure that you take out a proper measuring cup or scale, and actually determine the amount of food you are feeding. **Don't believe the amount of feeding that is provided on the food's packaging** – you should always check with your veterinarian for guidance on how much your pet should be eating!

2. Review the food you're feeding

In addition to thinking about how much you feed your pet, you should also do a review each year to make sure what you are feeding your pet makes the most sense. Over time, your pet's nutritional needs will change, so be sure you're not just always feeding the same thing, year after year, without making sure that is the best food for their current condition and status.

3. Stop feeding them human food

You probably already know this – but one of the most common reasons that pets are overweight or obese is because of feeding them "human" food. It's so simple and hard to resist that cute face sitting beside you at the dinner table, but it's not good for your pet and can lead to a lot of health conditions and future problems. Make it a rule that you never feed your pet scraps or leftovers from dinner, and stick with feeding them the food that is specifically meant for them.

4. Measure your pet's weight

Once per month, measure your pet's weight and write it down. Over time, you can begin to see if your pet is gaining or losing weight, and be able to help provide more information to your vet should some kind of health issue or concern come up. If you can't get your pet to stand still on the scale, no problem! Simply getting on the scale holding them in your arms, and record the weight. Then, get back on the scale without them, and deduct that amount from the first weight – and voila, you know what your pet weighs. We recommend weighing your pet at least once per month.

5. Get an annual vet checkup

Imagine if you only went to the dentist once every 7 years .. how many potential problems could develop with such a long gap between check ups.

Now think about the fact that your pet ages several years in one of "our" years. It's said that a dog year is the equivalent of 1 human year – so that means even with an annual vet check up, that's like your pet going 7 years without a check up!

By getting a regular check up, you help eliminate the risk of small problems becoming large, and your veterinarian can help ensure that your pet is on the right track. Combined with some of the information you're tracking (such as their weight), your vet will be able to provide better support to you and your pet – and you'll likely save money in the long term since you'll be able to catch smaller problems before they come big ones.

6. Do a 3 Step Checkup once a month

We recommend that once each month, you do the following 3 steps – it only takes 4-5 minutes a month, and it will make sure your pet is staying healthy in between vet visits.

Step #1: Weight your pet regularly.
This is the best way to establish if your pet is gaining or losing weight. Objective. Many pet owners don't notice a slow gain or loss.
- create a simple chart that you can write down the weight each time so you can see the trend – the same, or going up or down.

Step #2: Check for lumps, bumps, growths or other issues.
- They just think you're giving your pet extra affection and love. Run your hand slowly across all areas of your pet, feeling for anything unusual.
- Look for any growths under the skins, as well as any cuts or problems on the skin. Is there any hair loss happening? Are any of their paws wet or discolored from them licking them a lot?
- If you examine your pet regularly, you'll immediately any new or unusual bumps or growths that may have developed since you last checked them. Often these can be nothing serious, but sometimes they may indicate a problem and catching them early makes a huge difference.
  Most of the time you won't find anything new, which is good news. But if you do find something new, whether it's a hard bump, or a soft one that feels like an abscess or a little pocket of liquid under the skin, you should get in touch with us so we can do a full veterinarian exam and determine exactly what it means.

Step #3: Check for any unusual or unpleasant smells.
- dental disease leads to a lot of other problems, and if your pet has a really unpleasant smell in their mouth, that's <u>not</u> normal – get it checked out!
- skin and ear infections and problems also are often accompanied by a foul smell.

7. Brush their teeth daily

A lot of pet owners have a tough time getting into this habit, but you are almost guaranteed to have major dental issues (and bills) at some point in your pet's future if you are not brushing their teeth. Just like humans, not brushing allows plaque to build up and over time, creates infection and problems under the gum lines. When a pet's mouth is unhealthy, that causes a number of health problems that are even more serious. Getting into this routine is one of the most important and easiest ways for you to protect your pet's health, and avoid significant costs down the road.

8. Try a different activity to stimulate them

Try to break the routine that you might have with your pet – animals like variety and trying different things out, just like humans! If you normally go on the same route when you walk your day, try going in a completely different way. If you haven't tried any of the new toys that are on the market for your pet, think about getting one or two and seeing how your pet responds to a new toy. Making it fun and stimulating for them also makes it more fun for you!

9. Incorporate more play time

Your pet loves play time, and the more you give them, the happier they'll be. But there's a selfish reason to play with your pet as well – research proves that playing with your pet and sharing affection has a significant impact on your stress levels. Incorporate more time with your pet into your day, and you'll find that you'll feel more calm and stress won't get to you as much either.

10. Update your pet's ID and chip them

This one's so simple .. but so important! A lot of pet owners forget to make sure their pet's tags are updated and legible. Over time, as your pet moves around, their tags may jangle around and begin to lose their marking. At least once a year, stop and look closely at your pet's tags – can you read their name, and the contact information to get ahold of you if they're lost? Because if you can't, neither can someone who might find your pet if they accidentally get out or lost.

As well, if your pet doesn't already have a microchip, you should get one. It allows them to be tracked back to you should they get lost. Be sure you have the record of the microchip number for your pet and if you've lost it, ask your vet to scan your microchip and make sure you know what number corresponds with them.

Now that you know the top 10 things to do, start incorporating them into your life! Each month, just do one of the 10 things on this list, and over the year, your pet will be happier, healthier, safer, and you'll enjoy being a responsible pet owner as well.