



Paw Prints

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Columnist

2020 goals for your pet

Few things in life give us more joy than our furry friends. On top of the emotional benefits our pets give us, there are health benefits as well.

The new year is well underway, but we can still resolve to make life healthier and happier for our furry companions.

Make this year a fresh start for your pet — perhaps a new diet and exercise regimen or more play time with you. Whether you need to get back on track with his daily walks or make that vet appointment you've been meaning to schedule, there are plenty of ideas to help your pet have a happier and healthier 2020.

One resolution could be to be more aware of how much your pet is eating. And one way to do that is to measure out their food each day. Many pet parents “eyeball” their pet’s daily intake and pour that into their food bowl, which can result in overfeeding and weight gain. Try using a measuring cup. Cut down on the amount of treats you dish out or consider swapping in a fresh treat instead, such as blueberries or small pieces of sweet potato.

Another goal is to give your pet more exercise. Exercise is beneficial to keeping your pet happy, active, and at their optimal body condition.

Taking your dog for a walk or hike is one of the best ways to release some excess energy. When our lives get busy, it's easy to let the dog out in the fenced

yard to “exercise himself.” Going for a stroll with your pooch instead can be a great stress reliever for you both, not to mention it will get your hearts pumping. Your dog will be endlessly fascinated by the smells, sights, and sounds of your neighborhood, while you both get a chance to socialize with others.

While taking your cat hiking isn't a practical approach to upping the step count of your feline friends, incorporating more playtime definitely is. Cats love the thrill of chasing a laser toy, and toys that trigger a cat's predatory instinct are a great way to get them off the couch and engaged in a little aerobic activity. It's great fun watching your kitties play and pounce, and if you're a dab hand with a smart phone, you could end up videoing the next YouTube sensation.

Resolve to groom your pet every day. Brushing your cat or dog serves many purposes. It removes excess fur from the coat, reducing the amount you find on your clothes and furniture. It helps distribute oils from the skin to the fur, keeping the coat shiny and healthy. It will give you a chance to look over his coat and skin to check for any potential

problems. Daily grooming is also a bonding activity that demonstrates to your pet how much you love him by taking care of your pet in a soothing manner.

If your dog or cat hasn't been spayed or neutered, this year is the time to schedule that appointment. There are plenty of health benefits, including avoiding certain cancers and other medical problems. There are behavioral benefits as well, especially with neutered male dogs, who are less likely to mark, roam, or hump. You will also avoid adding to the overpopulation of homeless pets in the United States.

Keeping a basket of toys for your dog will occupy his time when you aren't around and give you a chance to play together when you are. Play also keeps your pet's mind sharp. Even five minutes a day spent tossing a ball or dangling a toy mouse for kitty can mentally stimulate them.

Training your dog is one of the kindest acts you can do for him. Well-trained dogs end up spending more time with the family and are welcomed more places than untrained dogs. A trained dog is a pleasure to be around, and he'll benefit from those positive feelings.

Just as people get bored,



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER

Exercise is as important for pets as it is for people.

pets can get bored with the same old routine day in and day out. Resolve to try a new activity with your pet in the coming year. From hiking to kayaking, camping to running, try incorporating your pet into a new exercise routine. It will get you both out of the house, and both pet parent and pet will reap the rewards of a healthy physical activity.

Resolve to bring more joy into your pet's life this year. One easy way is by setting up pet play dates. Play dates for your dog will help socialize him and get Rover used to new faces and other animals and people. Call up a friend with a pooch that is similar in size to yours and get together

at a nearby park. Interaction with other animals is great for your pet's mental health and can help improve their social skills.

Perhaps the most important resolution for any pet parent to make is to bring your pet to the veterinarian. Make your pet's health one of your biggest priorities.

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CORRECTION

Young drummer Frankie Borla was incorrectly identified in last week's story "Jazz enthusiast launches jam night at The Belfry," *The Nugget*, March 11, page 3). He was referenced by the name Frankie Deggendorfer. Frank Deggendorfer is the young prodigy's grandfather. He is not a drummer.

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