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Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Offers Advice to Residents Eager to Rescue Pets

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) reminds Massachusetts residents about responsible animal rescue and the pitfalls of impulse buying pets as gifts during the holiday season, and throughout the year.

“We encourage all residents to support the humane treatment of animals by buying and rescuing pets responsibly,” said DAR Commissioner Doug Petersen.

DAR Division of Animal Health Director Michael Cahill said residents should buy pets from licensed pet shops and reputable breeders, or adopt pets from approved shelters. Guidelines from the Division of Animal Health suggest owners should have new pets examined by a veterinarian right away. Pet buyers should research breeds and ask breeders to see the mother dog or cat interact with her puppies or kittens to detect any behavioral problems, according to the guidelines.

The Division of Animal Health suggests residents eager to help animals should volunteer with an approved rescue or humane organization to learn about responsible rescue before considering undertaking animal rescue on their own.

“We have a concern about people doing animal rescue work without properly understanding the needs of the animals they are trying to help,” said Cahill, noting that the DAR sees an increase in rescue activity during the holiday season.

Throughout the year – not just during the holidays – people should also think carefully before buying a pet as a gift. DAR recommends against choosing pets as gifts since the giver often doesn't consider the life-long commitment of taking care of an animal. Owning a dog, which has an average life span of more than 12 years, is a decision that requires serious consideration and preparation.

For a complete listing of Massachusetts Approved Shelter and Rescue Organizations, visit http://www.mass.gov/agr/animalhealth/emergency_order.htm. For suggestions about buying a dog, visit http://www.mass.gov/agr/animalhealth/petshops/buying_a_dog.htm.

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