National Pet Week is widely celebrated throughout the United States and other parts of the world. In 2012, National Pet Week is celebrated from May 6-12.

The goals of National Pet Week are to promote responsible pet ownership, celebrate the human-animal bond, and promote public awareness of veterinary medicine.

Knowledge Test About America's Pets

• There are more dog owners than cat owners in America, but more cats than dogs in those homes.
• There are 43 million dog owning households compared with 37.5 million cat owning households, but 81.7 million cats compared to 72 million dogs.
• About 64 percent of all pet-owning households owned more than one pet.
• Women are the primary caregivers for pets (74 percent)
• Five of the top 10 pet owning states are in the Northwest- Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

Five Feline Fast Facts

• There are 10 million more cats owned in America than dogs.
• Cats are less than half as likely to be seen by a veterinarian and receive health care.
• There are “cat-friendly” practices that focus on making trips to the veterinarian less stressful for your cat.
• Cats CAN be trained.
• Maine, Vermont, Oregon, Idaho and Washington have the highest percentage of cat-owning households.

Top 10 Tips for Responsible Pet Ownership

1. Think carefully before getting a pet and learn about its special requirements.
2. Ensure the pet is sociable and well trained.
3. Provide a nutritious and well balanced diet.
4. Provide suitable housing and bedding.
5. Clean up after the pet and worm it regularly.
6. Protect against disease. A vet can provide advice.
7. Prevent unwanted litters and neuter pets when appropriate.
8. Groom pets regularly.
9. Control pets and ensure they are properly identified.
10. Take out pet insurance for dogs, cats, rabbits and horses to cover against unexpected veterinary fees and third party liability.

Five Ways to “Vet” A Veterinarian

1. Visit myveterinarian.com. The recently unveiled, free, AVMA tool for finding the perfect veterinarian is just a mouse click away. Discover veterinarians in your area, the type of animals they treat, their hours, if they offer emergency services, and information on their staff.
2. Ask about the veterinarian’s office operations. This includes who does procedures, how much services cost and payment options.
3. Inquire about their experience with a particular type of pet
4. Ask about emergency care. When your pet has acute health issues in the middle of the night, know where to call or go. Ask where to go when things go wrong, and figure out how to get there BEFORE an emergency – don’t drive around asking for directions in an emergency situation

5. Talk with neighbors and other clients of the veterinarian. Selecting a veterinarian is like selecting a pediatrician. The owner is the individual communicating with the veterinarian. Make certain to have a good working relationship.

Think Before Visiting the Veterinarian

Pet owners have a million questions about their pet before going to the veterinary clinic but when asked, their mind is blank. Veterinarians rely on the owner to be the pet's voice. Keep eyes and ears open and report any changes in the pet's behavior to the veterinarian.

Sharing information about how a pet is behaving–including eating, drinking, sleep, urinating and/or passing stool–could help make a lifesaving diagnosis.

1. Ask about vaccinations. Vaccinations are essential to the pet's health and should be tailored to the pet's lifestyle. A pampered high-rise dweller that never sets foot outside won't need the same vaccines as a mud hound forever rolling in the grass, even if they live across the street from each other.
2. Ask about parasite prevention and control for fleas, ticks, heartworms, and intestinal parasites such as roundworms, hookworms and tapeworms that is appropriate for the region.
3. Ask about proper behavior training and socialization. Many shelters report behavior problems as a primary reason people give up their pets. A veterinarian can assist in evaluating an animal's disposition and provide advice and tips on how to appropriately train and socialize a pet.
4. Ask about nutrition. What type of food should a pet be fed? What serving size is appropriate? And does their age impact what they should be fed? Is the pet is overweight and, if it is, how can it get back to a healthy weight. As it is in humans, weight control for pets is essential for good health.
5. For a pet older than seven years of age, ask about senior care. Note any changes in the pet's energy level, water intake, behavior or any lumps and bumps the pet has developed. Although many of the lumps and bumps are not problems, some of them are cause for concern. It's best to have all of them checked out, just to make sure.

Older pets are more prone to conditions such as arthritis, heart disease, dementia and other problems, and prevention and early detection of problems are essential to helping pets live longer, healthier lives.