

(December 10, 2008 Stillwater, OK) – Dr.Carolynn MacAllister, Director of Continuing Education and Outreach at the Oklahoma State University’s Center for Veterinary Health Sciences, has some tips for giving pets as holiday gifts.

“Family and friends may mean well when they surprise you with a new puppy or kitten, but is that really the perfect gift?” asks MacAllister. “Often the hustle and bustle of the holiday season is stressful for humans and pets alike. Adding a new member to the family, especially a recently weaned animal, can escalate the stress of the season.”

Besides dogs and cats, pocket pets – such as rodents, guinea pigs, rabbits, and ferrets – are also common holiday gifts, especially for children.

MacAllister offers these tips to people who are considering giving a pet as a gift this holiday season:

- Give a book about the pet of choice and select the pet together at a later time when the family has more time to commit to the love and care of a new pet. This will also give everyone the opportunity to learn more about a pet and its needs, especially when it comes to exotic pocket pets.
- Make sure the family agrees on the type of pet and is prepared to accept the responsibility that the animal brings
- Consider the financial and time obligations that a pet will require—pet supplies, veterinary care, food, grooming, exercise
- Check for allergies and any fears/phobias the family may have about certain animals
- If you must give a pet, consider which animal best suits the family; decide with the family on the kind of animal, taking into consideration available space, time they can spend with it, who will have the responsibility of caring for the pet
- Be sure the recipient of your gift has the basics to care for their new pet — (which will vary according to the type of pet) may include items such as a crate (cage), bed, food and water bowls, leash and collar
- If you choose an exotic pocket pet, you may check with regional veterinarians to make sure they have the experience and are willing to provide health care for this species
- Before you buy any puppies, kittens, or pocket pets you may check with your local animal shelters and local veterinarians for animals that are in need of a good home.

The Oklahoma State University Center for Veterinary Health Sciences is one of 28 veterinary colleges in the United States and is fully accredited by the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association. The center’s Boren Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital is open to the public and provides routine and specialized care for small and large animals. It also offers 24 hour emergency care and is certified by the American Animal Hospital Association. For more information, visit [www.cvhs.okstate.edu](http://www.cvhs.okstate.edu) or call (405) 744-7000.

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