

The Pet Issue



Everything you need to know
about getting a pet in Shanghai

By Angela Daley

You flip the lights on after a long day, taking in your spotlessly clean apartment. Ayi has left a tasty meal in the fridge for you, your clothes are pressed with military exactness and there's an artfully arranged vase of flowers on your dining room table. It seems like your Shanghai life is perfect. And yet, something is missing. Do you long to hear the pitter-patter of little feet skidding across your perfectly polished floors when you open the door? Maybe a high-rise apartment just isn't a home without a fuzzy little friend nipping at your heels? Maybe it's time to add a little puppy love (or kitty cuddles) to your life.

The Adoption Option

"Don't buy an animal," advises Melodie Ghani, founder of the Shanghai Dog Fair, "There are many animals out there waiting to be adopted." For most pet lovers and animal advocates in Shanghai, laying down cash for a pet is an almost unpardonable sin. Finding an animal—for free—who needs a home is not difficult: there are thousands of strays in the city and, unfortunately, some expats abandon their already housebroken and family-friendly pets once they repatriate to their home countries.

If you'd like to adopt a pet, begin your search with either Sec-

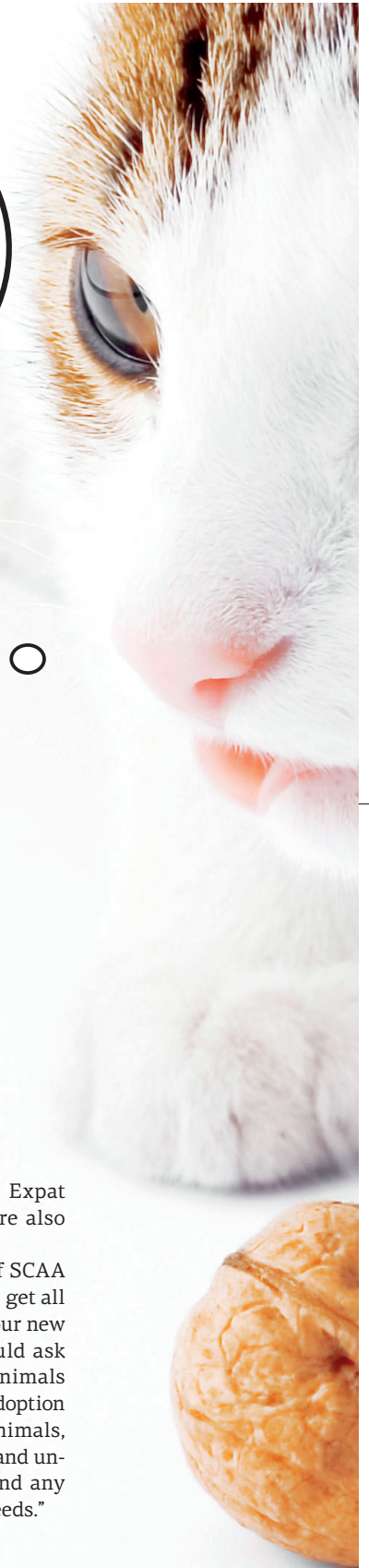
ond Chance Animal Aid Shanghai (SCAA) or Jaiya's Animal Rescue (JAR). You'll find many dogs and cats (mostly cats at SCAA) of varying ages waiting for a new home. Neither organization has a physical address so you'll need to visit their online galleries to view the pets just waiting for you to fall in love with them.

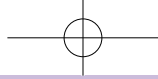
Ghani ticks off other options: "There are some shelters in Minhang District you can call. You can call kennels because they always have animals that have been abandoned. You can also contact a vet. There are always animals being left behind." Online expat forums like Shanghai Mamas ([\[haimamas.org\]\(http://haimamas.org\)\) or Shanghai Expat \(\[www.shanghaiepat.com\]\(http://www.shanghaiepat.com\)\) are also good places to check.](http://www.shang-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Lee-Anne Armstrong of SCAA reminds that it's important to get all the details before bringing your new buddy home: "Adopters should ask questions about where the animals are housed while awaiting adoption and with how many other animals, the type of vet care provided and under what circumstances ... and any behavior issues or training needs."

Pedigreed

Can't find the shih tzu or Siamese of your dreams? If you're set on purchasing a specific type of pet, then





it's buyer beware. Buying a pet from a local shop or animal market could mean paying a high price for an animal that may not be healthy.

Warns SCAA's Armstrong, "Shops and breeders with animals for sale get the animals from what expats would know as 'puppy and kitten mills.' Local regulations stipulate that any business selling pets must be affiliated with a breeding farm. But the breeding industry here lacks any oversight whatsoever. Many of these animals are injected with antibiotics ahead of sale and when the medicine wears off, the animals are obviously ill and some die." There have also been horror stories of

toy poodle puppies who have been dipped in boiling hot, toxic dye before being sold (chocolate poodles fetch more on the open market) only to die soon afterward due to the traumatic nature of the treatment.

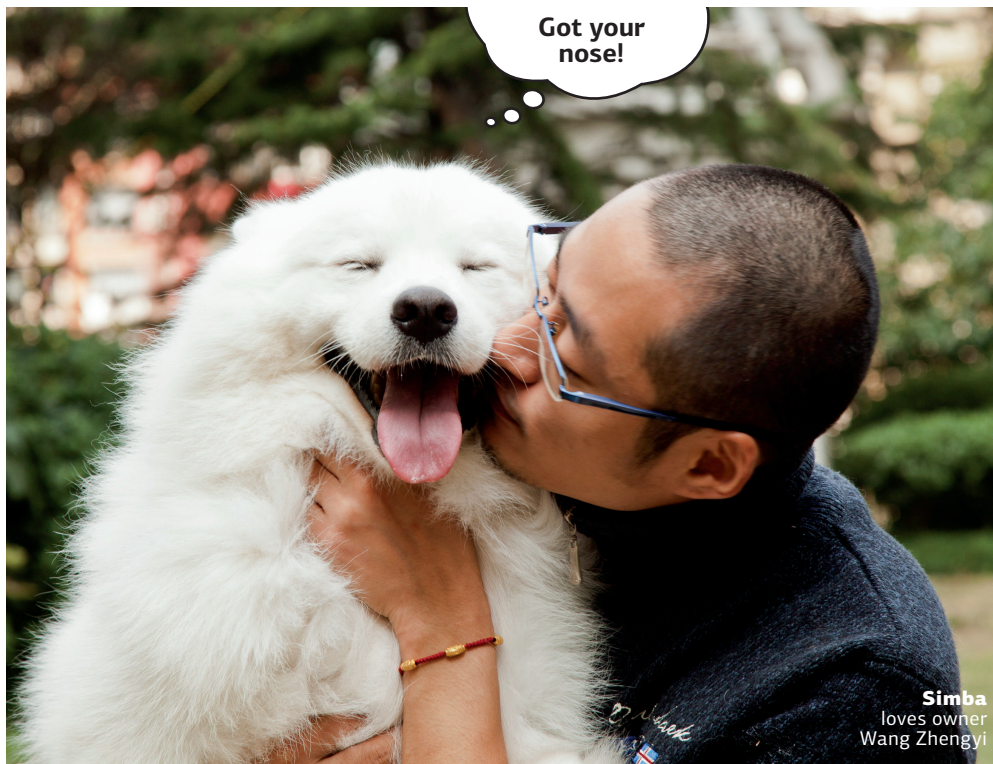
Dr. James Holder of Shanghai PAW Veterinary Services echoes Armstrong's advice. "Learning how to choose a healthy pet is very important and should take time. Impulse buys, especially here, tend to have sad endings."

Though qualified breeders are a rare breed in China, potential dog owners may have more luck by contacting China's National General Kennel Club, which is advised by

the American Kennel Club (help@ngkc.org).

To the Rescue?

"The moment I saw four, tiny, scared kittens [in that box], I couldn't walk away and let them die," says Wendela de Goederen. Right before the October holiday she discovered a box of abandoned kittens close to her office. "They had been dumped. I guess somebody didn't want to bother with them over the holiday." Animal lover de Goederen didn't know how she'd find homes for all of them but she was willing to try. She scooped up the box and immediately took



Simba
loves owner
Wang Zhengyi



the kittens to her veterinarian. Now they're being fostered by various friends, and two of them already have homes awaiting them once they're old enough. But it hasn't been an easy task. De Goederen estimates that she's spent about ¥1,500 and countless hours caring for and placing her feline orphans.

What should you do if you find a stray? SCAA's Armstrong says think before you act: "You need to decide how much responsibility you're willing to take for housing, vet care and re-homing, assuming the animal is healthy and social. There is no government-supported shelter or international-standard facility like an SPCA or Humane Society. Animal rescue organizations like SCAA may be able to help, but much depends on the rescued animal's medical care needs, temperament, and the resources we have available at the time."

In short, it's not an easy decision to help a stray animal if you can't adopt them yourself. "It's sad, but sometimes it's better not to pick them up," says Ghani.

Ask the Doctor

Now that you've found your new furry friend, it's all sloppy kisses and fuzzy snuggles from here on out, right? Not quite. You're a parent now, and you've got responsibilities. Fluffy needs to see a vet, stat.

"The vet should perform a comprehensive medical examination and begin a number of preventive health measures. It's important to

check the vaccination history. Any puppy or kitten over 8 weeks old should have had at least one vaccination. Furthermore, it is important to realize that even if an animal appears healthy when you first acquire him or her, they may have a fulminating disease just waiting for the right moment to rear its ugly head," explains Dr. Thom Jenkins of Doctors Beck and Stone.

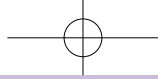
And it's not just getting a few vaccinations and going on your merry way. Adopting a young animal is almost like ... gasp! ... adopting a baby. How will you raise your new family

member? Do you have the resources—money, time and devotion—to make sure your pet stays healthy and happy? "Puppies still need lots of care, love and attention," stresses Dr. Holder, adding, "When we see a new patient, especially little ones, we cover eight topics—diet, exercise, training, parasite control, vaccinations, registration for dogs, grooming and neutering."

Standard examinations can be had at the value-minded Eagle Valley Veterinary Centre for ¥100-250, with vaccinations starting at ¥90. Neutering or spaying for dogs start from ¥800 and ¥1,200 respectively. For a more comprehen-



Tiko
takes
it easy



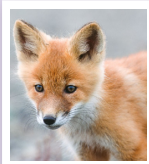
Pet-xotic

Five funky pets you can get your hands on in Shanghai



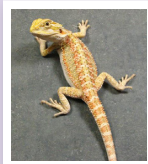
Miniature Pigs

Thanks to the recent craze over these stubby-legged creatures, you can now buy one of your very own here. Based in Hangzhou, the Miniature Pig Taobao shop (<http://anxin88888.taobao.com>) specializes in mini pigs. Reviewers praise the store, which breeds the pigs locally from Thai parents, for its customer service. ¥395 including delivery fee and cage.



Foxes

Established in 2005, the Miniature Fox Taobao shop (<http://shop33614103.taobao.com>) is one of the most credible places you can find a pet fox. Foxes have soft and sleek coats, although some warn that they can be difficult to tame. All animals are locally bred from Canadian-imported parents. Prices vary according to breed, from ¥1,580 to ¥3,000-plus.



Bearded Dragons

Bearded dragons might not be the prettiest pets, but they're very sociable and make excellent pets for children due to their calm and friendly nature. They grow to between 18-24 inches, live for around 10 years, cost ¥99-1,000 and are available at Petzoo (p. 65), where you can play with them before buying.



Crickets

If you feel like going native, why not opt for a cricket? Although their 'singing' can get a bit annoying, they are a symbol of prosperity—look after one well enough and perhaps you'll soon be able to buy a real pet. They're also cheap and don't need much looking after. You can find them at bird and flower markets, or outside some Metro stations.



Chinchillas

Chinchillas, or "dragon cats" as they're known in China, are adorable. They come in a range of colors, from pinkish white to violet, and are available from the Chinchilla Speciality Shop at the Wangshen Bird and Flower market (p. 66). Buyers should be aware that they need a lot of space to run around, and that, like most rodents, they produce quite a lot of poop. ¥1,000-7,000

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Zhang Jia's pug Ayo is so cute it hurts

sive guide to veterinary services in Shanghai, head to www.cityweekend.com.cn/bestvets.

Shaggy in Shanghai: What to Watch For

Your fuzzy loved one has gotten a clean bill of health, a brand new collar and a pink velvet pillow with her name lovingly embroidered on it. In your home country, it would be enough. But you live in Shanghai and bringing up furry here poses special challenges.

First of all, if you employ an ayi, did you inform her of your plans to bring a four-legged creature home? You'll need to get her involved as she may spend a great deal of time with your new pet. "Training and supervising your ayi can save your pet's life. As much as she may love animals—check that she's not terrified of them before you adopt a pet—your ayi will not be as aware of pet safety and care standards as you are," explains SCAA's Armstrong, continuing, "You need to screen or secure windows and

doors to keep cats inside and save them from certain death, either from a fall or from being trapped by animal traders for the food and fur industry." You should also get approval from your landlord, as some apartments are not pet-friendly.

While cats are easier to handle in this concrete jungle, taking care of a dog in Shanghai—especially a big one—requires serious planning and thought. Most importantly, you'll need to register Fido. The country's cracked down on canines in the last two years, and the dog catchers are known to be very strict—if your puppy gets taken away, you'll likely never see him or her again. Registering takes a bit of time and money, but it may prove worthwhile in the long run. Check JAR's comprehensive online guide for more details (<http://jarshanghai.wordpress.com>) or get in touch with pet consultant Sabrina Feng (Tel: 137-6146-7251, www.petinshanghai.com) for extra help.

Responsible pet owners don't have to worry too much about the size of their apartment though. As canine behaviorist Dennis

Schenk tells us, "The issue of cage / house size is only in the mind of humans. Dogs actually enjoy the coziness and safety of a cage, as long as they get frequent exercise. Dogs are denning animals; this is in the DNA of every single canine (yes, even domesticated ones). This is why dogs like to go underneath tables, couches, beds etc. They feel protected and secure due to these places' similarities to their dens in the wild."

But still, the question remains. Where will you walk your dog? Is there any place to let him have a good run? Exercising your dog in Shanghai is not as simple as it may seem. It's technically illegal to bring your pet to any public park. Rule breakers abound, of course, but it's still the law. If you're caught, the consequences can range from a simple fine to the confiscation of your pet.

Tip: one great place to let your hound roam free is the Sheshan Sculpture Park (Sheshan Station, Metro Line 9). Fido can run leash-free and even take a dip in the park's lake.

Beyond Dogs & Cats

Think poodles are passé? Would you rather take home something a little more exotic?

If your pet-loving tastes run towards the unusual, there are two places to find the potbellied pig or lovable lizard of your dreams. Believe it or not, you can begin your search on Taobao. Just about anything you could possibly hope to find is worth a search on Taobao, including exotic pets. One quick search for spiders, in fact, yielded four different species up for grabs. See the sidebar on p. 17 to explore some of the more exotic options available in town.

The other option is at the local animal markets. But again, look before you leap. Even that cute, little bunny might not be the best buddy for you right now. "Before getting an exotic pet, think about daily care needs, your landlord's permission, disease risks, endangered species welfare issues, as well as long-term pet care," recommends Armstrong, adding, "Only cats and dogs are considered pets for export from China, so who will take care of your potbellied pig, snake, or spider when you leave?"

Zaijian, Shanghai

The end of your contract is looming, the movers have been booked and you've thrown one heck of a going-away party. How do you plan to get Snuggles to your next destination?

The rules vary for different countries so it's vital to do lots of research well in advance of your departure: six months to a year in advance, according to some experts. You can choose to arrange your pet's travel details yourself or you might want to consider using a pet relocation company like Globy Pet Relocation (www.globy-petrel.com). They'll arrange everything for you,

including door-to-door service.

You'll also need to take your pet for a pre-travel checkup with your vet. As Dr. Jenkins of Doctors Beck and Stone Pet Health Center explains, "The first step is generally to have your pet microchipped and vaccinated against rabies. For travel to some countries, including the European Union, it is necessary to perform a rabies blood test at least 30 days after the vaccination to prove that your pet has developed an acceptable level of immunity." Other countries, like Australia, require months-long quarantines before allowing pets in regardless of vaccinations.

Though the process of taking your pet with you might seem daunting, with careful planning, it's usually a straightforward process for most countries.

Not only does Shanghai offer amazing opportunities—career advancement, access to a rich culture, the chance to learn Mandarin—it could also be the place where you begin a rewarding relationship that will last long after you've left the city behind. Says Dr. Holder, "Pets are wonderful and will give plenty to people who care. They add positive dimensions to many people's lives. But it does not come without effort, work and understanding."



Have cute pet pics you want to share? Got a pet you want to put up for adoption? Leave a comment at www.cityweekend.com.cn/shanghaipets



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