

Pointers For Parents

Learning To Care For A First Pet

(NAPSA)—Society is increasingly going to the dogs. And cats. And other furry friends as well.

That's because pets are turning up in all sorts of places, from pet-friendly motels to offices that encourage employees to bring their pets to work. And when circumstances prevent someone from sharing his/her home with a four-legged companion—or if parents feel that a child is not ready to take care of a pet—there are even ways to get a virtual fuzz fix.

Pet Care 101

For youngsters who long to have a dog or cat, there are a number of things to consider before bringing one home. Remember, a pet owner needs to:

- Provide the pet with an adequate balanced diet and ensure it has access to clean, cool drinking water at all times;
- Regularly exercise the pet according to its needs; and
- Train the pet using kindness, treats and rewards—not punishment.

A great way to get started is with a fun series of video games from Ubisoft's "Petz" line that teaches the basics about everything from horses to hamsters. This is the kind of casual gaming that appeals to players of all ages, and that lets them get their feet wet in the arena of pet care, while giving the grown-ups the opportunity to see the youthful caregiver take responsibility. Plus, contrary to the stereotypical notion that video games are not a good use of time, this introduction to pet ownership follows the player's progress and gives constant feedback. These



A series of video games can help prepare children for the responsibility associated with owning and caring for a pet.

features let users feel like they are being challenged and accomplishing something.

The Petz series of video games allows players to adopt and train cuddly friends. Players can take their pets everywhere within the virtual environment, starting inside the house and walking around the neighborhood to visit friends.

For example, in Petz "Dogz 2," users can choose a puppy from more than 40 different breeds and make him cuter with clothing and accessories; create a comfortable pet village and guide their lovable bundle of fur through 60 fun adventures; and compete against their friends in minigames, such as racing and treasure hunting.

The games, including "Catz," "Horsez," "Hamsterz" and "Dolphinz," are available for various video game consoles including the Nintendo DS and Wii, PlayStation 2 and PCs. To learn more, visit the Web site at <http://petz.com>.