

It is the week before Christmas and I have so much to do. In fact I have everything to do. I'd like to say that I am sharing in the universal stress of this time of year but I haven't even started to get stressed out about it yet. No doubt by the time this is published I will be meditating furiously, writing endless to do lists, and wondering why I bought a box of mince pies with a best before Christmas Day.

But then I guess it wouldn't be Christmas without the pressure, the last minute shopping, the tear jerking adverts and the slogans that have traditionally kick started the festive season. One slogan that has been around almost as long as I have been alive is "A dog is for life, not just for Christmas". I've never wanted a dog, either at Christmas or at any other time, but the point is a serious one and especially at the moment when we are seeing an increase in the number of pets in rehoming centres.

Buying a pet is a serious commitment. I am a slave to my two cats. Introducing a pet into the family requires time and the advice is to bring them home at a time of stability and calm. Hence why most pet charities, not just the Dogs Trust, say Christmas is not a good time to buy. Instead they advise wait until the New Year when routines are returning to normal and finances are more stable.

Pet ownership has changed massively over the past three decades and on the whole people are far more responsible. We love our animals here in the UK and more people are members of animal charities than go out and vote but somehow the message still needs articulating at this time of year. A pet is not a toy to be given, played with and then forgotten; it is a member of your family and the gift you can give it is a home for life.