

Step-by-step: pet shows

Great for: Everyone **Fun factor:** ★★★★★ **Effort:** ★★★★★ **£ potential:** ★★★★★

Who could resist seeing which dog wins the wettest nose or waggiest tail competition at your very own pet show? Raise children's awareness of animal welfare issues, while raising funds for your school.

Step-by-step

1. **Six weeks before:** Agree the parameters with the headteacher. Send out a letter to parents - this should include a form asking for details about the pet, and requesting a small donation (around £1). Stipulate that animals brought in by families at your school are done so at their owners' risk and should be kept on leads or in cages at all times. Invite external organisations such as a local wildlife centre or petting zoo to bring animals along, paying attention to any specific requirements that their animals have. Research external companies thoroughly and check that they are licensed appropriately with your local authority. Any third party suppliers attending your event will need to provide details of their insurance before the event. Check your PTA insurance summary to see what's covered.
2. **Four weeks before:** Agree your pet categories and choose your judges - perhaps a local vet or pet shop owner. Identify what jobs need doing and seek out volunteers. Plan your profit-boosting stalls such as refreshments and game stalls to keep visitors occupied.
3. **Two weeks before:** Send out a reminder letter - there's always a late-entry bunny on the day! Adorn the school with enticing posters inviting people to come along to the pet show - even if they don't have a pet. If you've invited a local wildlife centre to come along, include details in your publicity, and charge an entry fee to visit their exhibit, announcing costs in advance.
4. **One week before:** Complete a risk assessment in accordance with Health and Safety Executive guidelines. Have registered first aiders lined up to be on-site during the event. Make sure you have any equipment needed for the day itself, such as tables, tea urns, rosettes, bin bags and antibacterial hand gel. Hand washing facilities will need to be available and clearly signposted.
5. **On the day:** Keep different types of animals separated and have staggered entry times. Ensure owners stay with their pets at all times, keeping them under control and (where applicable) in their cages. Any 'mess' pets make needs to be cleared up by the owners. Award prizes to winners of the different categories - these might be vouchers for a pet shop, or other pet-related prizes.
6. **After the event:** Leave the school exactly as you found it! Ask for feedback from competitors and get your volunteer team to fill out a 'knowledge capsule'. This will

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help consolidate feedback while ideas are still fresh, enabling suggested changes to be considered when planning future pet shows. Display photos from the event on your PTA noticeboard and social media – include comments from pupils.

RSPCA advice

Both the pet owners and the PTA have a responsibility to comply with the Animal Welfare Act (2006). Although the owner always has legal responsibility for their animal, everyone must play their part in ensuring the animals are well cared for during their visit, with suitable accommodation, food and water.

Consider your choice of animals - while it's easy to transport rodents, these are usually only awake at night and are particularly sensitive to noise. Animals like rabbits and rodents may become stressed if they can see, smell or hear predators like dogs, so consider this when planning. Levels of light, heat and noise must be appropriate for each species.

Consider temperament. Animals should be confident with new situations, good with other animals and children, and be familiar with basic commands (dogs).

Specify that all animals should be in good health and have had any vaccinations/parasite treatments.

Will any dogs attending have docked tails? It is illegal to show a dog whose tail was docked after 27 March 2007 in Wales or 5 April 2007 in England, at an event to which members of the public are admitted on payment of a fee. The only exception is working dogs with a veterinary certificate.

When you are thinking of your choice of classes, judge on health and welfare, not just appearance. Some animals are bred to look a certain way and it can actually cause suffering. Good classes could be 'best child handler', 'best behaved pet' and 'best pet story'.

The owner of an exotic pet has a legal duty of care to meet the specialist needs of the animal. For more information read our FAQs guide to running a pet show or visit rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets.