

Beginners' Guide to

# digital photography



## Part 11: Pets & Domestic Animals

Tips for shooting in an Aquarium

*Go fishing for great shots*

Photographing pigs and sheep

*Out on a farm*

part eleven



## Part 11: Pets & Domestic Animals

### Pets

It's amazing how quickly our pets can turn into family members. Their quirky personalities and fun loving disposition soften us and before we know it they're part of the family.

When it comes to photographing our pets, a lot of the same techniques can be applied as with photographing children. However animals don't understand what it is we are trying to achieve, so don't start out with ambitions of studio style images that require your pet to be plonked into a 'set' and remain still whilst posing happily for the camera. For best results and less frustration for both of you start out with more realistic approach and capture your pet going about its daily business. Enlist help from others to interact with the animal, leaving you free to concentrate on taking the photos.

Natural lighting is better than flash though the intensity of the light required will vary depending upon the subject. Very dark animals can do well with a bit of intense light so as to pick up details in the coat, whereas lighter animals need less intensity. If you are using automatic settings try underexposing slightly for light animals and overexposing for dark.

Get down low to your pet's level, get in nice and close to avoid distracting backgrounds and remember to keep eyes in sharp focus. If your pet is very active, use a fast shutter speed and plan to photograph outside where the light is stronger. If possible choose a background that is of a contrasting colour to that of your pet's as this will help to make your pet stand out in the image.

One of the first things to consider when photographing any pet is its personality. Pets, like humans, have very distinct personalities and the challenge here is to capture that in your images. Once you have a clear understanding of your pet's habits and nuances you can better plan your photographs.







# Beginners' Guide to digital photography

## Dogs

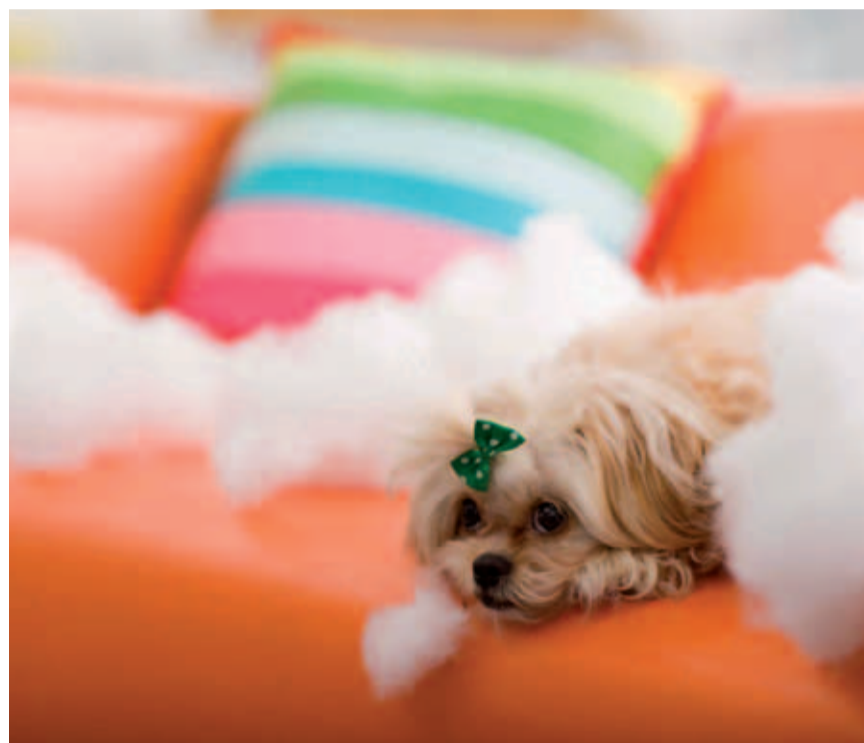
In many cases dogs are easier to photograph than other pets as they can be trained to understand human commands. If you have a well behaved dog that will sit and stay when instructed the task of photographing it becomes much simpler. However it is difficult to capture its personality in this way.

Photograph your dog playing ball, catching a stick, splashing in the water or digging holes in the back yard. Snap your puppy chewing its toys or relaxing during quiet times. All these scenarios offer some wonderful opportunities to capture great shots whilst allowing your pet the freedom to be itself.

If your dog is full of energy, inquisitive and unpredictable, set up some action outside and then bring it indoors to watch from the window. Perhaps have the kids splashing around in a pool or running and playing. Your dog will be keenly watching the action, alert, ears forward and tail wagging. The natural light coming through

the window will be soft and diffused. Ensure your windows are clean and position your camera angle so that you avoid fly screens. Call your dog's name to attract his attention and have a snack ready in order to hold its attention long enough to snap a few pics.

When photographing long nose breeds you'll need a little more depth of field in order to keep both the snout and eyes in focus. If you can't achieve sufficient depth of field try shooting in profile instead.



## Cats

Cats are much more placid than dogs and can often be found lazing around the house and are completely unfazed by the camera. You may be able to set up a scene and plonk your cat into it. Dangling a toy just out of reach (and out of the frame) can keep it sitting longer but be quick because once a cat has had enough it will become more and more uncooperative.

Give your cat a ball of wool to play with or a toy mouse on a string for playful pets or snap your cat prowling the backyard or in a tree if he's an adventurous animal. With a nice simple background and a little thought to composition you can take some great images that help to capture your cat's personality.



## Guinea Pigs and Rabbits

One option to entice your guinea pig or rabbit to sit still for the camera is to produce a yummy treat. Get down very low and crop in close. You can either photograph your pet with its food between its paws or whilst its head is raised to chew.

Another option is to find a quiet time, usually in the middle of the day when it's hottest, and photograph it lazing around and keeping cool. Use an ice pack to entice your pet to sit where you want it to.

People often photograph their tiny pets inside larger objects, such as boots, that they can't climb out of. These pics can be very cute but be wary of your pet's feelings. You don't want to frighten or upset your pet for the sake of a cute image.





## Part 11: Pets & Domestic Animals

### Aquarium Fish

When endeavouring to photograph your aquarium fish, ensure the tank water is fresh and clean and glass is sparkling. Use a tripod to keep your camera still and use manual focus as the camera is likely to focus on the glass just as the opportune moment presents itself.

Avoid unwanted reflections by using a piece of matt black cardboard between the camera and the tank. Cut a hole just large enough to poke the lens through. Turn off the pump briefly whilst you are shooting to still the water and turn the tank lights on to improve lighting conditions. You won't be able to use the on camera flash as it will reflect in the glass. If you need extra lighting in order to achieve a fast enough shutter speed, you'll need to

use off camera flash or bounced flash but test it first to make sure it's not giving a negative effect.

For an underwater effect, get nice and close to the glass in order to make it invisible to the camera. If you are taking photos of a fish in a fish bowl, try a fisheye lens to add interest to the image.

In a tank full of colourful corals your subject can easily become lost. Wait until your fish swims past a coral of contrasting colour and get in nice and close to crop out other elements.

It is also possible to restrict movement by inserting a sheet of glass inside the tank but be careful to camouflage it so you can't see it in the image.



### Farm Animals

As is the case with the other animals, natural is best. Capture them doing what they do naturally. Photograph pigs front on and up close, rooting around in the dirt. Chickens scratching for food against a green grassy background. Cattle in a meadow of long grass, and roosters crowing.

Photograph from their level and get in nice and close. Use a shallow depth of field to blur distracting backgrounds.



### Put Your Best Image Forward

Email us the best pet or domestic animal photo you've taken. Files should be approx 1 MB and received before deadline of 5pm Thursday. Photos can be emailed to [photo@dailyexaminer.com.au](mailto:photo@dailyexaminer.com.au).

The best images will appear in the next installment of Beginners' Guide to Digital Photography, published on Monday 2nd May. Prize for the best image each week will be a 7" Digital Photo Frame.

All photographs appearing in the paper will win the photographer 50 free 6x4 prints in store at Harvey Norman Grafton.

At the end of the course, the best image will win the photographer a Panasonic Digital SLR twin lens camera Kit (DMC-G10KTWIN) VALUED AT \$900.00. **ALL PRIZES COURTESY OF HARVEY NORMAN.**

