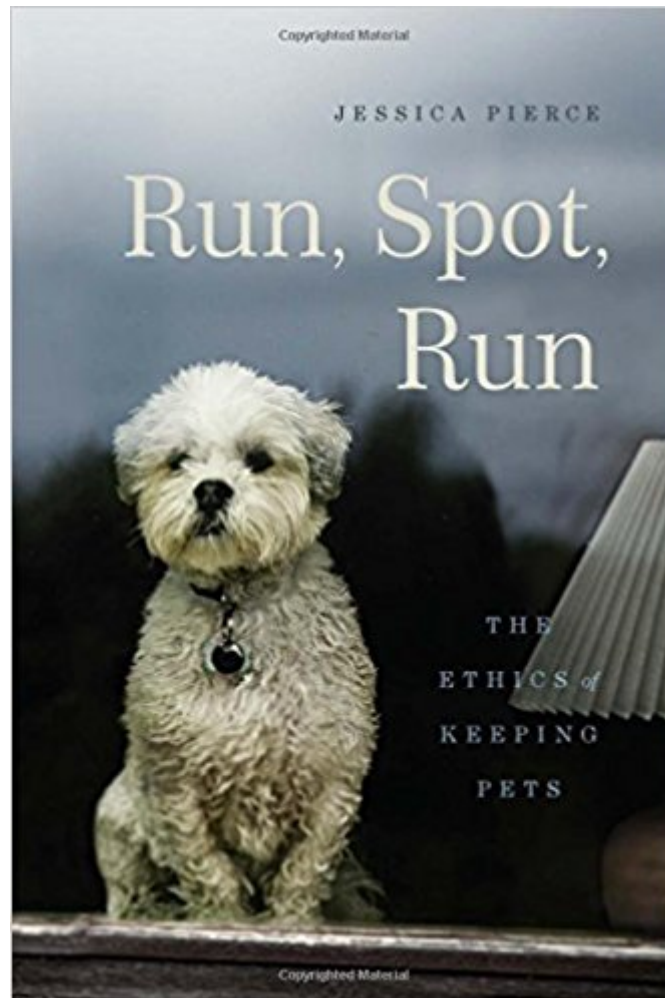




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# **Run, Spot, Run: The Ethics Of Keeping Pets**



## Synopsis

A life shared with pets brings many emotions. We feel love for our companions, certainly, and happiness at the thought that we're providing them with a safe, healthy life. But there's another emotion, less often acknowledged, that can be nearly as powerful: guilt. When we see our cats gazing wistfully out the window, or watch a goldfish swim lazy circles in a bowl, we can't help but wonder: are we doing the right thing, keeping these independent beings locked up, subject to our control? Is keeping pets actually good for the pets themselves? That's the question that animates Jessica Pierce's powerful *Run, Spot, Run*. A lover of pets herself (including, over the years, dogs, cats, fish, rats, hermit crabs, and more), Pierce understands the joys that pets bring us. But she also refuses to deny the ambiguous ethics at the heart of the relationship, and through a mix of personal stories, philosophical reflections, and scientifically informed analyses of animal behavior and natural history, she puts pet-keeping to the test. Is it ethical to keep pets at all? Are some species more suited to the relationship than others? Are there species one should never attempt to own? And are there ways that we can improve our pets' lives, so that we can be confident that we are giving them as much as they give us? Deeply empathetic, yet rigorous and unflinching in her thinking, Pierce has written a book that is sure to help any pet owner, unsettling assumptions but also giving them the knowledge to build deeper, better relationships with the animals with whom they've chosen to share their lives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Bioethicist Pierce challenges pet lovers to recognize that animal ownership is definitely a dicey affair; no matter how well loved they are, our pets are essentially being held captives. She reminds us that the animals we love and treat as companions are denied nearly all of their natural behaviors, not to mention their freedom. “A thoughtful book that should spark debate, with the author stressing that bringing a companion animal into one’s life is an ethical commitment that should not be taken lightly.” (Kirkus Reviews) “Pierce has clearly thought deeply about the ‘ambiguous ethics’ of pet ownership. . . . There is of course so, so much more to enrichment for pets; I’d recommend starting with Pierce’s book if you want to know more.” (New York Magazine) “A timely critique of America’s pet animal industry.” (Times Literary Supplement) “A major contribution to the literature on problems associated with the human-companion animal bond. . . . Run, Spot, Run offers a welcome counter to the glut of feel-good books on the shelves of my local bookstore extolling the mystical powers of the human-animal bond. Pierce’s book is well-written and researched, smart and provocative. And if you are a pet lover, it will spin your head around.” (Hal Herzog Anthrozoos) “So, you want to share your home with a companion animal? Millions of people make pets out of a wide variety of animals, from dogs and cats to hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates, and this decision is one that demands careful attention, for we truly are the individuals’ oxygen. Unfortunately, the lives of innumerable pets are intentionally and unintentionally highly compromised--indeed many are simply horrific--because people haven’t done their homework about what it means to live with another being or because they are ignorant of just whom the animal is. There are many ethical questions that need careful attention and these quandaries, some obvious and others less so, don’t fit into a nice and clean ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ mold. Run, Spot, Run will force potential and experienced pet-keepers to think about what they’re getting into, and likely mean that many readers will be moved out of their comfort zone. For equitable human-pet relationships to occur, and for animals to be able to express their full behavior repertoire, things are going to have to change. Jessica Pierce confronts many difficult and challenging issues head-on, and I hope her latest book becomes essential reading for those people who make the choice to bring a nonhuman into their lives. Currently, it’s all too easy to become a pet-keeper, and this results in many unhappy humans and nonhumans.” (Marc Bekoff, author of *Rewilding Our Hearts*) “In *Run, Spot, Run*, Jessica Pierce has produced a timely examination of pet keeping today that challenges our rationalizations and justifications for keeping nonhuman animals of all persuasions for our amusement under conditions that, even at their best, are inadequate and at

their worst inhumane. A pet keeper, herself, Pierce makes clear that some animals should not be kept at all while we should re-evaluate and reform our approaches to keeping others, like cats and dogs, who have long lived with us." "Anyone thinking of getting an animal of any sort for any reason should first read this book." (Mark Derr, author of *Dog's Best Friend*) "Even those of us with the best intentions for the dogs, cats, rabbits, and goldfish in our care will discover new, profoundly important ethical questions to ponder in Jessica Pierce's book." "With gentle humor, clear compelling language, and always in search of the physically and emotionally healthiest lives possible for our animal companions, *Run, Spot, Run* moved me all the more because it's written from the inside looking out. Pierce herself lives with three pets and understands the deep urge so many of us feel to connect across species lines." (Barbara King, author of *How Animals Grieve*)

Jessica Pierce is a bioethicist, the author of *The Last Walk*, and coauthor of *Wild Justice*.

This was a deeply disturbing book for me which is exactly why I've rated it so highly. Though I have always considered myself an empathetic and reliable friend to the cats who live with me, this book gave me more than a little pause when considering my own motivations and those of others who choose to bring animals into our personal lives. It is a must read for those who care.

Eye opening to all the aspects of owning a pet, to all the horrible realities of abuse on unwanted and unloved pets, this book covers it all, and makes you so aware of the world of pets in general. It definitely helps you decide if you want the responsibility or not.

I can't think of a single ethical topic that the book *Run, Spot, Run* did not cover. Some topics were uncomfortable, which at times made for equally uncomfortable reading, but this was also one of the strengths of this book; every aspect of keeping, buying and selling animals was discussed. As a veterinarian who has practiced for almost 40 years, and who has devoted his career to the well-being of animals, I am well acquainted with many (but not all!) of the subject matters and although some of it may be shocking and unbelievable to the reader, I can confirm that Jessica Pierce is "Spot" on in her knowledge of the subject matter. Everyone who is considering bringing an animal companion into their life or is part of the pet industry needs to read this book.

Very good, if basic book. But it is a good book for deeper thought and discussion. It doesn't focus

JUST on dogs, but all pets. So that is really good.

It's a wellresearched, well written book, covering all aspects of our relationship to animals.Highly recommended!

Whoa, difficult to think about this subject, but well written and thought provoking.

This book raises more questions than it answers, and that is a good thing for an ethics book to do! I like her approach, and reading the book has made me think about some tough issues around keeping pets. The short chapters raise a huge variety of issues. I recommend it for anyone who has pets, though it will push you out of your "comfort zone" and make you think hard about things you've always just done without questioning them.

Loved it

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