

The Costs of Caring for a Dog

In the excitement that comes with the decision to get a dog, people sometimes forget to consider whether they can afford one. Part of being a responsible dog person is making sure you have the money to keep your pet happy and healthy.

Your first expense will be the adoption fee, which can range from \$50 to \$300, depending on the facility you're adopting from and where you live. Adopting from a shelter tends to be cheaper than adopting from a breed rescue group. Besides being the right thing to do, adoption is much cheaper than buying a dog from a breeder or pet store, which can cost \$300 to \$1,500, or more.

If the dog isn't fixed, you'll probably spend \$45 to \$135 for neuter surgery or \$50 to \$175 for spay surgery at a low-cost clinic. Animal hospitals and veterinary clinics can charge \$200 to \$300.



Then, you'll need supplies: a dog collar and leash, toys, a dog bed, maybe a doghouse or crate, food and water bowls, dog food and treats, grooming brushes. If you live in an area where heartworm, fleas and/or ticks are a problem, you'll want to add in the cost of heartworm prevention or flea/tick control: \$150 to \$200 or more per year. Your dog will need an annual checkup and vaccinations, which can cost \$175 to \$200 for a puppy and \$50 to \$100 for an adult dog. For more details on what people are paying for things like spay/neuter surgery, teeth cleaning, grooming and vaccinations, go to CostHelper.com:

www.costhelper.com/cost/pets/pets-pet-care.html

Depending on your lifestyle and the type of dog you get, you may also need to factor in other costs, such as paying for doggie daycare, grooming, training, dog walking, boarding or pet-sitting. All of the costs mentioned above vary according to what part of the country you live in and whether you live in a big city, a town or a rural area, so you might want to do some preliminary research yourself.

According to PetPlace.com, here are average, routine costs for caring for a dog:

Small to medium-sized dogs:

- Estimated life span: 14 years
- First year: \$740 to \$1,325
- Estimated annual costs thereafter: \$500 to \$875

Total cost over a dog's lifetime is about \$7,240 to \$12,700.

Large to giant-sized dogs:

- Estimated life span: 8 years
- First year: \$1,020 to \$1,825
- Estimated annual costs thereafter: \$690 to \$875

Total estimated lifetime cost: \$5,850 to \$7,950.

Puppies: The First Year

- Veterinary care and laboratory tests: \$100 to \$200
- Physical examinations and immunizations: \$80 to \$200
- Internal/external parasite treatment and control: \$100 to \$150
- Spay/neuter: \$90 to \$200 (The cost often depends on the dog's size and age.)
- Food: \$150 to \$250
- Miscellaneous (collars, leads, crate, toys, bed, training): \$250 to \$285

Total: \$770 to \$1,285

Dogs: Annual Costs

- Veterinary care, examinations and laboratory costs: \$150 to \$255
- Immunizations: \$60 to \$75
- Internal/external parasite preventatives: \$120 to \$190
- Food: \$150 to \$300
- Miscellaneous: \$100 to \$125

Total: \$580 to \$945

These are routine costs – not including the cost of emergency trips to the vet or necessary surgeries or treatments. Surgeries can cost several thousand dollars or more, while a simple ear infection may only cost a couple hundred dollars in vet fees and medications.

Helpful Resources

Consumer Reports

Veterinary Care Without the Bite:

www.consumerreports.org/Pets/

20 Ways to Cut Vet Costs:

www.consumerreports.org/pets/0307vet3.html

About.com: The Cost of Dog Ownership

dogs.about.com/od/becomingadogowner/a/costofdogs.htm

ASPCA: Cutting Pet Care Costs

www.aspca.org/pet-care/pet-care-tips/cuttingcosts.html