

Consumer Information

Include Fluffy and Fido in your budget

MADISON, Wis. (5/5/10)--Many pet owners consider a cat or dog part of the family, yet haven't included the cost of ownership in the household budget. An animal can live with you for many years. *Consumer Reports Money Blog* (April 19) and the Credit Union National Association's (CUNA) Center for Personal Finance recommend that pet lovers prepare for the price tag attached to obtaining and caring for an animal.

Whether you purchase from a breeder or adopt from a shelter, you can expect to spend anywhere from less than \$100 to more than \$1,000 to acquire your new best friend. Even if you get a pet for free, there are significant costs for feeding and vet bills. To ensure that Fido or Fluffy is well cared for, include these items in your budget:

- *Basic supplies* include food bowls, leashes, collars, nail trimmers, brushes, ID tags, cages and carriers, and litter boxes. You typically purchase these items once or twice during a pet's lifetime. Costs will vary by type and size of animal, and often can be obtained for less at discount stores. You'll pay more for longer lasting, quality tools; ask established pet owners when it's worth spending more. Plan to replenish disposable items such as litter and dog waste bags monthly, unless you buy in bulk.
- *Food and treat* costs will vary with the size, age, and health of your pet. Feeding a cat can cost as little as \$4 a week, while a large dog can eat \$25 worth of kibble. Based on your veterinarian's recommendation, determine the daily amount of food required and how much it costs per month to provide your pet.
- *Medical care* is another guaranteed expense. Spaying or neutering is a one-time cost. A yearly checkup, including routine shots, is standard for dogs and cats. According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), it costs an average of \$150 for veterinary care every year for a cat and \$400 to \$780 for a dog, again depending on size, age, and health. Pet insurance can help cover some bills; shop around for rates and read the fine print about what's actually covered.
- *Services* such as grooming, obedience training, dog walking, and boarding when you're out of town are additional expenses to account for in your budget. Get references from friends and your vet; contact providers in your area to compare one-time and recurring costs. Remember to include any local licensing fees.

Check out the ASPCA's estimated pet-ownership costs, not just for dogs and cats but rabbits, guinea pigs, other small mammals, birds, and fish. These are average costs, and may be higher or lower in your community

[ASPCA Website](#)

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