

# How Much Will That Dog REALLY Cost?

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## West Wind Dog Training

"I can't afford a breeder; I need to find a cheap dog." "My dog is throwing up all over but I cannot afford a vet." "My dog is ripping up the house and chewing when I am not home, crates are too expensive and the dog climbs gates." "I will not spay/neuter my dog. Too much money!" How many emails like this do I get each week? How often do I hear these statements from students? How many times do I see questions like these posted on the Internet?

Years ago, I read a quote that stated the average dog owner spends about \$600 per year on the family pet. I mentioned this figure to my husband and he replied, "Yeah, if there is an emergency, I can see that." Being the loving wife I am, I did a quick calculation of what we spend per year, per dog *without* including emergencies. What I came up with was very close to the \$600 estimate. Therefore, I decided to go a bit further and look at numbers. This is what I came up with – the true cost of a dog.

Before I continue I need to mention that some of these prices will vary based on size of the dog and where you get supplies. You could spend as little as \$600 or over \$2000 per year for your dog. A smaller dog will eat far less than a larger dog. Some breeds require professional grooming which will add to annual costs. A dog with a health condition may cost more over time than a dog without a health condition. The numbers I came up with are just guides and not set in stone!

### ***Cost of puppy:***

This can range from \$50 through a shelter upwards to about \$1000 from a breeder (breeder prices will often range between \$750 - \$1500 *on average* based on many factors and please know how to tell a reputable breeder over one who is not).

### **The first year:**

9 week puppy shots \$35 - \$50 depending on vet

12 week puppy shots \$35 - \$50 depending on vet

16 weeks rabies shot \$7 - \$40 depending on where you go

Heartworm preventative \$40 - \$100 per year depending on size of dog & type of preventative

Collar \$5 - \$20

Leash \$5 - \$20

Toys (puppies and dogs need a variety)

- Fleece man \$5 - \$7 ea
- Rope Toy \$2 - \$5 ea
- Ball \$1 - \$5 ea
- Various chews \$2 - \$10ea

Crate \$25 - \$150 depending on size and type

Food \$15 - \$30 (per bag for good, premium food – cost per year will vary based on dog)

Puppy Classes \$45 - \$125 per session

Basic Obedience Classes \$45 - \$125 per session

Spay/Neuter \$75 - \$150 based on gender and size of dog

So depending on your individual expenses, you could easily spend \$300 - \$900 on your puppy the first year alone. You can easily exceed the cost of the pup you paid for. Therefore, that cheap little pup one had to find is not a cheap little pup!

***As he grows:***

Now, dogs require annual checkups, dogs should have refresher training classes, food, toys, treats, heartworm preventative and the like. Add all this up in one year and it is amazing how much you can spend. It is very easy to hit that \$600/year estimate even after your dog's first year has passed.

***Emergencies:***

Dogs get sick, accidents happen – even to the best of us. It is not unreasonable to expect to drop hundreds of dollars or more for an emergency. This is just part of being a dog owner. A hit by car can easily run over \$1,000. If you cannot handle the expenses of basic day-to-day care, you may not be able to handle emergencies. There are pet health insurances available to help cover some costs. Another option is to keep a credit card on hand that is used ONLY for serious emergencies with your pets (trick: do not carry the credit card with you, too much temptation). The cost of just walking into a clinic for an emergency can run \$40 - \$75 depending on if you go to your regular vet, an emergency clinic or if the emergency is after hours. However, if you suspect a serious problem with your dog, do not let it go to see if it gets better. Often waiting can mean the vets have a worse situation to deal with and the cost can be greater to you in the end.

### ***Chronic health issues:***

What if your dog has a chronic health problem or develops one? Not all hereditary issues are present at birth and many can take years to crop up. A good breeder will do all possible to breed only the healthiest dogs but still, genetics are funny and things can show up down the road. Can you afford to care for a chronic condition? What if your pet develops a problem that is not hereditary but something that just can happen like diabetes or an autoimmune issue? Can you afford the medications and multiple vet trips during the course of the dog's life beyond what is normal for a healthy dog? You can spend hundreds of dollars in a few weeks with testing and finding the best medications alone. If the dog has to be on constant medication for a problem, you can end up spending hundreds of dollars or more in a year on the medications alone. Years ago, I had a dog with Cushing's disease. Her medications per month were close to \$50. Multiply that by twelve and then add in vet trips every few months while we stabilized her medications.

### ***As a senior:***

Senior pets have issues of their own. Once your pet hits senior age, it is a good idea to have baseline bloods run. This will give an idea as to Senior pets are prone to more health issues than a younger pet and these issues can be costlier. Many vets recommend a senior dog come in twice a year for physicals as so much can change within a short period as a dog hits his golden years. Can you afford to have various bumps that may develop checked out? Some may be age-related, some may not be. Can you afford the extra vet trips? Can you afford any extras a senior pet may need for comfort?

### ***Other expenses:***

*Grooming...* Do you have a breed that may require professional grooming? Depending on where you go, the size of the dog and type of grooming, you can pay as little as \$30 or over \$100 for a grooming. In addition, depending on how often you have the dog groomed, expect to pay this as often as every four weeks.

*Security...* The safest way to confine a dog to a yard is with a barrier fence. Tying up is cheaper but dangerous. Depending on the size of area to be fenced, the cost can be as little as a few hundred dollars or thousands. Even electric fences can cost a couple hundred dollars and they are not as safe as barrier fencing.

*Boarding/Pet Sitting...* Do you travel? What if you cannot take your dog with you? Boarding can cost as little as \$10 a night at your vet or over \$100 for a luxury kennel. Even if you have a relative watch the dog, it is still nice to give them something for their efforts.

### ***Time factors:***

Dogs and puppies require time investment as well. Though not financial, all the money in the world is nothing if you do not invest the time and effort to properly raise and train

your dog. Dogs are not status symbols to be stuck in the yard to make you look good. Dogs are pack members and need time and effort from us.

***Conclusion:***

Whether your dog came from the pound or the best breeder in the country, it is the day-to-day expenses that cost the big bucks over time – not the purchase of the dog. Do the math and look at what it takes to be a responsible dog owner. Now, look back and think: "Can I really afford a dog? Can I afford an emergency? Can I afford training and the time it takes?" Dogs, even just pets, are not a cheap investment. If you spend that average of \$600 per year and your dog lives to be 15 years, the cost of the dog is \$9,000. If you add in emergencies, illness, medications, if you are involved with canine sports, the cost can be easily over \$10,000.

Now you know the true cost of that dog. However, for many, and myself included, the cost is worth it and we accept it as part of being a responsible dog owner!