



CUTTING PET EXPENSES

There is no doubt about it that having a pet can be costly. It's a cost and responsibility that should not be taken lightly. For many of us though it's a nonnegotiable; we have to have a pet in our life! If a dog or cat is not affordable then consider some of the smaller companion animals; a budgie or a pet rat can make a great companion. Here are some hints and tips on how you can cut the costs of keeping a pet, whilst not compromising their health or well-being.

If you are thinking of bringing a new pet into the family: check out your local animal shelter before purchasing an expensive pedigree cat, dog or bird.

- Shop around for pet-related needs. Visit online stores, buy bulk or wait for sales & consider some second hand items might suit as well. Consider if you really need a kennel for your dog; a crate might be more versatile. Don't go into pet stores if you are tempted to buy an animal on impulse.
- Buy a few quality toys for your pet which will last. If you buy plush toys and other potential dog or cat play things from opportunity shops, make sure you test them first and check for safety and quality. Some toys don't have to cost anything; recycle an ice-cream container to hide treats (or create an ice block treat from stock and pet milk) or use an empty soft drink or milk bottle to use as a treat dispenser (use under supervision). For inexpensive cat toys, use toilet rolls and attach ribbon to them, or let them play with a ping pong ball.
- Use an old doona for your indoor pet bed or make your own. For a cat you can decorate a box & line it with old sheets.
- Make your own healthy dog treats, e.g., oven-dried liver, tuna treats, baked biscuits. We have recipes on our website (Resources and information pages under T)
- Give your dog a bone, but check with your vet first. Beef bones can be very hard and can cause tooth fractures. Lamb necks, chicken wings, necks or chicken frames may be a better alternative. Bones can help to clean their teeth, reducing the need to prevent serious diseases that arise from rotten teeth.
- Get to know your vet. Cost price vet services may not be as good as they sound. If you develop a good trusting relationship with your vet then the trust goes both ways. Let your vet know if money is tight. There are often more cost effective treatment options; for example giving tablets instead of an injection, or more cost-effective means of giving heartworm medication.



Talk to your vet about Titre testing in place of vaccinations. If your dog has good immunity you don't need to revaccinate. Over vaccinating can cause health problems which can be much costlier in the long term. Core vaccines or titre tests can be done every 3 years for adult dogs, not yearly as was previously done (see the Australian veterinary association guidelines for full information). If your vet is still insisting on a yearly vaccination then do your research.

- Invest in a pet first aid book or first aid course and gradually build up a pet first aid kit. This can reduce unnecessary trips to the vet.
- If you go away, arrange for a house-sitter to live and care for the animals – it can save on kennel costs.
- Invest in pet insurance. It will cost a little extra on top of your home or contents insurance, but will soon prove its worth when your pet needs a vet. If you don't think pet insurance is affordable, then set up a savings account to be used for pet expenses only.

By Sarah of Clever Creatures