



# Prepping for pet ownership: Financial and medical considerations for lifetime care

Whether you're a first-time or seasoned pet owner, being financially prepared to manage the cost of pet care is an important part of keeping your pet healthy. To estimate your pet's veterinary care costs each year, contact your veterinarian for the average costs of the following wellness services:

## Physical exam

A nose-to-tail physical exam helps your veterinarian detect such abnormalities as a heart murmur, ear infection, dental disease, or flea allergy dermatitis.

## Lifestyle-appropriate vaccination

Your veterinarian will tailor your pet's vaccinations to their lifestyle and exposure risk, so necessary vaccinations may change from year to year.

## Parasite testing

Ensuring your pet is heartworm-free is critical for safe heartworm prevention administration, so annual testing is recommended. In addition, knowing if your pet is carrying roundworms, whipworms, hookworms, or other par-

asites can indicate potential infection risk for your family—the reason a fecal exam is important.

## Parasite prevention

Depending on your location and your pet's lifestyle, they may require year-round parasite prevention.

## Screening tests

All pets should receive annual screening tests tailored to their age, breed, and health status. By monitoring your pet's normal values over the years, your veterinarian can detect subtle changes early in a disease process, offering the best prognosis. Screening tests may include blood work, urinalysis, blood pressure check, and X-rays.

## Spay or neuter

Having your pet spayed or neutered can prevent health and behavior problems from developing later in life.

## Dental care

All young pets begin accumulating plaque and tartar buildup, and many cats and dogs require dental cleanings from as young as 2 years old. Delaying preventive dental cleanings can lead to

dental disease, which may require more expensive procedures, like extractions, down the road.

## You've got options

Whether your pet is healthy, sick, or injured, here are potential ways to manage the cost of their lifetime healthcare:

## Split bills between cards and cash

Veterinary practices take multiple payment forms, and you can divide a bill between a debit card, credit card, and cash.

## Pet insurance

Pet health insurance provides a wide range of coverages, from accident and illness only, to comprehensive wellness and specialty care. Protect your pet by securing their insurance policy when they are young, to avoid coverage gaps because of pre-existing conditions.

## Wellness plans

Some veterinary practices offer wellness financial plans that charge a monthly fee, which covers your pet's annual physical exams, vaccinations, parasite prevention, and screening tests.

### Health and pet care credit card

A credit card specifically designed to cover healthcare costs—for you and your pet—can give you the financial capabilities you need for anything from wellness care and prescriptions, to emergency and specialty services. Better yet—it’s a solution that can provide promotional financing options with convenient monthly payments.

### Installment loans

A short-term loan or other financing option from a third-party lender can work in a pinch when your pet needs immediate care. Ask your veterinarian if they offer or accept this option.

### Savings account

A savings account kept solely for pet-care costs, or to set aside an emergency fund, can provide a financial safety net and ease your mind regarding pet expenses.

### Monthly budget

While you can’t predict emergencies or disease development, you can add your pet’s wellness care to your monthly budget. Ask your veterinarian for an estimate of your pet’s expected annual costs, including exams, vaccinations, screening tests, and parasite prevention. Divide that cost by 12 to determine how much you need to save each month.

### Animal charities

Breed- or condition-specific charities may assist, providing your pet meets their funding qualifications.

**When you’re prepared with a financial safety net for your pet’s care,** you have peace of mind knowing you’re ready with a way to pay – no matter what life brings. From routine visits and vaccinations to unexpected illness, injury or surgery, you know cost won’t get in the way of providing the care your pet needs throughout life. Isn’t that worth everything?

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### Range of one year of expenses

*Low end* does not include non-basic expenses, while the *high end* does not include health insurance, wellness plans, spaying or neutering, technology purchases, or initial costs.



**Dog** = \$1,270 (low) to \$2,803 (high)



**Cat** = \$961 (low) to \$2,487 (high)

### Range of 15-year lifetime expenses

*Low end* does not include health insurance, wellness plans, or other non-basic expenses, while *high end* includes initial costs, spaying or neutering, and end-of-life expenses.



**Dog** = \$19,893 or \$111/month (low)  
\$55,132 or \$306/month (high)



**Cat** = \$15,055, or \$84/month (low)  
\$45,790 or \$254/month (high)

Synchrony, Lifetime of Care Study (2021). Available at: <http://petlifetimeofcare.com>

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