

How To Make Dog Ownership Affordable

When adding a four-legged friend to the family, most people only consider the initial cost of purchasing the dog and the supplies you need right away. However, the expenses that come with responsible dog ownership are far more considerable than most people realize on the onset. These costs usually come up one at a time but can really add up in the long term. If you're considering adding a dog to the family, here are some steps to follow that will help you make your years together a less expensive investment.

1. Do your research.

Sure, you love the neighbor's really cute bernese mountain dog, but is that breed the right choice for you? Consider attributes like temperament, shedding, allergens, size, need for exercise, health issues, etc. and then compare them to your lifestyle.

Do you have the time or ability to take a dog out for an hour or so of exercise every day or can you afford to hire a dog walker to come take your dog out during lunchtime if no one else is home all day? What about children? Some dogs are good with small children, some better with older children and others not good with kids at all. Can you deal with dog hair all over your home or do you need a dog that sheds less? Also think about what you could afford medically - some dogs are more predisposed to medical conditions than others, which is important to think about when choosing your breed as well.

There are so many factors to take into consideration when choosing a dog breed, so do your research, talk to experts or friends and family who have a certain breed, and figure out what type of dog would be best for your family rather than just what type of dog you've always imagined owning.

2. Choose a rescue dog.

Not only are rescue dogs less expensive right off the bat, but you're also saving a dog's life when you do so. Another good thing about choosing a rescue dog is that you can choose a dog that is older and already house trained because training a dog can be expensive if you don't have the time or knowledge to do so yourself and puppies need considerably more time and attention.

Call a few local rescue centers and explain what you're looking for in a dog. Ask them about the dog's history and behavior to make sure you're getting one that you can handle - some rescue dogs have been abused and are more likely to exhibit violent behavior, which may be better handled by someone with more experience or without children. Take your time and look around until you find the right dog for you and your family.

3. Groom your dog yourself.

Dropping your dog off at the groomers and then picking him up all clean and fluffy is wonderful but it can become incredibly expensive, especially if you have an active dog that spends a lot of time outdoors. Put in the extra effort to learn how to groom your dog yourself and get the few supplies you'll need. At the end of the day, you'll actually save quite a bit of money but you'll also be putting your pet through a much less stressful experience by grooming him yourself rather than handing him off to strangers.

4. Be proactive about your dog's health.

Just like taking care of yourself now can prevent disease down the line, take care of your dog in the same way. Make sure to visit the vet for annual check-in's to get vaccinations and any preventative medicines that the vet recommends. Those small costs annually could save you from big expenses down the line.

Food is also important to your dog's health, just like it is to yours, so ask your vet about what to feed your dog but at the same time, shop around. If you do your research, you may be able to find a less expensive brand of food that still contains the same or almost the same ingredients of whichever brand your vet recommends.

5. Give your time.

Last but not least, the most important aspect to dog ownership is spending time with your dog. Your time is essentially free and is by far the most important thing to the dog that you've brought into your home. When you're feeling burned out and would rather watch TV than take the dog for a walk or play tug-o-war, remember why you got your dog in the first place and all the joy and stress relief that he has brought into your life. There's a reason that dogs are called man's best friend, so make sure to really spend time with your dog and reap the physical, mental and emotional benefits that come with him.