



AFFORDING TO KEEP YOUR DOG

Although the current economic climate is difficult for everyone, it's not fair that your best friend should suffer as a result. We hope that the following advice which has been put together from the suggestions of our dedicated Dogs Trust staff will help you and your family get through this difficult time together.

Some of these suggestions may be used on a temporary basis until things improve and some can be used on a permanent basis, but please ensure that you do not compromise your dog's welfare. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 was created to ensure that owners look after their pets responsibly, detailing a 'Duty of care' that all pet owners must follow. Please ask for our 'Changes in Animal Welfare' leaflet or contact your local dog warden for more information.

Pet insurance – although pet insurance may seem to be an expense you can do without, it only takes a simple accident or short illness for those vet bills to start racking up. Remember that 'cheap' pet insurance may not give you the cover that you need, so this may be one expense not to scrimp on if you can help it.

Veterinary care – if you don't have pet insurance and will struggle to pay vet's bills, think about contacting the following in case they can assist:

- PDSA – www.pdsa.org.uk or call 0800 7312502 (only if you are on housing benefits)
- The Blue Cross – www.bluecross.org.uk or call 01993 822651
- The RSPCA – www.rspca.org.uk or call 0300 1234555

Ask your vet if they will consider taking small payments on a regular basis if you have a large vet bill.

Medication – prescription-only medicine from your vet can be expensive. If medication is not needed urgently, think about asking for a prescription from your vet (for a reasonable charge) as you can then source and buy medication from elsewhere. There are many online 'pet pharmacies' that may be able to supply your dog's medication more cheaply. Worming and flea treatments may also be sourced from other suppliers – these may not be as comprehensive as prescription-only products but won't hurt to use as a temporary measure.

Vaccinations – regular vaccinations are essential for the health of your dog. Some vets now charge a one-off fee to cover vaccinations for the lifetime of the dog – so look for this type of scheme locally. To reduce the price of vaccinations, some vets have 'loyalty card' type schemes and you can get free vaccinations during National Vaccination Month. Make sure your vet is not over-vaccinating as many vaccines now last for three years with only minor elements being given annually.

Neutering – letting your dog have puppies is incredibly expensive and these days there's no guarantee that you'll be able to sell them on to new homes. Complications during pregnancy and birth are not covered by pet insurance and can leave you without a mum or pups but with a huge vet bill, so think about neutering. Neutering can have preventative health benefits for both males

and females, so could save you a lot of money in the long run. Check if you qualify for subsidised neutering with us – call 0845 606 3036. Local animal welfare organisations and your local council may also run neutering schemes in your area.

Food – your dog doesn't have to have the most expensive food on the market – so do shop around for cheaper food. Consider buying in bulk from pet superstores or online. Add your food scraps to bulk it out and make it more interesting for your dog (pretty much anything apart from grapes, raisins, onions, corncobs and fruit pits, spicy foods or anything too fatty or processed – check with your vet if you're unsure) – meat and cooked vegetables work best. If you have a local abattoir they may be able to supply cheap meat and offal which can be mixed with pasta/rice and vegetables for a relatively cheap diet – at least on a temporary basis.

Chewies/treats – raw meaty bones can make a great alternative to expensive chewy treats. Ask your butcher for large beef bones (with some meat attached) in particular. Some supermarkets also sell suitable bones for stock. Some dogs really enjoy fruit and vegetables as a treat – slices of apple and whole carrots can make a very cheap treat. Again, check with your vet if you are unsure.

Dental bills – can be huge and may not be covered by pet insurance. Prevent treatment from being needed by brushing your dog's teeth regularly with dog toothpaste and/or providing lots of opportunities for your dog to chew (especially after meals) to keep your dog's teeth healthy.

Microchipping - if your dog strays you could be facing a hefty bill from the dog warden. Get your dog microchipped by Dogs Trust (or your local council) for just a few pounds – contact your local Rehoming Centre to arrange an appointment.

Grooming – if you have a breed/type of dog with the type of fur that needs professional grooming, brushing them on a regular basis (once a day) will prevent you from having to get that hair cut quite so often. Walking your dog on pavements or concrete paths (as part of his normal walk) at least once a day will help keep his nails short.

Toys – cheap toys can be bought from charity shops or jumble sales. Just stick them in the washing machine and remember to remove any eyes, noses or buttons that your dog may swallow. Never leave your dog with any toy that he is likely to destroy and eat! Make your own activity toys from coconut shells or large plastic bottles filled with dried kibble – also check out our 'Beating boredom' factsheet on our website for other cheap or free ways to keep your dog busy and amused.

Bedding – why pay for an expensive dog bed when he'll be happy as anything on a folded 'budget' duvet from a supermarket, large chain retail store or even a charity shop? Stick an old clean duvet cover on it and he'll be sleeping like a baby in no time.

Bowls – dogs don't care what they eat out of, so use an old plate or bowl, or even just pile the food onto a wipe clean table mat or a flat piece of cardboard that you can throw away.

Training classes – if you really cannot afford to pay for that training class, have a look online at our training videos, which should cover all your training needs:

www.dogstrust.org.uk/az/t/training/default.aspx

Boarding kennels – if you're lucky enough to be able to get away on holiday, prepare for this beforehand by getting together with other dog owners that you trust (perhaps via a dog training class, veterinary surgery or just friends and family) and form a 'pet care club', so that you can dog-sit for each other. Alternatively stay in the UK and take your pet with you.

Behaviour advice - get the right advice the first time, so you don't end up spending hundreds of pounds going from one 'behaviour expert' to another. Always check with your vet first that the problem isn't being caused by a physical issue and then ask for a referral to a qualified local behaviourist. Price of consultation is not always an indication of quality and you may find that you actually pay considerably less than you would with someone you just found on the internet. If the problem is relatively minor and does not include aggression, you can find information on our website in the A to Z section, or email us at info@dogstrust.org.uk in case we can offer some advice.

Moving to rented accommodation? – if you are having problems finding somewhere that accepts pets, check out Lets with Pets for advice. www.letswithpets.org.uk

Become a member of Dogs Trust – for £25 a year (or £12.50 if over 60). This will entitle you to useful benefits including:

- Unlimited access to Vetfone™ – a 24 hour emergency advice service from veterinary professionals.
- 3rd party insurance for your dog – up to £1,000,000 per claim if your dog causes damage or injury to another person, their property or pets (An excess of £200 applies for the UK and £500 in the Republic of Ireland).

Although times are hard at the moment, please think about the commitment you made when taking on the responsibility of a dog. Is there anything else in your lifestyle that you can sensibly forego to allow you to keep your canine friend?

For more information about Dogs Trust, to become a member, sponsor a long-term resident or help us in our campaigns please call 020 7837 0006 or write to:

Dogs Trust, 17 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7RQ.

www.dogstrust.org.uk

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