

Pet Care Guide



Cutting the Cost of Care

Proper healthcare is one of the largest expenses in owning and caring for an animal. While certain treatments and vaccines are essential, there are steps you can take as a responsible pet owner to save on your pet's health expenses in the long run.

KEEP UP WITH REGULAR CARE

Staying on top of regular checkups is one of the best methods of preventative care.

Not only do current vaccinations help protect your pet from communicable diseases, but having a trained professional look over your pet can alert you to more serious issues — such as gum disease, wax buildup in their ears, any abnormal growths and any abnormalities that may show up in routine blood work.

This can save you major bucks down the road for issues that went unnoticed until it was too late.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PET FAIRS

Pet fairs are a fun and productive way to help manage the cost of pet healthcare. Pet fairs often are hosted by veterinary clinics or multiple clinics working in conjunction with one another, and provide regular services at discounted rates.

You also can get your pet spayed or neutered, or have its toenails clipped, ears cleaned, and teeth checked, all at rates much lower than normal. Look for pet fair advertisements and call ahead.

Procedures typically must be performed on fair days, so if you are looking to get your pet spayed or neutered, there



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will be limited space.

ENGAGE IN REGULAR EXERCISE

Obesity is the biggest threat

to your pet's health. In fact, according to the State of Pet Health report — released by Banfield Pet Hospital — over the last 10 years the number of

overweight cats has increased 169 percent and the number of overweight dogs has increased 158 percent.

Engaging in regular play and

exercise is essential to maintaining your pet's health, which can prevent a multitude of harmful (and expensive) problems down the road.

Animal Cruelty Statistics

An animal is being abused, neglected or forced to fight every minute — even as you read this.

One of the first steps in creating positive change for these animals is understanding and recognizing the cruelty they face on a daily basis.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has made this its mission and works tirelessly to rescue animals, pass humane laws, share resources and raise awareness across the nation. Here are just a few relevant statistics on animal cruelty.

STAY INFORMED

- On average, there are 2,000 cases of animal abuse or cruelty reported in the media each year.

- 60 percent of these cases involved dogs.

- These numbers are considered very low and inaccurate, because many states do not include livestock in their cruelty laws.

- The most common types of reported animal abuse involve neglect, shooting and poisoning.

- Dog fighting, cockfighting and other forms of organized animal cruelty are closely tied to other violent crimes across the United States.

- According to Canine Journal, 66,000 dogs and 21,000 cats are subjected to



testing every year.

- In addition, 100 million animals — including mice, rats, dogs, cats, rabbits, monkeys and others — are killed in U.S. laboratories each year.

- According to the ASPCA, more than 250,000 animals fall victim to hoarding each

year. This is when there are too many animals in unsanitary conditions.

- Florida is the worst offending state for animal cruelty, according to Pet Abuse's 2008 report. The state ranks the highest for the number of dog fighting cases

under investigation, highest for the number of dog beatings, highest for the number of cases involving neglect or abandonment of animals, and highest for animal drowning, choking and suffocation.

- The connection between

animal and human violence is well documented. A survey of the 50 largest shelters for battered women in the United States found that 85 percent of women and 63 percent of children entering shelters discussed incidences of pet abuse in the family.

Don't Bully My Breed

You might have heard this phrase before. You've possibly seen it on a tee shirt, or on a sticker in a shop window. Or perhaps you are the owner of a bully-breed dog and are an active participant in raising awareness on the destructive nature of breed-specific legislation.

It is important to understand the impact and history of breed-specific legislation and its impact on pet health.

WHAT IS BREED-SPECIFIC LEGISLATION?

Breed-specific legislation is a law that bans or restricts certain types of dogs based on their appearance and perceived threat to a community. This legislation often is created in response to a well-publicized incidence of a dog biting or injuring someone — especially by pit bull-type breeds.

There has been much dispute, however, over the effectiveness of this type of legislation in preventing or reducing attacks by dogs.

POINT OF VIEW #1

This type of legislation is necessary because certain dog breeds are a public safety issue and should be addressed through cities banning the breed, mandatory spaying or neutering, mandatory microchip implants or prohibiting convicted felons from owning them.

POINT OF VIEW #2

Breed-specific legislation does not effectively address the issue it's aiming for, and is harmful to innocent dogs and owners. There should be more comprehensive and specific "dog-bite" legislation — outside of breed — working along side consumer education initiatives and legal mandating of responsible pet ownership.

THE EXPERTS

According to a 2000 report released by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fatal attacks on humans appear to be a breed-specific problem.

However, breeds often not banned (rather than pit bulls and other bully breeds) bite at higher rates, and since fatal attacks represent a very small portion of dog bite injuries, there are better alternatives to breed-specific legislation to address the issue.



Treating Your Pet

Treating pets — through food or new toys or gear — is one of the ways pet owners love to show their affection for their animals. This is only natural, given they are full-fledged members of our families and love us unconditionally.

But it is important to be conscious of how we treat them. Just like with children, just because they may enjoy something does not necessarily mean it is in their best interest.

PURCHASE NEW TOYS

Staying engaged is an important aspect of pet health. Toys are not a luxury but a necessity.

You pet should have several items to play with. Without proper toys, pets can become bored, which can lead to destructive or lethargic behavior. When purchasing new toys, keep in mind:

- Be sure that the toys are size appropriate; too big and your pet will become disinterested. Too small, and you risk a swallowing hazard.

- Hard rubber toys are great for dogs because they can be chewed on and carried around with ease.

- Cats are pickier about their toys, so be sure to choose items that suit your cat's personality.



HEALTHY SNACKS

Giving treats is a preferred method of showing love for many pet owners. However, with so many varieties to choose from, you must be careful about what you give. Snacks should be healthy and low in sugars, salt and arti-

cial flavorings and preservatives.

Here are a few things you should look for when choosing snacks for your pet:

- Look for treats that are meat-based with no artificial ingredients.

- Look for treats that also

serve to maintain your pet's health. Dental treats are a great example — but continue to read the labels to avoid unwanted ingredients.

- There also are great alternatives to commercially sold treats. Fruits and vegetables are a great option, and pets

often like hard produce, such as apples, carrots. Green beans are a great source of fiber.

Just be sure to consult a vet before giving anything to your pet; some items, such as onions and grapes, are toxic to pets.

AVOID THE EXCESS

While your pet might enjoy them, it is important not to feed your pet table scraps. Too many table scraps and not enough exercise can lead to obesity — one of the largest threats to your pet's health.

Have Pets, Will Travel

We all love a good vacation, from a quick weekend getaway to a long family holiday. If you are a pet owner, however, travel can feel stressful — especially if you are not comfortable boarding your animal.

If taking Fluffy with you is of utmost importance, fear not. Here is a checklist of travel musts to keep both you and your furry friend comfortable and at ease.

ROAD TRIPS

- Before you set off on any long sojourn, do a test run.
- Secure your animal safely. Pets who are free to roam around in vehicles not only provide a distraction to the driver but are also more likely to be injured in the event of an accident.

- Plan several stops. The American Veterinary Medical Association recommends drivers stop every two or three hours to allow your pet to stretch its legs and relieve itself.

- Never leave your pet alone. On an 85-degree day, temperatures can get as high at 110 degrees Fahrenheit in 10 minutes in a car with the windows cracked.



FLYING

- Documentation. It is always a good idea to carry a copy of your pet's medical and vaccination records with you when you travel.

- In addition, attach ID tags both to your pet and its carrier.

- If your pet hasn't traveled

in a carrier much, spend some time letting it get used to the carrier before you leave. Airlines have different requirements for kennel size, and the USDA requires animals have food, water and bedding.

- Be sure your pet gets plenty of exercise before a flight.

Engage in some intense play or go for a long walk. If you're pet is tired, it is more likely to rest or sleep during the flight.

GENERAL TRAVEL TIPS

- Take a familiar object — a toy or blanket. Familiar smells provide comfort in new environments.

- There are things that are essential to bring, no matter how you travel, including leash, collar and ID tags.

- If you have an anxious pet, consider a Thundershirt. These are tight-fitting shirts that hug your pet and target pressure points, helping pets relax.



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Senior Pets

Thanks to advances in care, pets are living longer than they ever have before. But as our pets age, they require extra care and oversight. (Extra cuddles don't hurt, either.)

WHEN IS A PET SENIOR?

While it varies, cats and dogs are generally considered senior when they've reached seven years of age.

Larger breeds of dogs do tend to have shorter life spans, however, and might be considered by your vet as senior at five or six.

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR

Changes in your pet's behavior might be your first sign that your pet isn't feeling as young as it once did. Common behavioral changes include:

- Skittishness around loud noises;
 - Increased anxiety or nervousness;
 - Unexplained or unusual aggressive behavior;
 - Acting confused or disoriented;
 - Having "accidents" in the house;
 - Not responding to commands;
- and
- Increased irritability.

CHANGES IN ACTIVITY

Your pet also will begin to change the way it plays, eats and sleeps.

Arthritis is a common problem as animals age. You might notice:

- Irritation when being touched or petted;
- Taking additional time or being reluctant to sit or lay down;
- Eating more slowly; and
- Avoidance of jumping up on things — such as a favorite piece of furniture or the bed.

CARING FOR YOUR SENIOR PET

There are things you can do to help your senior pet stay healthy and happy. Consider the following:

- Raise your pet's food and water bowls, so it doesn't need to kneel or bend over quite as far. This can be especially useful for larger dogs.

- Purchase an orthopedic bed or pad for your pet to lay on. This is easier on the joints and helps ease inflammation caused by arthritis.

- Make sure your pet has a private space in your home. This is especially important for dogs. Older animals can feel the need to be by themselves, or escape loud areas — especially if you have young children.

- Don't pass on physical activity. You might feel the urge to limit your pet's exercise, but don't reduce it drastically. Physical play is good for both the body and mind. Remember, just because Fido might not be as fast as he once was doesn't mean he doesn't enjoy playtime; you just might consider trading in the Frisbee for a long walk in the park instead.



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Pet Safety

You can never be too diligent in prioritizing your pet's safety. Stay aware of the most common safety concerns for pets year round, and it is less likely you will find your pet in need of emergency care.

HEAT SAFETY

Pets are exposed to many of the same safety concerns in the heat as their owners. They are prone to heat exhaustion as well as heat stroke.

It is important to keep your pet cool and hydrated. Make sure your pet

always has access to plenty of fresh, cool water and an area where it can rest in the shade (or in air-conditioning).

Warmer weather also is the time to take precautionary measures against fleas and ticks. Be sure to stay up to date with your pet's flea and tick preventive, as well as heartworm preventative medications.

COLD-WEATHER SAFETY

Pets face just as many safety concerns in cold temperatures as they do in hot temperatures. Ice and snow — even freezing pavement — can be very painful to your cat or dog's paws.

It is important to dry your pet's paws after any time outside, and look for any cracks or dry patches.

Purchasing boots for your dog is

always an option, but applying petroleum jelly is another great and inexpensive alternative.

Also be mindful of your pet feeling cold. Cats and many short-haired dogs need time to acclimate to colder weather, and don't need to be outside for extended periods of time.

HOLIDAY SAFETY

The holidays come with their own safety hazards for pets. Decor such as tinsel and ornaments can be dangerous and should be hung out of reach. If you keep a live Christmas tree, be sure to place a tight skirt around its base to prevent your pet from drinking the tree water.

Also be mindful of strings of lights by tucking cords out of reach and

using outlet surge protectors.

PREPARING A PET FIRST-AID KIT

It is important to be ready when your pet needs you. Keep the following items together in a tackle box or cosmetic case:

- Cotton rounds;
- Tweezers;
- Sterile gauze;
- Grease-cutting dish soap;
- Hydrocortisone cream;
- Rubbing alcohol;
- Benadryl;
- Blanket; and
- Copy of vaccinations and medical records (particularly useful if you are away from your home or you are putting together a kit for your vehicle).