

There is No Such Thing as a Free Dog

By Brenda Howard

“Can I keep him Mom!?” How many times does a parent here this? I tried the same plea on my parents when I was young! The reality of owning a dog was not clear to me – but it was to my parents. The commitment of time, energy and resources required to properly care for a dog is beyond the grasp of children and for that matter many adults.

A commitment to a dog is much like a commitment to a child or a spouse – it should be for the life of the dog. The life span of a small dog can be 12 to 15 years or more and the life span of giant breeds averages about 8 years. Getting a dog should not be an impulse purchase!

Not every breed is going to be a good fit for your family or match your vision of what life with a canine companion should be. Before you leap into this commitment consider how much time is available to spend with the dog, how much money it will cost to keep the dog, and who will care for the dog if something happens to you.

The acquisition cost of a dog may be nothing, or the price of spaying or neutering, or hundreds of dollars. Excluding the initial cost of the dog, let's estimate the yearly cost of keeping a medium sized dog if the dog lives 14 years:

Product/Service	Yearly Cost \$
Food – good quality	350.00
Vaccines/Yearly Veterinarian Visit	65.00
Heart Worm Preventative (important year round in Texas)	120.00
Bedding	15.00
Treats	30.00
Chew Bones	30.00
Fencing/Containment (divided out over 14 years)	55.00
Flea/Tic Prevention (important year round in Texas)	168.00
Grooming/Shampoo	40.00
Dental Care	45.00
Boarding	150.00
Crate (divided over 14 years)	5.00
Car Restraint (divided over 14 years)	5.00
Total	\$1078.00

This estimate is based on a moderate approach to providing for a dog. Certainly much more could be spent, and clearly there are folks who will try to spend far less by feeding low cost food, skipping vet care, heart worm prevention, and the rest.

While the cost of dog ownership may not have been something you have considered, my intention is not to scare you away, rather to help you make a clear headed decision about whether or not you really want the responsibility of dog ownership.

It's been said that a dog is the only love money can buy and I agree completely and would add that the cost is totally worth it!

Brenda Howard has been training dogs for over 20 years and is a member of The Association of Pet Dog Trainers, The American Bloodhound Club, and The American Boarding Kennels Association.

The information presented here is not intended to substitute for the advice and care of a veterinarian. Please consult your veterinarian regarding all issues relating to your dog's health.

