

Saving Money on Pet Care

by Kim Wolf, Executive Director of Beyond Breed, a nonprofit organization
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No matter how many times we say that “all they need is love,” the harsh reality is that dogs cost money. With more and more [Americans struggling to make ends meet](#), dog owners are [struggling to keep their dogs at home](#) and out of animal shelters.

Here are some tips to help dog owners save money!

FOOD

- Buy pet food in bulk; the larger the bag, the cheaper per ounce. You'll pay more up front, but save money over time.
- Order food online through [Amazon Subscribe & Save](#) and get free shipping on regular monthly deliveries.
- If you're eligible, apply for Pet Food Stamps to receive free pet food. [OAS note: This program has been discontinued.]
- A website called [www.PetFlow.com](#) offers \$10 off any \$40+ scheduled order with the code “PFS,” plus free shipping on any delivery schedule over \$49+ (after discount). [OAS note: This discount may no longer be offered.]
- Consider feeding two small meals a day, instead of one large meal.
- Skip the store-bought dog treats; consider offering pieces of kibble or veggies instead. If it comes from your hand, chances are your dog will think it's gold!



VETERINARY CARE

- Shop around! Some veterinarians charge more than others, so call ahead for estimates. Get second opinions on surgeries and non-routine procedures.
- Ask the veterinarian to explain every possible treatment and discuss the pros & cons. Tell him/her, “I need to balance care with cost.”
- Ask your veterinarian, “What will this test tell us? What choices will be made as a result of the test?” Sometimes the course of action is the same no matter what the result is. Be especially cognizant with older pets; if you aren't going to pursue the treatment anyway, consider skipping the test.
- If you have more than one pet, ask your veterinarian about “multiple pet discounts.” Some veterinarians will only charge for one exam fee if they see multiple pets during one visit.

- Ask about discounts for adopted pets.
- If you are on a fixed income or you're a senior citizen, ask about discounts or "sliding scale" rates.
- If you can't afford the cost of treatment upfront, ask about payment plans or look into [Care Credit](#).
- Consider using lower-cost venues like [Banfield Pet Hospitals](#) or [VCA Animal Hospitals](#).
- Take advantage of free or low-cost spay/neuter services. To find options in your area, click [here](#).
- For routine treatment (like vaccinations), look for low-cost clinics or events hosted by local animal shelters, animal control agencies, or animal welfare organizations. [OAS note: see our listings [here](#).]
- Consider vaccinating your pets at home to avoid paying an exam fee and having to transport your pet. Ask your veterinarian if you need assistance. (Note: Most areas require a veterinarian to administer rabies vaccinations.)
- Ask your veterinarian if your pet is eligible for a 3-year rabies vaccination, instead of a 1-year vaccination.



MEDICATIONS

- Veterinary offices tend to markup medications, so avoid having them filled on site, if possible. Ask to have the prescription called to a "human" pharmacy (e.g., CVS, Target, Rite-Aid, Walmart) or have them fax it to an online pet pharmacy (e.g., [1-800-PetMeds](#), [Drs. Foster and Smith](#), [PetCareRX](#)) for later delivery.
- If you use Pill Pockets to give your dog pills, break them in half; the bag will last twice as long. Or make [homemade pill pockets](#) using milk, peanut butter, and flour.
- For routine heartworm pills or topical flea/tick ointment, ask your veterinarian about buying the largest dosage possible (i.e., for the largest dogs) and dividing it in accordance with your dog's weight. Ask about cutting the pills in half or using a syringe to measure out/dispense the topical ointment.
- Ask your veterinarian if you can skip flea/tick treatment during colder months, depending on your geographic location.

Homemade Pill Pocket Recipe

in



1 T Milk
1 T Crunchy Peanut Butter
2 T Flour (any kind)

Mix together and form 12 pockets.

Store in fridge or freezer.

<http://muttnut.blogspot.com/>

GROOMING



- Give your dog baths at home. Many dogs don't require frequent baths anyway!
- Clip your dog's toenails at home. Click [here](#) for some tips and how-to photos.
- Cut your dog's hair at home. Click [here](#) for instructions.
- Remember: This isn't a dog show, so aim for being practical over being perfect!

TOYS, BEDS, & ACCESSORIES

- Make [homemade versions of expensive toys](#)! My dog's favorite tug rope was made by cutting an old sheet into 3-inch-wide strips and braiding them together (shown at right).
- When getting a new dog (especially an adolescent or adult dog), wait until you know his/her preferences before buying the pricier items. Dogs are individuals and each one will prefer different things.



- Some dog toys and accessories/clothes appeal to the human more than the dog, so save your money for products that give your dog comfort or entertainment. Don't waste money on things that aren't meaningful to your dog.
- Buy dog beds that have removable covers. Take out the stuffing/inserts and place it inside a trash bag, and then put everything back inside the cover. If your dog has accidents or the bed gets dirty, you'll only need to wash the cover — not the entire bed. (Note: This works well for dogs with less reliable bladders, like puppies and older dogs!)

- For older dogs that require more support, skip the pricey orthopedic beds. Instead, get a less expensive bed with a removable cover and replace the stuffing/insert with [Memory Foam](#) mattress toppers (for humans!), which you can buy on discount websites like [overstock.com](#). Cut and/or fold the mattress topper to the desired level of cushioning.
- For older dogs who have trouble walking and need extra traction, buy cheap yoga mats or vinyl floor liners (shown at right). The floor liners cost ~\$0.99/foot and can be purchased at many hardware stores. Place them on the pathways your dog uses most often.

Remember:

Dogs love the time — not the money — you spend on them! Saving money wherever possible can extend the amount of time you have together.

