

How to Put Your Dog on a Budget

Tips for Saving Money on Your Dog Food, Dog Products and Dog Care

By the publishers of DogTipper.com

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Introduction



In today's tough economic times, everyone has an eye on the budget and that includes expenditures for dog food, supplies, and care. We've all had to cut back on costs, including those that involve our dogs. However, with a little preparation, research, and even some home cooking, you can continue to make your dog's life as rich as it ever was while saving money at the same time!

Remember, your priorities aren't necessarily your dog's priorities. You might be worried about finances, but your dog isn't! As Cesar Millan, best known as National Geographic's *Dog Whisperer*, says about dogs:

...they don't care if their collars have "bling." They don't care if you live in a big house or even if you have a job. They care about other things...

No doubt it's your job to tend to your dog's needs and some of those needs involve money. With a little extra effort, though, you can save money and even get closer to your canine at the same time.

And never forget: the best things you can give your dog—your own time and love—are free!

Saving Money on Your Next Dog



Adopt a Shelter Dog

Shelters are a budget-friendly way to obtain a pet. Although fees and services vary from location to location, for about \$100 you can adopt a dog who has been spayed or neutered, received a health check, and received shots appropriate for his age. Compare that to the cost of a purebred puppy—or even that “free” puppy that will require all the above medical care—and you’ll see the shelter dog makes financial sense.

Look for Purebred Dogs from Shelters and Rescue Groups

Did you know that according to statistics from The National Council on Pet Population, Study and Policy, about one-fourth of the dogs in shelters are purebred dogs? Shelters and rescue groups (many of which specialize in a certain breed) are a great resource for purebred dogs. To search for a particular breed of dog in your area, visit <http://www.petfinder.com> . This site allows you to search by zip code, breed, gender, age, and size.

Saving on Dog Food



Measure the Dog Food

How much should your dog be eating every day based on his weight? Do you know? All too often, it's easy to just pour the kibble in the bowl but that might not be the right amount. Overfeeding not only fattens your dog (potentially leading to costly veterinary bills) but also wastes expensive dog food. Measure first!

Clip Those Coupons

Old-fashioned coupon clipping can save you big bucks at the grocery store. The Sunday newspaper is an excellent source for dog food and dog treat coupons. Many coupons have expiration dates just a month or two after their publication date so buy now and stock up for later.

Search for Dog-Related Coupons Online

Before you head to the grocery store, do an online check for coupons at sites such as:

- <http://www.couponmom.com/>
- <http://www.coolsavings.com>
- <http://www.couponbugs.com/>

Visit the Manufacturer's Site

If your dog especially loves a particular brand of dog food, visit the manufacturer's website for potential coupons and offers.

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Make Your Own Dog Biscuits

3/4 cup hot water
1/3 cup margarine
1/2 cup powdered milk
1 teaspoon salt
1 egg, beaten
3 cups whole wheat flour

In large bowl pour hot water over the margarine. Stir in powdered milk, salt and egg. Add flour, 1/2 cup at a time. Knead for a few minutes to form stiff dough. Pat or roll to 1/2 inch thickness. Cut into bone shapes. Bake at 325 degrees for 50 minutes. Cool. These biscuits will dry quite hard. Makes about 1 1/4 pounds of biscuits. Cost: around 30 cents per pound. *Variation:* Increase margarine to 1/2 cup and add 2 teaspoons sugar

Make Peanut Butter Dog Biscuits

1 1/2 cups water
1/2 cup oil
2 eggs
3 tablespoons peanut butter
2 tsp. vanilla
2 cups flour
1/2 cup cornmeal
1/2 cup oats

Blend wet ingredients together. Whisk dry ingredients together and mix into wet mixture to form a ball of dough. Roll out and shape. Put onto a non-stick cookie tray or lightly greased one. Cook 20 minutes at 400 F. Turn off oven and allow the biscuits to cool in oven until crisp and hard. Store in airtight container.

Make Vegetarian Dog Biscuits

2 1/2 cups flour
3/4 cup dry milk powder
1/2 cup vegetable oil
2 tbs. brown sugar
2 vegetable bouillon cubes
3/4 cup boiling water
1/2 cup carrots, shredded (optional)
1 egg

Dissolve bouillon cubes in the boiling water. Preheat oven to 300F. Mix all ingredients into a ball and roll out to about 1/4" thick. Cut with bone-shaped cookie cutter, or strips, or a cutter shape of your choice. Bake at 300 degrees for 30 minutes on an ungreased cookie sheet.

Saving on Dog Toys & Supplies



Check Thrift Stores for Stuffed Toys

If your dogs are like ours, stuffed toys have pretty short lifespans. It makes sense to buy used stuffed animals for them to enjoy; thrift stores and garage sales are an excellent source for animals as cheap as 25 cents each. Just as if you were purchasing a stuffed toy for your dog at the store, make sure it doesn't have any eyes or buttons that can be pulled off and choke your dog. Baby toys which are extra soft are a good choice.

Buy Good Quality Chew Toys

Our Lab mix can go through cheap chew toys in a matter of hours. If you have a power chewer in your house, it's more economical to invest in high quality dog toys such as Kong, a firm rubber toy/treat dispenser that comes in classic and extreme levels of durability.

Rotate Those Toys

Just like children, dogs tire of the same toys so don't leave them with their toys for an extended period of time. By rotating out the toys, you'll be giving him a "new" toy without having to actually buy a new toy!

Make Your Own Dog Toys

Get innovative with items you have around the house and create your own dog toys! Cut jeans into strips and tie them together for a tug of war rope. Drill holes through a tennis ball (or use a plastic whiffle ball) then thread blue jean strips through the holes; finally, tie knots on each end for a fun toy to toss.

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Search for Online Store Coupons

Ordering a chew-proof dog bed from Orvis or a Pet Roomba to clean that dog hair? Check for online coupons before placing your online order by doing a quick search like “roomba coupons” or “roomba coupon code” before you do your ordering. We’ve found \$25 coupons and free shipping coupons this way!

Shop Off-Season

Buy plush dog beds, dog sweaters, etc. at the end of winter season. Like to dress up for Halloween? Hit the sales right after the event and you’ll be set for next year.

Shop Thrift Stores for Baby Gates

Need to restrict a new dog from certain rooms of your house? Pet superstores sell special dog gates to prevent access – but look for baby gates at thrift stores and garage sales at a fraction of the price.

Saving on Dog Health Care



Look for Pet Vaccination Specials

Many groups, especially local animal shelters, sponsor low-cost vaccination clinics. Call your local animal shelter and ask if they know any upcoming pet vaccination clinics in your community.

Ask About Vet Payment Plans

If you are hit with unexpected vet bills, it doesn't hurt to ask about payment plans. Many offer affordable plans so you can split the cost of treatment over a period of months.

Shop Around for a Vet

All vets do not charge the same fees. Especially if you have a new dog and don't yet have a vet, it pays to make a few calls and ask the cost of their basic office visit.

Consider Pet Insurance

Pet insurance can help with many veterinary costs but be sure to read the fine print. Some don't cover annual exams or routine visits and shots; others don't cover accidents. Also, ask about the amount of your deductible. Even with these limitations, pet insurance can be a great help with unexpected vet costs. If you don't opt for pet insurance, consider setting up a saving account where you deposit the cost of that pet insurance; you'll have that money available to cover later vet bills.

Order Medicines Online

Check online veterinary pharmacies such as <http://www.1800petmeds.com/> and <http://www.drsfostersmith.com/> for many pet medicines, flea preventatives, etc.

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Some medicines will require a prescription from your veterinarian; some will not. These online pharmacies frequently run specials for discounts or free shipping.

Find Out If Your City Has a Low Cost Clinic

Just like low cost clinics for humans, many communities have low cost animal clinics. At your local shelter if your town has such a clinic where you can obtain low cost spaying and neutering as well as immunizations.

Sign Up for Online Newsletters

Many online pet pharmacies and pet superstores offer free e-newsletters; look for exclusive offers, online coupons and news of upcoming specials in these newsletters.

Saving on In-Home Care



Form a Dog Walking Coop

If you've been hiring a dog walker in the past, get together with fellow dog lovers in your neighborhood to form a dog walking coop. By taking turns, you'll have the chance to have free time while your dog is walked, and he'll have the social interaction with other dogs.

Form a Dog Sitting Coop

The next time you plan a trip out of town, save money on kennel costs or pet sitting fees by forming your own dog sitter coop. You and fellow dog lovers can trade off dog sitting, feeding, providing medication, and giving companionship to dogs whose owners are on the road. What, your friends don't have dogs? Consider trading out babysitting time in exchange for dog sitting.

Learn to Train Your Dog at Home

A professional dog trainer is great for teaching your dog and for working on any dog behavioral issues you might be having. However, professional lessons don't come cheap. Check out home dog training courses you can order online. Written and produced by professional trainers, these programs offer either ebooks or videos (and sometimes both) to teach you how to teach your dog for about one-third of the cost of a professional class.

Saving on Dog Grooming



Use Baking Soda as a Dry Shampoo

Baking soda makes a great dry – and low cost – shampoo for your dog. Sprinkle the baking soda on your dog's hair (be careful of his eyes) and rub it into his coat. Let it set for a few minutes then brush it out. The grittiness of the baking soda takes out oils and dirt as well as that doggy smell. This makes a great shampoo on cold winter days when you don't want to wash and dry your dog.

Make Your Own Dry Shampoo

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup cornmeal

Mix the ingredients. Sprinkle your dog with the mixture and brush to remove oil and dirt from his hair.

Learn to Groom Your Dog at Home

OK, your dog may not be as immaculately groomed as he is after a trip to the groomer's, but you can learn to cut your dog's hair at home. A pair of inexpensive dog clippers are easy to use and can provide an even cut with just a little practice.

Learn to Cut Your Dog's Nails

For about the cost of one or two professional nail clipping sessions, you can purchase dog nail clippers or a Dremel sander tool to get professional results at home. It takes a little patience and time (and a few dog treats) but your dog's nails can eventually be clipped in just a few minutes.

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Make Your Own Dog Shampoo

Aloe Vera Pet Shampoo

2 cups water

2 teaspoons liquid castile

2 tablespoons aloe vera gel

Up to 1 teaspoon vegetable glycerin or vegetable oil

Combine all ingredients in a jar. Shake to blend. Get the pet's coat wet, pour on the shampoo, lathering as you go. Work the shampoo in with your hands. Rinse thoroughly.