



45–60 mins.



Upper Primary

Owning a pet

In this lesson students learn about pet ownership in Australia and the cost of buying and maintaining a pet.

Outcomes

Students:

- understand and compare data
- appreciate the impact of pets on a community
- calculate ongoing costs related to owning a dog and other pets
- identify ways to reduce costs

Curriculum links v9.0

English

AC9E5LY02

Mathematics

AC9M5N08

AC9M5N04

AC9M5N09

AC9M5ST03

AC9M6N09

AC9M6ST01

HASS

AC9HS4K08

HPE

AC9HP6P10

General Capabilities

Digital Literacy

Locate information Level 4

Acquire and collate data Level 4

Interpret data Level 4

Numeracy

Proportional thinking Level 5

Understanding money Level 9

Understanding money Level 10

Getting started (15 - 20 mins)

How many Australians own a pet?

Open a discussion with your class about pet ownership. Ask the class to record the information for further consideration:

- How many students own/have owned a pet?
- What kind of pets have students owned?
- For how many years have they owned a pet?
- What percentage of the class has a pet?
- What percentage is allocated to different pets (e.g., dogs, cats, birds...)

Compare the class data with the information available from the RSPCA ([How many pets are there in Australia?](#)). This will indicate if the class reflects the national averages.

If the class data is quite different from the national data, ask students why this might be the case. Answers might include, too small a survey sample; age of participants; family composition; location (e.g., urban vs rural), etc.

Discovery (30 - 40 mins)

Explore the benefits and costs of owning a pet

- In 2023 the Victorian government will conduct a pet census. The online census will ask questions about pet owners and their animals. For example, the pet's health, the costs associated with caring for a pet, and the social and wellbeing impacts of owning a pet.

What might be the costs or benefits to the community if people own pets?

- How might an understanding of the type and number of pets in a community impact services? E.g., dog parks, dog waste bags, vets, groomers.
- What pet services and businesses exist in each students' community? Are there enough services and businesses? Are more or different services and businesses needed?
- Is there specific state and federal legislation pet owners need to follow? Where would a pet owner find these rules?

What are the costs and benefits to individuals and families if they own pets?

- Ask students to list the benefits of owning a pet. Are there any downsides?
- Have students complete the **Real cost of buying a pet** activity on page 3 to understand the full range of costs associated with buying and owning a dog.
 - › If a dog lived for 10 years, what would the cost be over its lifetime?



Owning a pet

Other resources

[Pet insurance](#)

[What do I need to know before I get a new pet?](#)

[Survey of Pets in Australia](#)

- What percentage of the household budget (weekly, monthly, yearly) would be for dog expenses? Try using [Moneysmart's Budget planner](#) to assist with household expenses or have students create their own categories.
- Are there ways you can reduce costs? Explain what they are.

Extension (30 mins)

What are the costs of owning other household animals such as cats, snakes, guinea pigs, fish, reptiles, birds, arachnids, rabbits, mice?

- Ask your students to build a table as a guide to help others compare costs for pets they might want.

Ask your students to research and compare insurance costs.

What are some options for saving, spending, planning and budgeting? Refer to [Getting a pet](#).

Ask your students to design a graph or table using the findings from the class survey in the Getting started activity.

Activity: The real cost of buying a pet



Buying a dog

Buying a dog is a big commitment and requires research before making a final decision. There are lots of things to consider, including what kind of dog you want to own. Some of the things you need to think about are:

- Do you want a puppy? Or do you want an older dog that is already house trained?
- Do you have the space for a big dog? Or would a small dog be a better choice?
- Is there a particular breed that suits your family?
- Where will you get your dog?
 - › From a breeder?
 - › From a shelter?

Purchase price of a dog

Research average costs based on breed or adoption costs + add the price you paid or would expect to pay for your dog	\$
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Additional costs at time of purchase

<p>Microchipping</p> <p>Microchipping your dog is mandatory in ACT, NSW, QLD, VIC, TAS and WA. A microchip is a permanent way to identify your dog if it gets lost. The chip has a unique 15-digit number that is detected through a scan that links to a registry with details about the dog and the owner. The microchip is very small and is implanted by a Vet just under the skin between the shoulder blades at the back of your dog’s neck.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">+ add \$70 for microchipping</p>	\$
<p>Initial health check and vaccinations</p> <p>Puppies are given an overall health check by a Vet when they are between 6 and 8 weeks old. The Vet will check your dog’s eyes, ears, teeth, heart, and lungs. Just like people, dogs also need vaccinations against dangerous viruses. Vaccinations are important to keep your dog healthy. They protect your pet against some potentially fatal diseases. Costs for visiting the Vet and for vaccinations will vary. The average price is \$200.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">+ add \$200 for the appointment</p>	\$
<p>Desexing</p> <p>Desexing your dog may not be mandatory where you live, but it is recommended by Vets as it helps to prevent unwanted animals and benefits your dog’s health and behaviour. The cost can vary depending on the clinic and the size and age of your dog. It usually costs more to have larger dogs desexed and may be slightly more expensive for female dogs because the surgery is more involved.</p> <p>The average range is from \$200 to \$500.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">+ add a minimum cost of \$200</p>	\$

Additional costs at time of purchase

Obedience Training

It is very common for you and your dog to attend basic obedience classes. The costs for these classes will vary depending on how long the course runs for, who is running it, and whether the course is one-on-one or in a group. For a better idea of how much this might cost, check out what's on offer in your community.

+ add a minimum cost of \$200

\$

Ongoing costs

There are ongoing costs you need to plan for when you own a dog. The cost of food, treats and grooming are usually predictable and regular. However, you need to plan for unpredictable costs as well, like treating your dog if they're sick.

Record ongoing costs at an annual rate (what it will cost in total for a whole year).

Registration or permits (possible annual cost)

You are usually required to register your dog. Depending on where you live, registration may be an annual expense or a one-off cost for the life of your dog. Check with your local government to determine the frequency.

+ add \$57 for registration

\$

Pet insurance (annual cost)

Pet insurance is not compulsory, but it can help cover costs if your dog gets sick or hurt. On average an insurance plan for a dog will cost \$293 a year.

+ add the optional \$293 for insurance

\$

Food and treats (annual cost)

It is important to feed your dog well and to give them food that suits their size and breed. The cost of high-quality dog food and healthy dog treats can vary a lot and most people spend \$60 to \$80 a month.

+ add \$840 for food costs

\$

Medical costs (annual cost)

Looking after your dog's health involves regular visits to the Vet. Dogs need booster vaccines and regular treatment for heartworm and fleas. Just like people, your dog may feel sick from time-to-time and will need to be examined by a Vet and prescribed medication if necessary.

+ add \$300 for Vet bills

\$

Grooming (annual cost)

All dogs require some brushing, washing, and regular nail clipping. Some dogs need a lot more grooming, so you may need to pay a professional groomer to maintain your dog's coat. An appointment can cost up to \$130 if you have a large furry dog. Depending on your dog, grooming could be as often as every eight weeks or only a couple of times a year.

+ add \$200 to keep your dog pretty and comfortable

\$

Equipment (annual cost)

Dogs need a bowl for food and one for water. You will also need to buy a collar, a lead and maybe a harness. Leads and collars will need to be replaced from time to time. Your dog may also need a coat in cold weather.

+ add \$50 for essential equipment

\$

Ongoing costs

<p>Bed or kennel (annual cost)</p> <p>Your dog will need a place to sleep. Bedding or kennels aren't always one-off costs. An outside kennel can be expensive and will need maintenance. Dog beds need to be replaced regularly and the cost can vary a lot.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">+ add \$100 so your dog has a comfy place to sleep</p>	\$
<p>Dog toys (annual cost)</p> <p>Most dogs love to play and need something to keep them busy so they don't get bored and damage things around the house. There are lots of dog toys to choose from, and they often don't last.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">+ add \$25 for doggy entertainment</p>	\$
<p>Boarding costs (possible annual cost)</p> <p>You might need somewhere to board your dog when you and your family go on holiday. Dog boarding is a place your dog stays overnight. Sometimes it's also known as a dog hotel, dog kennel or dog resort. Costs can vary significantly depending on the boarding service.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">+ add \$40 a day for the numbers of days per year you are on holiday</p>	\$
Total costs	\$
Total costs over 10 years	\$

List items that could be possible savings

For example, clipping your dog yourself.

1.	\$
2.	\$
3.	\$
4.	\$
Total savings	\$
Original cost	\$
Subtract total savings	-\$
Revised total cost	\$