

Cost of Owning a Cat

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Cats can make great pets for the right people and are one of the favorite pets in America today. While the cost of owning a cat is much less than that of a dog, there is still a significant cost and is most likely much more than the average pet owner thinks.

We may argue, "I love my pets and cost is not a consideration so what does it matter?" The reality is cost does matter and directly influences both the type and quality of care that an animal will receive. Every day I see animals that are denied basic levels of care and veterinary treatment because of the failure of the owner to recognize that pets cost money. No pet should suffer as a result of poor financial planning and lack of commitment of their owner. High veterinarian costs are often blamed for the lack of care, but in reality, medical care is a necessary expense and is often a small part of the total cost of owning a pet. Owning a cat is not a right but a privilege and by recognizing that pets can cost a lot of money, it will help us to be more prepared and provide better care to these animals.



Cats are different than dogs in the sense that they can lead a semi-wild life and cost the owner virtually nothing. There are tens of thousands of these 'pets' living on the farms and the back streets of America's cities. These animals are often infested with [parasites](#) and deadly viral diseases and survive by hunting which takes a tremendous toll on wildlife. Their quality of life is very poor and most do not live more than a few years. Everyone knows of these cats and their 'owners' and I do not consider their quality of care to be adequate enough to even consider it here. The following chart lists the cost of owning a cat from three perspectives: the lowest cost of adequate care, the high-end cost of care, and the cost of care for my own cats. In addition to listing the cost of owning a cat for the more expensive first year, the cost for owning the cat for the remaining 13 years is broken down as an average yearly cost and then totaled at the end showing how much it will cost to own a cat for 14 years.

Product/Service	Cost 1st Year			Yearly Cost		
	Low Cost	My Cost	High Cost	Low Cost	My Cost	High Cost
Purchase Price	0	50	750	0	0	0
Food	120	175	200	100	175	200
Spay/Neuter	50	95	200	0	0	0
Litter Box	8	10	50	1	1	5
Cat Litter	70	120	150	70	120	150
Furniture	0	0	200	0	0	20
Window Perches	0	25	60	0	3	6
Cat Bed	0	0	45	0	0	5
Cat Door	0	25	75	0	3	8
Cat Carrier	18	20	45	0	0	0
Scratching Post	5	5	45	1	1	5
Food Bowls	7	8	25	1	1	3

Grooming Tools	5	7	40	0	1	4
Hair Removing Tape	0	7	10	0	7	10
Stain Removers	8	25	75	1	3	8
Flea Control	50	60	150	50	60	150
Heartworm Prevention	0	0	40	0	0	40
Training Aids	20	20	150	0	0	15
Vet Bills	50	50	300	50	50	200
Vaccines	45	55	85	10	10	35
Ear/Dental Care	0	0	65	0	0	7
Vitamins/Fatty Acids	0	10	50	0	10	50
Treats	0	5	40	0	5	40
Toys	10	15	75	1	2	8
Boarding	25	75	200	25	75	200
Totals	\$491.00	\$862.00	\$3125.00	\$310.00	\$527.00	\$1169.00
Total over the life of a 14 year old cat				Low Cost	My Cost	High Cost
				\$4,521.00	\$7,713.00	\$18,322.00

Did the totals surprise you? I know some of you are thinking, 'I would never spend that much,' but in reality, these prices are on the conservative side. I live in the rural Midwest. In the large metropolitan areas the prices could easily be doubled. These prices also do not take into account animals with special health or behavioral problems. If you have a cat with a chronic illness, your veterinary cost could triple. Likewise, if you have a cat that urinates on the carpeting and you have to clean or replace the carpeting as a result, your costs are going to be higher. While some people think they can cut costs on food, litter, and veterinary expenses (which when combined are often the biggest expenses), my experience shows otherwise. If you feed cheap food, you can end up with a cat with urinary or intestinal problems and high veterinary bills. If you use cheap litter, your cat may use the living room carpet instead. The same goes for avoiding [routine veterinary care](#); you will shorten your cat's life or end up paying in the end. So these prices are pretty accurate. Even for myself with indoor/outdoor low maintenance cats (I do feed good food and use good clumping litter) the costs are still very significant.

What does all this mean? Well first of all, it shows that there is no such thing as a free kitten. Secondly, it shows that we need to be very committed to our pet cats, both financially and with our time. If owners are not willing to meet their animal's financial needs then they are rarely able to meet their pet's social and basic care needs as well. Before we consider taking that 'free kitten,' we have to be prepared for the time and financial commitment that the animal requires. I have spent a lot of time

taking care of animals that had owners that could not spend the money or time required to meet their basic care. The problem with this is that the animal has no control over its situation and suffers as a result. Therefore, I often spend time talking people out of getting a pet if they are not getting the pet for all of the right reasons. The animal shelters in this country are overflowing with abandoned and unwanted cats and dogs. Millions are [euthanized](#) every year and millions more lead unhappy and poor quality lives with owners that do not meet their basic needs. If you are thinking of getting a pet cat, be aware of the cost and time commitment required, and then choose a needy pet from a shelter. If you want to have a purebred cat, only purchase one that is guaranteed healthy, is well-bred, and whose parents and grandparents are free of any inheritable disease. If you are educated about the cat's needs and committed to the pet, then you can be part of the solution and not part of the problem.