

IT TAKES \$\$'s TO HAVE A PET

Today I am writing about some things to think about before you adopt an animal into your life.

I receive many phone calls every week from people who need help with veterinary care for their animals. Sammie's Friends has saved the lives of many animals by providing veterinary assistance. We are a non-profit and do not have unlimited resources. Our intention is to be there to help animals when their family has hit a rough spot in the road and some help is needed. We would like the owner to have some investment in their animal and pay part of the bill.

Sammie's Friends became a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation in 2004. Our intention and our mission was to pay for veterinary care for the shelter animals. At that time, prior to Sammie's Friends managing the shelter, many animals were being euthanized for space and for being sick/injured and no money for care to make them adoptable. Sammie's Friends began paying for veterinary care so the animals could have a chance to live and be adopted. Immediately the euthanasia rate plummeted.

In 2005 a woman called and said she was 82 years old and lived on \$800 per month Social Security and her 15 year old cat, the only friend she had left on this planet, was sick and needed veterinary care and she could not afford it. At that moment our community veterinary assistance program began.

When people want to adopt a pet they must determine if they can financially care for the pet. Sammie's Friends program was not created with the intention that someone would get a pet knowing full well that they do not have the money to care for a pet and would expect Sammie's Friends to pay those bills.

Many people think if they can feed the pet all is well. Animals need to be spayed/neutered, vaccinated, receive an annual physical exam and check up to ensure the pet is in good health. Also, budgeting needs to be made for heart worm prevention, flea and tick medication, micro-chips, beds, collars, leashes, toys, bowls, brushes, litter, litter boxes and more.

An animal should be fed quality food just like humans need healthy food to grow and stay healthy. As they say "You are what you eat."

As an animal ages they often need dental care to keep their teeth healthy and not full of decay and toothaches. Just as humans needed regular dental care, so

does your pet. And just as us humans do not enjoy tooth aches, neither do our pets.

Purchasing pet insurance is a good idea so that if something big comes up you will have a way of paying for the surgery or care the animal needs. I receive quite a few calls for veterinary care for dogs who have ingested various things that cause an intestinal obstruction. Without surgery the animal will die. Your dog should not be in the back of your truck. Falling out and getting injured happens somewhat often and often the person with the pet does not have the money or the insurance to pay for the care the animal needs. Torn ligaments are another malady affecting dogs who injure themselves through rough housing and falls.

Cats often have respiratory conditions requiring care. Older cats often have kidney problems requiring fluids and other medications

A minimum you should count on spending for a cat annually is \$700 for basic and routine care. If there are veterinary issues the cost can go up into the thousands. The cost of owning a dog will vary depending on its size. A chihuahua will eat way less food than a Saint Bernard. On the other hand you are likely to spend more on your little dogs teeth over time than on your St. Bernard. Most little dogs develop dental problems over the course of their life. The cost of basics and routine care for your dog will start at \$1500 per year and go up from there if there are health problems.

If you're looking for a pet you can adopt cats and dogs from a shelter or a rescue at a fee of \$150 to \$350. They will have been spayed/neutered and vaccinated and most likely have received medical care for any problems when they arrived at the shelter or the rescue. By contrast a purebred dog from a breeder can range anywhere from \$800 to several thousand dollars. Over the years I have received numerous calls from people who have spent a great deal of money on a purebred puppy and then want Sammie's Friends to pay for the pup's veterinary care.

With some research and planning you can have a great pet and take good care of it and receive a lifetime of joy and love.

Cheryl Wicks is the Co-Founder and President of Sammie's Friends

