

# Investing In A Pet

By Barbara Axel. October 20, 2005

Financial investing calls for diligent research before making a decision in order to reap long-term benefits. So too it pays to research before investing in the incorporation of a pet into the household. Impulse decisions are bad decisions in either case.

Pets come in all sizes, shapes and species. Some species, especially small, caged animals live a few years only, but others such as dogs and cats live for more than a decade.

All pets have these requirements:

They need a safe and comfortable habitat, fresh water, nutritious food, exercise, and health care including both routine and emergency veterinary visits, and loving attention. Dogs and cats need even more attention and training.

How much will your pet cost? Will your budget allow for ongoing pet expenses year after year? Whether you initially pay \$10.00 or \$1000.00 for a pet, that cost will be the smallest expense pro-rated for the life of a pet.

Here are some guidelines to help you decide which pet is right for you:

- ✓ What is your lifestyle now, and what changes do you plan to make in the next decade or so? Decisions concerning pet ownership should be part of those plans.
- ✓ Will you be moving to another location? Will a pet fit into that new lifestyle too?
- ✓ Are there covenants or property restrictions in addition to local and state ordinances concerning pet ownership where you now reside? Where you might move?
- ✓ Are you allowed to build a fence? If so, how high? If not, are you prepared to walk a dog on leash or keep your pet indoors?
- ✓ What about traveling? Will your pet travel with you? If not, who will take care of it in your absence?

Pet dogs and cats should be spayed and neutered so they do not reproduce. Casual and accidental breeding is not healthy for your pet and is disruptive to household routine. It is not responsible to bring new lives into the world unless the sire, dam, and several generations of their ancestors have been judged to be top quality, have passed stringent health clearances, and will not pass on genetic defects. You, the owner must be prepared and able to be responsible for the welfare of the progeny for the rest of their lives. It certainly is not right to burden your fellow citizens with the work and expenses of caring for pups or kittens you brought into the world, then abandoned.

Financial help in obtaining that surgical spay/neuter procedure for your pet may be available through many local agencies.

Cats are gentle and amusing; quiet companions, easily trained to use a litter box, and remain indoor pets for a lifetime. Cats can be trained to keep off countertops and shelves, and to come when called.

Dogs need lots of care, grooming, training and quality time for at least a decade or longer. They are responsive to their owners and loyal. They are NOT self-cleaning. Even neutered canines need supervision and must not be allowed to run loose.

If you think you would like a dog or cat as a pet, but are not sure you want to make a long-term commitment, there is a way to explore the option of pet ownership that will benefit you and our community. Become a foster caregiver for a limited time and see if either of these species fits the bill for you. Or if you wish to assume a longer-term commitment you can socialize and care for a special pup in your home for about a year. That pup is a potential service dog that will be returned to the guide dog facility to undergo the formal training enabling him to spend the rest of his life helping a new owner.

Investing in a pet? It will cost time, money, care, training, and responsibility. The rewards? PRICELESS!!!!