

ANIMALS FIJI

# HOW TO BUDGET FOR YOUR PETS



Opinion



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A Fijian family with their newly adopted dog. Photo: Animals Fiji

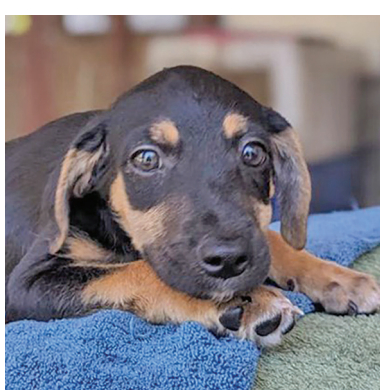


Balancing your dog and cat budget.

Starting the new year often means budgeting for expenses such as rent, utilities, schooling and more. A budget provides clarity on expenses and helps plan for bills. Don't forget about your animals—consider their yearly costs based on their type, size, and age. Here are key points to consider.

**Food**  
The cost of pet food can be expensive if you buy pre-made, pre-packaged bags of dog or cat biscuits available in stores. Alternatively, you can explore ways to make homemade food and treats. Although it may take some time, it will save you money. Remember to ensure your treats or food is healthy for your pet and not toxic for their species. Dogs and cats need a majority 70 per cent and more protein diet. You can also mix in veggies and some rice—but no onions or garlic as it is toxic to them.

**Pet toys**  
Toys can be treated in the same way as food. It can be expensive to buy toys for your pet and cat especially needs something to play with to keep them entertained and active. For cats, a solid stick wrapped tightly in string, strong wool or a



A dog rests on his towel sleeping mat.

carpet piece attached to a block of wood can be an easily made scratching post. Or you can get a cardboard centre of a toilet roll, cut it in half, attach a string to it, and dangle it in front of the cat to chase – become inventive and wrap some grey wool around it to make it appear like a mouse!

Dogs can often be entertained by throwing a ball or going on a walk. They also love playing 'tug of war' with you. Get a thick rope, tie a knot in each end, and play with the dog grabbing one end and you the other and trying to get it from each other. Some dogs will be happy to retrieve the same knotted rope if it is thrown.

Remember, playtime is essential to keep your pet mentally active.



Cats sleeping comfortably.

**Beds**  
Cats and dogs love to have their own 'bed' - a mat or box/cage/kennel with a towel in it that they sleep in. You can also make your own. If your dog sleeps outside – it will need a sheltered area, a porch, a kennel or a place near the house that is sheltered from direct sun, wind and rain. A kennel can be made from wood scraps, sheet iron offcuts or old crates. Ensure your dog has something soft to sleep on off the ground.

For cats and dogs, keep their mat/towel clean by regularly washing and sanitising it weekly.

**Grooming**  
Dogs need regular washes to keep their coats clean and healthy, but no more than once every two weeks. We recommend that for the average pet dog kept indoors washing once a month is plenty. Ask your vet for the best shampoo for your pet. You should also regularly brush your animal's coat so it doesn't become matted, especially if your pet has long hair. Dirty, matted fur attracts undesirable parasites to your dog, which can be expensive to treat.

Certain breed dogs, such as maltese, need their hair trimmed regularly. This can be done at home using a medium or heavy-duty electric clipper with guide combs. Contact your veterinary clinic for advice.

Cats do not need bathing as they self-groom.

Dogs and sometimes cats need

their claws clipped, especially if they spend a lot of time indoors or are elderly and do not move around a lot. Having nails too long makes it uncomfortable and painful for dogs to walk, and can cause major arthritis issues. Veterinary clinics can clip them for you at regular health checkups and provide you with instructions on how to clip them at home. You can buy pet nail clippers from our Nadi or Savusavu clinic locations. If you want to do this, please visit your vet first and ask to be shown how to clip your dog's nails properly.

Cats that do not have access to outside trees can use scratching poles, which usually keep their nails at a healthy length.

**Medical expenses**  
For your animal to be happy and healthy, it will need visits to the vet. It is part of being a responsible pet parent. Here are some likely expenses that you should budget for:

- Desexing (spaying or neutering): Desexing may seem expensive and unnecessary, but it saves you money in the long run as desexed pets are less likely to develop some health issues. You will also not have to deal with an unwanted pregnancy, the health stress it puts on the mother, the costs associated with it, and finding homes for a litter of baby dogs and cats. It is essential for our communities that stray pet populations are kept to a minimum.
- Vaccinations and parasite medicines: Talk to your veterinary clinic

regarding flea and tick prevention, heartworm medication and any other requirements for your pet. Amount and cost vary considerably with your pet's type, size and age.

■ Routine veterinary checkups: Ensure you have regular annual veterinary check ups to ensure your pet is healthy. This way, if your pet develops any issues, it can be treated early and is less likely to develop into something that is expensive or impossible to treat.

**Microchipping or other identification methods:**

Your dogs and cats should be microchipped so that your animal can be returned if it runs away. Microchipping provide permanent identification of an animal. If microchipping is not possible, have a durable collar inscribed with your name, current address and phone number.

**Pet licence:**

It is a requirement by the Fiji Dog Act to have your pet licenced. Contact your local ministry of Agriculture office for details. This yearly charge is approximately \$13.50 and ensures that if your pet is lost and handed in, it can be identified from the license tag and returned to you.

**Here are some tips to help you get the best value for your money:**

- Compare prices for pet supplies and services to get the best value.
- Prioritise essentials like food and healthcare in your budget – prevention and maintaining good health, just like in humans, will save you a lot of time and resources in the end.
- Establish an emergency fund for unexpected expenses.
- Regularly review your pet's needs, which will change over time, and adjust your budget accordingly.

By budgeting thoughtfully and planning for routine and unexpected expenses, you can provide your pet with the care and attention they need while maintaining a balanced budget. Responsible pet ownership involves being prepared for all aspects of your pet's well-being.

Source: Animals Fiji

**must read**

**ANIMALS FIJI**

As a non-profit charity, Animals Fiji depends on the kindness of donations to continue in their work to support animals across Fiji. To find out more about Animals Fiji's services and how you can help please contact their Savusavu Clinic at (+679) 998 6253 or Nadi Clinic at (+679) 993 6647 or visit their website at [www.animalsfiji.org](http://www.animalsfiji.org).  
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