

## Pet Ownership Spectrum

Pet ownership can be an incredibly rewarding for many people and families. Many people feel as though their pets are as much a part of their family as the humans are. Others feel that pets serve a particular role or function as a part of a family. And there are some people who think animals shouldn't be domesticated at all. This article is not intended to advocate for or against pet ownership (but, for full disclosure its author is a firm believer in the power of a pet's love to heal the human heart and soul).



Regardless of where you personally fall on the pet ownership spectrum, there is an element that can often be overlooked by many. People living below the poverty line, and particularly those who are trapped in the [cycle of generational poverty](#), might not be able to enjoy the companionship provided by pets.

## The Cost of Pet Ownership

As with most experiences of poverty and oppression, there are a lot of factors that contribute to this challenge. The largest and most overarching of these is quite simply: [cost](#). Pets (and vet bills, pet food, supplies) are increasingly more and more expensive. Twenty years ago, a hamster cost less than a CD, about ten dollars. Today, they don't make CDs like they used to, and a hamster is about \$30.

Even if your pet is non-exotic and doesn't require specialized housing, their beds, food, water bowls, and toys add up. Pet food of any kind can run grocery bills up, and most food assistance programs don't cover cat litter. A small aquarium can impact monthly utilities, and even a few fish might be enough tack on additional pet fees to your monthly rent. And none of that touches on the cost of veterinary care.

On top of all of those costs, during extra tough times, there is also the emotional toll of having to decide if you can afford to take your pet to the veterinarian. When you know you can't look after the animal you love, do you surrender them and hope they get the care they need? This is a really challenging decision to face when a pet can provide great emotional support.

## Pets as a Way to Think of Others

Even in the most ideal of circumstances, owning pets and caring for them well is not easy. It's not for everyone, and that's OK. Every animal comes with their own individual needs and requirements, just like humans. And, just like humans, they each deserve a home full of love and affection. As stated above, the purpose of this article is not to say that everyone needs a pet, or to shame anyone who does not have the means to keep and care for one. My intention is simply this: the next time we sit down and talk about cat ladies or dog dads or fish friends, we remember to include those among us who may not have to get up at 6am and walk the dog, but who would love to enjoy the opportunity, if only their circumstances were a little different.





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