**Which Animal Is Easier to Keep as a Pet: a Cat or a Dog**

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For over 40,000 years, people have kept dogs and cats as pets (Veeramah, 2018). All this time there are disputes about who is the best - cats or dogs. For example, in the USA there are 70% of people keep a pet at home. 69 million people have at least one dog at home and around 45 million have at least one cat. (Bedford, 2022). It is important to compare cats and dogs as pets to prevent cruelty to these animals. According to statistics, every year 3.2 million dogs and 3.1 million cats are given to shelters and half of them are euthanized. (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2019) It is only in USA, in poor countries this situation is worse. By collecting data on cats and dogs and comparing them, based on some criteria, it will be possible to help people decide whether to get a pet and which one is better to take in this or that case. In order to conduct this comparison, 3 criteria will be examined: monthly pet expenses, the amount of time and attention the pet need, and the influence of the pet on the owner.

It is not a secret that pets require a lot of things to be healthy and happy. That means that the owner has to spend a certain amount of money per pet per month. But there is a difference between cats and dogs in this respect. Most of the money will be spent on the initial purchases for a new pet, especially if it was recently born. Both puppies and kittens should visit the veterinarian once a month until the age of 16 weeks. All important puppy vaccines, including core vaccines given in series of three at 6, 12 and 16 weeks of age, cost about $75-$100. (American Kennel Club, 2022). As for kittens, this price is lower. All vaccinations for kittens cost no more than $85. (Bonk, 2022). Most of the owners prefer to sterilize their pet. The average price for spaying a cat range from $200 to $400. (PetMD, 2016). This price is higher for dog sterilization. It varies from $250 to $500. (Moore, 2020) Pet insurance is also very important aspect. The difference between cat and dog insurance per month is not big. Average cost of dog insurance is $35, cost of cat is $39. (Metz, 2022) The bulk of the cost of a pet will go to food. Cat owners spend about $40 for food for one cat and dog owners spend about $50 for one dog per month. (Oakland Veterinary Referral Services, 2019) People want for their pets to look good so they spend up to $100 on grooming for their pet per month. This price is the same for both types of pets. (Oakland Veterinary Referral Services, 2019) There are some things that only cats or only dogs require. For example, cat litter costs about $15 per month and bags for dog excrement to take on every walk with the dog cost $12 a month. (Oakland Veterinary Referral Services, 2019) Such things as toys and clothes for pets don't need to be bought every month but some owners spend from $5 to $50 on toys per month. (Statista, 2019) As a result, on average, one dog costs $222 per month, and one cat costs $219 per month. Together with initial medical procedures for kittens and puppies, the amount for one dog and one cat is $650 and $600 respectively. In brief, caring for a cat costs a little less than caring for a dog.

As mentioned above, pets can’t take care about themselves, so they need a lot of owner’s attentions. Dogs are very social animals, that means that they can’t spend too much time alone. Professional veterinarians say that dogs can’t stay alone without any attention for more than 8 hours. (Virga, 2019) This can become a serious problem for those who work on shifts. If the dog stays at home alone for 10 hours and more it can feel lonely, leading to anxiety and misbehavior. Lonely dos start to destroy furniture, scratch doors and windows and even try to escape. (Flowers, 2021) Average adult dog needs at least two hours of attention every day. (Virga, 2019) If the owner can’t afford to spend enough time with the dog, he can adopt second dog as a friend to the first one or hire a person who will take care of the pet when the owner is not at home. But not everyone can afford to take a second dog or hire a sitter so in this case it’s better to choose another pet that does not need much attention or to consider whether it is worth getting a pet at all. Speaking about cats, they are more independent. They can spend alone up to 24 hours alone and even more sometimes. As long as they have fresh water, some food and litter box they will feel themselves comfortable. (Delgado, 2021) But it doesn’t mean that cats don't bond with their owners. Average adult cat needs at least 10 minutes of attention every day. (Schelling, n.d.) Most of cats feel good even if they stay in one room with the owner without communicating with him. In conclusion, we can say that cats need much less owner's attention than dogs.

Both cats and dogs have a significant impact on the owner, which can be both positive and negative. These pets affect the behavior, health and mental state of people in different ways. Speaking of dogs, they have a huge impact on the physical activity of the owner. Average adult dog needs at least 20 minutes walking two times a day, which means that average owner spends at least 20 hours per month on the fresh air. (Team, 2020) Playing with dog is a physical activity that raises the level of endorphins and serotonin and makes the owner happier and improves his sleep. (Queensland Government, 2021) And also, dogs increase social interactions, because they are very communicative pets. For example, when the dog drags the owner to another dog passing by, appear an opportunity for new social interaction. (Queensland Government, 2021) Negative aspect of having a dog is that they need to be trained. All the dogs are very playful and naughty, so owners need to teach the dog some necessary commands such as “sit”, “heel”, “come”, “place” and “stop”. Without these commands it will be impossible to get along with a dog that doesn’t listen to the owner and does not understand his commands. Teaching the dog takes a lot of time and energy. Speaking about cats, cat owners are more likely to be better at work/college, because cats require less attention than dogs and let the owner spend more time studying. (Live Science, 2014) Secondly, cat purring lowers stress hormones, lowers blood pressure helps to heal faster. That is because the frequency of cat purring varies from 25 to 140 Hz, which has been shown to aid in the wound healing. (Adnan, Qureshi, 2009) On another side, the biggest problem with cats is that they are shedding a lot. All the furniture and clothes are covered with fur after them. It means that the owner has to clean the house very often. To sum up, dogs make people more active, but sometimes misbehave and take a lot of owner’s energies, and cats make people more relaxed and don’t distract from studying, which can help to become smarter, but they also leave their fur around the house, so the owner have to clean it more often.

A number of conclusions can be made from the aforementioned comparisons. In terms of money expenses, cats are cheaper than dogs, but the difference isn’t big. Speaking about attention, dogs are more communicative and need much more owner’s time than cats. As for the influence on the owner, both cats and dogs make their owners happier and healthier, despite having some disadvantages. In brief, when someone wants to adopt a pet, it is important to go through all the criteria to decide which pet is best for his lifestyle.

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