More than a third of dog and cat owners underestimated “cost” of ownership

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- More than a third of owners (35%),[1] questioned feel they underestimated aspects of cat or dog ownership
- 15%[1] of owners are worried about continuing to afford their pet due to the soaring cost of living
- As many as 1.3 million[1] dog and cat owners feel overwhelmed by all the things they need to think about when it comes to owning their dog/cat

- Andrea McLean reveals the joy her pets bring her but also the challenges she has experienced with pet ownership

- TV vet, Rory the Vet, offers owners time and money-saving tips such as using Seresto Flea & Tick Control collar that lasts 7-8 months

A new survey has revealed that more than a third of owners (35%) felt they underestimated aspects of cat or dog ownership, with the financial burden coming top of the list.[1]

With the potential lifetime cost of keeping a dog estimated at between £25,000 and £30,000, depending on size, breed and how long they live, and a cat costing most owners at least £12,000 over their whole lifetime, the financial commitment of pet ownership speaks for itself.[2,3]

The soaring cost of living is only placing more financial pressure on pet owners. The survey reported that 15% percent of dog or cat owners said that they were worried about how they will be able to continue to afford their dog or cat due to the current rise in living costs.[1]

Cost has been the factor that has tipped some people over the edge leading them to abandon their pets.[4] The survey reported that as many as 1.3 million dog and cat owners may have considered giving up their dog or cat within the last two years due to the impact on their life.[1,5]

But it is not just the financial burden of pet owning that is troubling pet owners. Around a million dog and cat owners feel overwhelmed by all the things they need to think about when it comes to pet ownership, according to the survey.[1,6]

The survey asked over 900 UK cat and dog owners which aspects of pet ownership they felt they underestimated most. After finance, respondents selected behavioural issues, the amount of time needed to dedicate to caring for their dog or cat, the mental health of the animal in relation to changing working patterns post lockdown, training needs, and the number of things to remember in order to care for their pet.[1]

Dr Rory Cowlam, better known as ‘Rory the Vet’ from his TV role in the CBBC show *The Pets Factor*, is only too aware of these struggles. He said: “So many people got a new pet over the last two years, up to one in four people got a new dog or cat! I see first-hand how challenging people are finding adjusting to easing lockdown with their new pets.”

Andrea McLean is the owner of rescue dog, Teddy, from Battersea. Andrea, in common with many people worked from home during the pandemic which gave her a lot more time with Teddy.

“My dog has brought me so much happiness and I’ve understood the time they take to look after,” said Andrea. “With a house full of teenagers, a husband and a business to run, there just aren’t enough hours in the day. Like many dog owners I love having him around, especially now I work from home – he sleeps at my feet all day. But having had dogs before I’m aware they need a lot of maintenance, vets’ visits, grooming, walking, training and, often way down the list for most people, they need to be kept free of fleas and other parasites,” she said.

Remembering to protect pets, even when the parasite treatments are in the cupboard, doesn’t always happen as people re-engage with the world and re-fill their diaries. Over four in 10 owners (41%) using monthly spot-on treatments have forgotten or missed a course of flea and tick prevention for their pet in the last year, according to the survey.[1]
And even more owners using flea or tick treatments agree they would find treatment easier if they didn't

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have to apply it every month (44%).[1]

Dr Rory is mindful of how difficult it can be to remember pets' monthly treatments. "Owners don't want to be thinking about fleas and ticks when they should be playing with their pets and enjoying the special bond they have with their animals. Life is incredibly busy, and flea and tick treatments seem like another chore to have to remember," he said.

"Even vets forget to give their own pets their monthly protection," Dr Rory continued. "I wouldn't be truthful if I didn't confess to my dog having missed a few treatments on my watch," he admitted. "But as a result of a few lapses and motivated by my understanding of the importance of protecting both my dog and my family against parasites, I've found a few good ways of making treatment a bit easier," he said.

"I'm a fan of the 'fit and forget' approach. I use Seresto's Flea and Tick Control collar which lasts seven to eight months – one job ticked off the list," he said.

With 7-8 months' protection in just one application, the Seresto Flea and Tick Control collar can be a money saver too. When comparing prices in Pets at Home for a 25kg dog, Seresto works out *at £4.75 per month, that's* £3.25 less per month than the leading spot-on brand, Frontline Plus®.

Andrea completely understands the challenges that pet owners face today. "I'm all ears for any advice about how I can use my time more effectively and if that means using a product that can help keep my pets happy and healthy, I'm all for it," she said.

Dr Rory said he has picked up some tips from the pet owners whose animals he looks after. "Many of my clients live through their phones, especially some of the newer owners," he said. "And they find it really useful to schedule their pets' treatments, vet visits, grooming and training sessions in, to make it easier for them to remember."

The TV vet also suggests some money-saving advice for pet owners feeling the pinch. He said: "Consider making your own pet treats – these could be the healthier option; don't buy pet clothes; buy tough and durable toys; and shop around for pet insurance."

But Dr Rory maintains that the most important piece of advice is to keep your pet healthy, by ensuring that vet visits are up to date along with their parasite protection. "Looking after your pet's health benefits both your pet and your pocket. Getting rid of a flea infestation is not a quick or easy thing to do. It can take up to three months to gain control of the flea situation and even at that point, ongoing preventative treatments will be required to prevent reinfestation. And dealing with issues such as overweight pets with diabetes is a challenge. A sick pet is an expensive one," he said.

Andrea's app This Girl is On Fire helps women to think differently about themselves so they can Get Brave, Get Confident & Get Going. "I'm seriously considering creating an online community for busy pet owners to encourage them to think differently about their pets. I would like it to help new owners understand what is involved in being a pet parent. If owners can be more prepared before embarking on a wonderful life journey with their animals, then we can have healthier and happier pets, as well as less stressed and anxious owners." she said.

For more information about Seresto flea and tick collars for dogs and cats click here-

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References

1. Survey conducted by YouGov Plc titled Survey of 901 GB 18+ dog and cat owners 2022 (v1.0). All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2011 adults of which 901 are dog and cat owners. Fieldwork was undertaken between 30th - 31st March 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).
2. PDSA Cost of Owning a Dog:

   (accessed 4 May 2022).
3. PDSA Cost of Owning a Cat:

(accessed 4 May 2022).

4. RSPCA 2022, Cost of living crisis: RSPCA reveals struggle of thousands unable to afford pet care, https://www.rspca.org.uk/-/news-cost-of-living-crisis-pet-care (accessed 9 May 2022).
5. Calculation made by Mind+Matter. 46% of the GB 18+ population are dog and cat owners (0.46*51,435,642 = 23,146,039). 6% of this group agreed with the statement 'I have considered giving up my dog/cat within the last two years due to the negative impact on my life (e.g., stress due to behavioural issues, financial costs etc.)' Therefore 0.06*23,146,039 = 1,388,762).
6. Calculation made by Mind+Matter. 46% of the GB 18+ population are dog and cat owners (0.46*51,435,642 = 23,146,039). 6% of this group agreed with the statement 'I feel overwhelmed by all the things I need to think about when it comes to owning my dog/cat' Therefore 0.06*23,146,039 = 1,388,762).

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