

What a Breeder Charges For Their Puppies By Tanisha Breton

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Breton I think it's safe to say that most of us are not rich, and we all appreciate a good deal. Why not? Blowing money unnecessarily is just a waste, and most of us enjoy finding a bargain even if we can afford to spend more. When shopping for cars, electronics, furniture or even a pet, frugal living is the way of the wise these days.

So, what's the big deal about shopping around when looking for a puppy? Because the price you pay for a healthy well-bred puppy is minimal compared to the veterinarian cost for the life of a dog that's ill-bred, sickly and the bitterness of a poor-quality dog will linger long after the sweetness of a cheap price is forgotten. Ever heard the saying, "**You get what you pay for?**" well, the pet dog industry is one place you won't find a better example of the prudence of that advice. Quality in the breeding world can range anywhere from absolute crap to jaw-dropping fantastic - and everywhere in between and what you actually pay for a dog may cost you thousands in medical bills for a dog with a lifetime of health problems. Quality has never been cheap and buying a quality puppy certainly is not! You will have to expect to pay more than just a few hundred dollars to buy from a responsible breeder.

There are several factors that go into the price of buying a puppy from a good breeder. The ever increasing price of top notch veterinary care is one of the main reasons many breeders spend thousands upon thousands each year at the vets. Not to mention the money that goes into a breeders breeding stock, to produce quality dogs. A breeder has to buy quality dogs, feed high-quality diets, pre-natal exams, pregnancy x-rays, supplements, whelping, breeding, puppy supplies, emergency veterinary care, C-sections, assisted whelping when complications

arise, vaccination for adults and the puppies, health testing, routine blood-work, dental cleanings, veterinary exams, health checks for each puppy at least twice, sometimes 3 times if you can imagine this is just the short list of costs, but it gives you an idea.

Most responsible breeders cannot breed a female until she's almost 2 years old and due to the fact toy breeds have typically such small litter sizes with two puppies, three if you're lucky. Now divide all those expenses by the number of puppies and even at \$2,500 most responsible breeders are lucky if they even break even. Responsible breeders of any breed are lucky to break even.

Well, bred dogs are expensive to breed; even poorly bred dogs are not cheap to breed. For toy breeds especially they often need a C-section for the birth that can cost \$1,000 or more and an afterhours emergency C-section can cost upwards of \$2,000- \$4,000. In addition, there is the cost of care for the dam during pregnancy and after birth which can add more unexpected expenses if the mother develops a life threatening postpartum complication such as metritis, eclampsia or mastitis. If a breeder is breeding responsibly there will be health, genetic testing before breeding.

The average litter can cost \$2,500 or more to breed by the time all is said and done. Often the case many toy breeders are susceptible to neonatal loss because the puppies are so tiny and require so much intervention to survive causing more economical loss for a breeder. Any purebred dog will be expensive when you purchase a dog from a reputable breeder: you have to remember that the breeder has already spent a good amount of money on veterinary care for the mother and the pups, which will be reflected in the price of the puppy. Pre-breeding health checks for parents, stud fees, prenatal care, initial vet visits, shots, worming, food, and all the other things that the breeder takes care of long before you ever get to bring your puppy home which cost a lot of money.

So what is a breeder's time worth? It is estimated that the average breeder spends 120 hours per month caring for their dogs and pups. Hours that cannot be scheduled around other obligations; other obligations must be scheduled around your puppies. The small size of toy breed puppies make them susceptible to hypoglycemia and death during the first three months of life. Small breed puppies require a lot of hands on care which includes round-the-clock hand feeding, daily weight checks, administering subcutaneous fluids, monitoring temperature and constant assessment of neonatal well-being.

Having a litter of puppies for any breeder takes a considerable chunk of time and independence from your life. A good breeder will carefully screen and interview all potential buyers to ensure that their puppies get placed in only the best homes. They will also offer support to the puppy's new family to make sure they are adequately prepared to care for the puppy, offer tips on potty training, feeding, hypoglycemia prevention, discipline and in the event the family can no longer care for the puppy they will assist in finding a new home placement or accept the puppy back into their home. Look at the expense you pay for a new puppy as an investment into your emotional health. You couldn't get any mental health professional to treat you daily for the next 15 years for \$2,500.

Breeders know the quality of their puppies and what they are producing and are not willing to negotiate the value of their dogs. Not to mention not just anyone can walk up, pick up a toy breed and take it home. They are high maintenance, fragile, difficult to potty train, require daily grooming and dental care due to their small teeth but for the right family it will be the best emotional investment which is priceless!

Good puppies start long before their parents are bred. Both the sire and dam need constant care, or conditioning, to produce the best offspring. This means regular veterinary care, screening for genetic problems, pre-breeding health tests, regular exercise and good nutrition. Animals, not in good health, fed proper nutrition can experience fertility, pregnancy, and whelping complications. Many

breeders swear by the belief that the dam's temperament affects the puppies and good puppies come from good mothers therefore a breeder will avoid breeding shy, unstable or aggressive dogs.

Quality dogs are expensive to buy, expensive to maintain, and expensive to breed so **NO BREEDER SHOULD** ever have to explain or justify their prices. Much goes into the breeding of dogs and the price a breeder is asking for their puppies is up to their discretion. Whether it's \$500 or \$2,500 every breeder knows what they've invested into their dogs, how much they've paid, and the quality of puppies they are producing. When looking at purchasing a puppy, you can't just consider the cost of the puppy but also the breeder overall expenses to just achieve that litter. **As the old saying goes you get what you pay for and exceptional quality is not expensive, it's PRICELESS!**

It is estimated the average cost for the first year of raising 1 small dog is **\$2,674**; with an average of 3-5 breeding dogs, a breeder spends **(\$8,022- \$13,370)** annually. Medium breed dogs cost is **\$2,889**; with an average of 3-5 breeding dogs annual expense **(\$8,667- \$14,445)**. Large dogs is **\$3,239** with an average of 3-5 breeding dogs annual expense **(\$9,717- \$16,195)**. Giant breeds such as Great Danes have an annual cost of **\$3,536**. With 3-5 breeding dogs the annual expense could be **(\$10,608- \$17,680)**. The average first-year cost across all sizes was **\$3,085** for 1 dog.

Supplies \$432 per year, food \$435, Preventative Medications \$389 per year, Veterinary costs \$650 included all lab work plus one serious illness. The average lifetime cost of raising one breeding dog is \$23,410. That's for just 1 dog! Here's the truth in one sentence: The initial purchase price of a dog is a drop in the bucket compared to the other expenses of dog ownership if you end up with an unhealthy dog with a lifetime of health problems and expenses.

Let's do the math. A \$900 dog from an unethical, poorly bred breeder costs 21 cents a day over the puppy's 12-year life span. A \$2,000 dog from a quality,

health conscious breeder costs 45 cents a day. The difference is less than a quarter a day. If that \$900 poorly bred dog ends up with hip dysplasia, a heart condition, collapsed trachea or worse yet liver shunt you could easily absorb that \$1,100 difference if not more in a single vet visit, and still have a dog with a shortened life, or a compromised quality of life. Often breeders breeding cheap puppies will not stand behind their line with any type of health guarantee and puppies tend to be sold as is.

No, buying from a quality breeder doesn't guarantee your dog will be healthy and well-adjusted, but having four or five generations of checkable health and behavioral clearances has to increase your chances of having a healthy, happy, well socialized dog so for a quarter a day, it seems like cheap insurance.

Spending \$2,500 on a puppy may be a shock at first but if it's healthy, intelligent and guaranteed free of defects then wouldn't it be worth every penny? Puppies that are not bred to be structural sound, intelligence, health, temperament, and of good disposition are a dime a dozen but will often end up costing you much more than the purchase price of a good puppy in health problems and often will develop serious behavioral and disposition problems.

You can pick up any Sunday paper and find a basket full of puppies for \$75 to \$300 each. It would be unlikely that these puppies' parents have certified hips, eyes, elbows, been tested for luxating patellas, or had any health screening. The parents are often not well trained, the owners have never even seen the grandparents, not structurally sound with good conformation or exceptional breeding standard and tend to not be registered by a reputable kennel club or registered at all. When you see what it costs to own a dog, you will see the importance of why good dogs cost a lot more.

Pretend you're buying a phone when you go into a wireless store and sign up, you are given a choice of phones one is \$99 with your plan, the other is \$399. I would predict, nobody will walk out with the \$99 phone. If you can make it work, even if

it hurts, you will leave with the \$399 phone. If you can't, you'll walk out with the cheap phone – but you'll gaze wishfully at the one you're leaving behind, and every time your phone frustrates you over the next two years you'll say "If only I had saved and gotten the more expensive one." The cheap phone will make you curse and throw it at the wall within a few weeks when it starts dropping your calls, has poor reception or stops working. Then you can bet your sweet skippy you'll be on your own with no warranty.

So why would you make the choice to buy the more expensive phone?

The answer is: We know how much a reliable phone cost and it'll be likely backed by replacement warranty. Whenever a price is substantially low, it should be regarded with suspicion because experience tells us good quality will not come at a bargain price.

So why would we not follow the same lesson about dogs? The cost of a well-bred puppy will range between one and three thousand dollars, which is what you should expect to pay. For that, you should expect to receive a well-bred, well-raised, well-socialized puppy, which should be the equivalent of approximately a 12 years/12,000 miles warranty. You should expect that if this "phone" catches on fire – if the puppy ends up with a major, unforeseen problem – you will be taken care of. You should also expect a lifetime of support and help for all the things that come up in the normal daily life of the dog. Think of it as lifetime technical support. If you've got a limp or a training problem or something is worrying you, you should have a breeder helping you figure it out. If the puppy costs less than normal average, assume that it comes with no promises, no predictability, and no support.

Just like phones, If someone comes to you and says they are buying a cheap dog, your reaction should be the same as if they told you they were buying a car for two grand and sure it's going to be a great investment. Skimping on the purchase price when there are health, temperament and socialization issues at stake, strikes me as penny wise and pound foolish. So when purchasing your new puppy

much should be considered especially making sure you are buying your new pup from a respected breeder. You should always buy your breeder first, then your puppy. Good breeders aren't cheap or easy to find, but they tend to be cheaper than the best orthopedic veterinary hip surgeon, or the best canine behaviorist. **Buying a quality puppy is PRICELESS!**