

Dogs as pets

Life expectancy: 12 to 15 years

Costs

Animal	300-4000 CHF	depends on the breed, size and provenience of the animal
Initial costs	500-1000 CHF	Food and water bowl, leash, collar, basket, blanket, transport box, vet costs for castration, vaccinations, (de-)worming, compulsory chipping and education courses
Yearly costs	ca. 1000 CHF	Depends on the size of the dog: food, dog tax (varies), regular veterinary check-ups, vaccinations and worming, stays in dog pensions during holidays.
Varia	Unforeseen veterinary costs can greatly exceed the purchase-price of the animals.	

Time requirements

Dogs should be able to live with their “human pack”, their family. Generally, dogs need to share at least some hours of their owners’ time daily. This quality time encompasses extended walks on alternating promenades, daily education exercises, occupational games for nose, ear and brain. Dogs should not be left alone for more than 4 hours. Dogs are unsuitable pets for fully employed persons, with the exception of jobs that allow the dog to be taken along to the workplace, where they can move about freely. Additionally, dogs are time consuming since all dog owners need to attend at least some courses in education and training. Even before deciding for a dog as pet, future dog owners need to inform themselves thoroughly by asking experienced dog owners or dog specialists as well as by reading the relevant technical literature.



A forest of legal paragraphs

Dog ownership is very complicated in Switzerland: Dog owners must comply with a large set of regulations. There is the general nation-wide Animal Protection Law decreeing the requirements of dog keeping for all dog owners to assure species-specific housing and handling of dogs. There are also regulations for breeding dogs, working with dogs and using educational aids. For example, pinch and prong collars as well as anti-bark collars using smelling spray substances or electric stimulation are completely forbidden. Additionally, tail and ear docking are forbidden in Switzerland, as well as the importation of docked dogs (except in the case of relocation to Switzerland or short holiday stays).

In Switzerland, dog owners must attend **compulsory courses (proof of competence for dog-owners)**: 4 hours of theory in the case of persons with no dog experience, 4 hours of practice for all owners of a new dog, irrespective of its provenience (shelter, breeder). Addresses of licensed dog trainers who are entitled to teach the compulsory courses can be found on: www.bvet.bytix.com/plus/trainer/ In Switzerland, it is also compulsory to chip dogs and register them with the central regis-

try www.anis.ch. Generally, it is the vet who injects the chip and registers the dog on its owner's name.

In addition to the national law, each canton has its own **Cantonal Dog Keeping Legislation**, which can differ considerably between cantons. Certain breeds are forbidden completely in some cantons, in some cantons you need a special permission and education to keep certain breeds, some cantons make muzzles of given specifications compulsory for an assortment of breeds, etc. A compilation of all cantonal dog legislations can be found on www.tierschutz.org. If you are unsure about your canton's dog legislation, contact the Cantonal Veterinary Office. Be mindful: if you cross cantonal borders within Switzerland, you are required to comply with a different set of cantonal dog laws, so make sure you know about these laws, carry a leash, a muzzle (which your dog should be habituated to) and the required paperwork (animal passport, proof of competence for dog owners, etc.). In Switzerland, it is the municipalities that raise **dog taxes**. Every dog owner needs to register the dog with the municipal government and pay taxes, which vary between CHF 40 and CHF 150 per dog per annum. In Switzerland, **dog owners are required to clean up after their dog**, to collect and dispose of dog faeces appropriately. Free plastic bags and trash bins ("Robidog"-system) are provided by the municipalities at many public locations.

Pedigree dog or crossbreed? Puppy or adult dog? Male or female?

The advantage of pedigree dogs lies in the knowledge of how the dog will look like when adult and which basic traits of character are to be expected. Through extensive breeding, however, dog breeds are often affected by hereditary diseases. Therefore we discourage buying breeds with extreme traits such as dwarfism, brachycephaly (very short snout), short legs, long fur. Caring for a puppy and watching it grow up is a very touching experience, but also very intensive and time consuming. In the first weeks and months, special puppy courses have to be attended ("imprinting" courses or play courses). Later on, education courses are compulsory. Males can develop dominant behaviour towards humans and other dogs, more so than bitches. With dogs, anyway, careful and consistent education is a must. Bitches come in heat twice a year. To prevent unplanned reproduction, bitches must be surveyed carefully during this time – animal shelters are full with unplanned, unwanted dogs! Ask the veterinarian about the possibilities to suppress the heat or to castrate the animal.

Where to buy, what to be attentive to?

Many dogs, puppies as well as adult dogs, await new owners in animal shelters run by a local animal protection organisation. The shelter personnel gives advice on dog care, education and housing. Most shelters charge a fee for handing over the animals, and they set up a contract. If a pedigree dog is what you want, visit several breeders and carefully compare the conditions under which the puppies were raised. In Switzerland, there are two labels for controlled dog breeders, the Golden Quality Seal and Certodog. Puppies should only be separated from their mother and littermates at 10-12 weeks. Be careful if someone (supposedly a dog dealer) offers cheap puppies with no opportunity to check on the breeding conditions, especially on the internet. In so-called puppy-mills, mass dog production facilities, inadequate conditions during development usually lead to behavioural and health problems in the dogs later on. Therefore refrain from buying animals via the internet! You either support animal mass production under unspeakable conditions, or you might even be cheated badly.

What are the dogs' needs?

Dogs need food once or twice daily, puppies more frequently. All dogs need fresh water at any time. The dog can be fed commercial dog food, or home-made food. For the latter you should mix one part meat and one part starch-containing food. Chewing items are good for teeth hygiene, but with bones there is the danger of intestinal obstruction. Depending on fur length, some dogs need in-

tensive care for the fur not to felt. Generally, you neither need to bath the dog regularly nor to shampoo it. Keeping dogs on a chain or in the kennel is not covering the dog's need of social contact and has to be strongly objected to. Unfortunately, keeping dogs chained for up to 19 hours per day is still allowed. There are minimum requirements for keeping dogs in kennels, for example 8m² for w dogs of 20-45 kg of body weight, with an adequately isolated, dry shelter or dog house. Swiss Animal Protection legislation requires dog owners to walk and exercise their dogs daily according to their needs and to allow for social contact with humans and other dogs. This is also the case for kennelled or chained dogs. Dogs also need to have natural ground to defecate several times daily. It goes without saying that dog droppings have to be collected and be disposed of in the garbage bin. If you have no possibility to go outside the city for the daily walks, we discourage of keeping a dog. The daily walks have a far-reaching importance. They allow the dog to cover his need for exercise, to blow off steam, to explore with nose and other senses and to play, most ideally also with other dogs. During walks, you can do playful educational exercises and occupy the dog with games that challenge its natural olfactory and cognitive abilities, such as following trails or working for food.

Education

Every dog needs the basics of a good education. He should for example learn not to jump on persons, not to walk with the leash pulled tight, not to growl when asked off the sofa by a family member. During compulsory courses to achieve the proof of competence for dog owners, in pet obedience schools and training courses dog owners learn how to express their intentions clearly to the dog, and to assert themselves not by force, but friendly and consistently. Undesired behaviour and behavioural problems are usually the owner's fault, not the dog's. Dog owners have to learn about the species-specific behavioural repertoire of dogs as well as about modern and species-adequate training, and should be able to prevent their dog becoming dangerous to other humans and animals.

Veterinary care

Dogs have to be vaccinated once and wormed several times yearly. The veterinarian performs the vaccinations and thus also regularly checks on the condition and health status of the dog.

Dogs and holidays

Ideally, dogs accompany their owners on holiday trips. However, dog-friendly destinations and hotels need to be chosen. Alternately, dogs can be placed in a pension or shelter over the holidays, which costs 25-50 CHF per day. Abandon of animals is forbidden in Switzerland and can be fined with up to 20 000 CHF. Dogs should not be left alone in cars. Already in spring and even with slightly open windows, temperature in the car can rise up to 80°C – a death trap for the animals that leads to painful death!

Dogs and Kids

Dogs can make great companions and friends for children. Children, however, cannot care for a dog on their own. The responsibility for species-adequate care, husbandry and education lies with the parents, who must instruct the children and supervise their interactions with the dog. Small children must never be left alone with the dog.

Behavioural problems

Excessive barking, aggressiveness, pulling on the leash and other behavioural problems are no reason for abandoning a dog. Trained animal behaviour counsellors help dog owners adapt housing, handling and training of the dog to its behavioural needs and thus solve the problem, with success rates of up to 80%. Behaviour counselling for dog owners is offered by specially trained veterinarians (www.stvv.ch) and animal behaviour counsellors / animal psychologists (www.vieta.ch).

Information und contacts

- Information brochure “Dogs” (German, French, Italian), can be ordered for free by sending a postage paid C5 envelope with your adress to:
Swiss Animal Protection SAP, Dornacherstrasse 101, Postfach, 4008 Basel,
phone 061 365 99 99, fax 061 365 99 90, sts@tierschutz.com, www.tierschutz.com,
helpdesk & free advice (German, French, English), free brochures, addresses of shelters,
children’s club www.krax.ch
- “Children and dogs”, “Playfully from puppy to dog”, “Understanding dogs – interpreting early warning signals” (German), special editions of the Swiss Dog Magazine (Schweizer Hundemagazin), can be ordered for free. Just send a post paid C5 envelope with your name and address to: Swiss Animal Protection SAP
- “I would like a dog”, “I own a dog”, “Dog offspring?”, “I fear dogs”, “Travelling with dogs and cats”, “Dogs – species-adequate pet keeping”, guide booklets; “Tapsi, komm... / Truf, viens... / Vieni Birillo...” children’s booklet for dog bite prevention (German, French, Italian), all issued by the Swiss Federal Veterinary Office. Can either be ordered for free from Swiss Animal Protection SAP or from the Swiss Federal Veterinary Office (PDF or booklet), www.bvet.admin.ch and www.tiererichtighalten.ch
- Certodog, Foundation for the Welfare of Dogs (Stiftung für das Wohl des Hundes), Gugelmattstrasse 36, 8967 Widen, Tel 056 631 80 18, Fax 056 631 80 18, info@certodog.ch, www.certodog.ch, Certodog dog breeder quality label, continuing education for dog owners
- Swiss Cynological Society (Schweizerische Kynologische Gesellschaft) SKG, Brunnmattstr. 24, 3007 Bern, phone 031 306 62 62, fax 031 306 62 60, www.skg.ch, info@skg.ch, Golden Quality Label (Goldenes Gütesiegel) for dog breeders, dog obedience courses, continuing education of dog owners
- Kynologos AG, Society for applied animal behaviour research in dogs (Gesellschaft für angewandte Verhaltensforschung bei Hunden), Habersaat weg 13, 8914 Aeugstertal, phone 01 776 11 87, fax 01 776 11 89. info@kynologos.ch, www.kynologos.ch, Puppy «imprinting» and play courses, continuing education of dog owners

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