



Finding affordable pet care and pet products

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I retired four years ago and thought I had enough to cover all my expenses, plus some. But the rise in prices for everything has really hit hard. I can't afford to take my two Dachshunds, "Kili" and "Fili," to the vet for their annual checkups and shots. And I'm terrified what will happen if one of them gets sick. Do you know of any way I can cut expenses for pet care?

- Dave M., Santa Monica, CA
DEAR DAVE: I completely understand. These are difficult economic times, especially on a fixed income. But there are lower-cost pet care options available.

First, contact Kili and Fili's veterinarian and explain your situation. Ask if they offer any discounts or payment options for care, or if they have any recommendations for free or low-cost care. Vets will work with you to keep your dogs healthy.

Next, contact the local Humane Society or shelter and ask the same questions. Shelters want pets to stay with their owners and have resources and contacts to help make their care easier and more affordable.

Ask about low-cost or free pet vaccination events (often called shot clinics). These take place in many towns and cities at least once a year. For less than half the cost of a routine visit (and sometimes free), these clinics give pets their required vaccines and may offer additional services like physical exams and blood tests. These are frequently announced online, but you may be able to locate one by contacting your town office or the local shelter. The most important advice I have for you is: Don't go it alone. Tell your vet, close friends and family members about your financial situation and the care your dogs need. People are there to help - just reach out.

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