*3rd-5th Grade – Pet Pals*

**Petonomics – How much it costs to own a pet**

**Objective:** To understand how much money it takes to own a pet. Develop an awareness of the responsibilities of pet ownership.

**Skill:** Students will be able to identify what it costs to own different kinds of pets and why it can be so expensive.

**Materials:** Whiteboard, print out from and bundles of $ <https://www.aspca.org/sites/default/files/upload/images/pet_care_costs.pdf>

**Activity:** Students will become aware of what costs are involved in caring for a pet properly. They will break up into groups and decide given different amounts of money, what pet they should get and why.

**Part 1 – Introduction to pet care costs**

Hello class. My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I volunteer (or work) for the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe. How many of you have pets at home?

Today we are going to see, first hand, how much it costs to take care of a pet.

People love animals and when they come into our shelter and fall in love with a dog or cat, they sometimes don’t think about how much it costs to take care of a pet for the rest of their life! This is something that we have to make sure to talk to them about.

A lot of times, people surrender their dog or cat because they end up not being able to afford their pet. According to a recent survey (by National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy), reason #4 that BOTH dogs and cats are turned into local shelters by owners is due to the cost of maintaining a pet. So today, we are going to help you guys understand what it takes to be responsible pet owners.

Before we talk about pets, let’s talk about us. What are some basic needs that all human beings have? \*LIST THESE ON THE BOARD (only if there’s a board available otherwise just list verbally).

Do you think dogs and cats have these same needs? (i.e. food, shelter, water, medicine, bedding, etc.)

What are the basic needs of pets? \*LIST THESE ON THE BOARD

\*looking for: toys and treats, food, medical expenses, litter, license fees, health insurance

\*Also talk about spaying and neutering and why you want to have this done (prevent unwanted litters) and training

**Part 2 – Cost of owning and caring for pets**

Did you know that different sized animals and breeds cost different amounts? Imagine feeding a German Shepard that weighs 90lbs, and then feeding a small mini-poodle that weighs only 10lbs? That can be a big difference in the amount of food those two eat each day, which adds up.

You’d think owning a small pet (i.e. rabbit, hamster, and guinea pig) would cost a lot less because of their size and weight, right? But in fact, the opposite is true. Small pets can cost over a $1000 a year to care for.

We are going to pass out some charts to you that show about how much it costs per year to own various pets. \*Show chart OR have printouts for all students to take home (ASPCA Chart):

1. Using the chart, what is the cheapest pet to own?
2. The most expensive? Any of you guys have large dogs at home?
3. Are there any surprising amounts on this page (i.e. the rabbit)?

When choosing a pet it’s always better to over estimate how much they will cost you per year. **What does over estimate** mean? Sometimes your pet may suffer an injury, or get sick, or need to have porcupine quills pulled from its nose. These vet visits can cost hundreds or thousands of dollars!

**Part 3 – Activity 1**

We are going to break you up into teams. Split the kids into teams just by doing a count (1,2,3,4 or a,b,c,d)— All 1’s go together, all 2’s go together, etc.

The team is going to become your family for this game. You are going to receive a bundle of money. Start by counting up how much money you have to spend…this is your budget. This is the amount of money your family can afford to spend on a pet. After you receive your money, you’ll need to talk amongst your family about what is the best pet for you to get. You can use your charts to help guide your answer. When you decide on what pet to get (as a team/family), you need to come up with 2 reasons why you’ve made that decision.

When kids are done discussing what pet their family can afford, have students rejoin into a whole group. Ask groups to come up and share how much money they had to spend, what pet they chose and then their 2 reasons why.

\*Make sure to emphasize that we need to over estimate how much a pet could cost because you never know what emergencies or sicknesses they’ll have.