

The True Cost of Training

By Gary Ross, M.E.

Hello again! This is one of those rare occasions where I'm writing the article. Here we are in 2008. Maureen, myself and the teams at Dog Talk & TheraPet LLC would like to wish you and your families a Happy New Year.

Some of the questions we ask when we get a new dog is (at least we hope it is) where and when should we begin training? For those of us who don't ask this question, let's try it out because it is one of the most essential and beneficial questions you can ask to ensure a life of respectful companionship with your puppy / dog.

If you are a regular reader to our e-newsletter, you know we have repeated this time and time again. We need to take time to prepare for a new arrival and how to safely and effectively build a relationship with our dog, in the context of our lifestyle.

A great place to start is a positive reward based training class. As a bonus the class provides the basis for socialization and well-being, both with people and other dogs. If this is done the right way, then we are less likely to have to fix things later that have gone astray (with added time, possibly greater

expense, emotional pain & stress).

One of the comments I hear often is "it takes too much time and/or costs too much." True, it does and today we are all watching our pennies. However, in the big picture of things, taking a bit of time up front, can in the term save us so much.

Do your homework. Of course, we'd love for you to join us at Dog Talk, but our concern is focused more on simply saving dogs from being given up at shelters because you didn't train at all.

Once a week for one to two hours, for 6-weeks is a typical class. Cost can range from, depending on location, experience of the trainers and style, from \$95 - over \$300. This is not a lot of time up front given you will have the dog for another 8-15 years.

In my opinion, no class should have more than 8 dog teams in it for a good, quality training class. Plus you will learn (at least if you come to our sessions... this is a shameless plug) how to integrate the lessons into a lifelong learning process as part of your everyday lifestyle.

Cost? Let's divide the cost over the dog's life. Say \$160 over 10 years... that's \$16.00 a year, or \$1.33 a month. That's a LOT LESS than a cup of coffee.

Consider the pitfalls you might avoid. The unofficial record that we know of for doggie destruction goes to an Akita in California who was left in his owner's BMW for 10 minutes. Do you know how great a chew toy the leather interior of a BMW makes? This Akita did to the tune of \$11,000 dollars. Ouch! That story always helps me keep my perspective when I make a mistake and one of our dogs gets something they shouldn't for a good chew.

Dogs chew, they bark, they run, they dig. These are all doggie things to do.

In terms of socialization, the true cost of training is priceless. Often we think of training class as a place for our dogs to interact with other dogs. They do, and it's a good thing. However, many dogs in our society go through much of their life very happily without seeing another dog.

The priceless part of training is the positive interaction with people of all-different sizes, shapes, colors and ages.

Let's face it. Our dogs don't truly need to love other dogs, but life is a lot more fun if they love people. We live in a litigious society. We can get sued for almost anything. Owning a certain breed of dog can make it difficult to get homeowners insurance. A dog owner stands to lose a lot should an incident occur. Prevent the

preventable. Take your dog to training. Know your dogs. Learn their characteristics and manage them. You, your family, and your dog will all have a great time (for pennies on the dollar).



If you have a question for our coaches, email:

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