



OWNING A LARGE-BREED DOG

When selecting a dog, size can play as big a role as breed in making the right decision for your family. Large-breed dogs are sturdier and often a better fit for active families who want their dogs along on every adventure. However, large-breed dogs can carry additional expenses and require a different level of household logistics to keep them fed, bathed, exercised, and healthy. If you are interested in a large-breed dog, please consider the information below.

General


- Large dogs can cost more in both medical care and everyday supplies. These pets eat more, need higher doses of medication, and need larger-sized equipment.
- These dogs need more space in your home and yard, on walks, and even in your vehicle.

Lifespan

- The average lifespan for larger-breed dogs is less than that of smaller-breed dogs. For example, the Burnese Mountain dog has an average life span of between 6 to 8 years, whereas the average life span of a West Highland Terrier is between 12 and 16 years.

Diet

- Large-breed dogs require more food, and these costs can add up. Factor the cost of your large dog's diet into your household budget before adopting. Larger-breed dogs grow at a different rate than smaller dogs, so proper nutrition is especially important for at least the first year. It is critical that large-breed dogs eat large-breed puppy food during this growth phase. Speak with your vet to choose the right food and determine the right amount to feed.
- Adult dogs may require large-breed adult food. Large-breed food usually has less fat and calories to help maintain a healthy weight and to reduce risk of injury due to their large size. These diets may also have additional nutritional specifications for large dogs as they get older.
- These dogs are more likely to develop joint and bone problems and could need a high-quality diet or supplements that can cost more, especially as they age.

 **Health Care:** Larger dogs will have greater healthcare costs because of increased amounts of medication and supplements, and they may require more treatments. Insurance prices for large-breed dogs may increase accordingly.

The following is a basic list of more common health issues that are important to consider for larger dogs. It is not exhaustive and does not mean that your dog will develop any of these conditions. Please consult with your veterinarian for complete information specific to your pet.

- Hip and elbow dysplasia – When the bones in the hip or elbow joints do not fit correctly, it can cause deterioration of the joint over time.
- Ligament tears – Ligaments can be more easily injured when jumping or making sharp turns because of increased stress from a heavier body weight.
- Arthritis – Large-breed dogs are more susceptible to hip and elbow arthritis because of more weight on these points.
- Bloat – Deep-chested large-breed dogs can suffer from gastric bloat, when the stomach twists and flips over itself. Special feeder bowls have been developed to reduce this risk.
- Heart disease – Some large-breed dogs can develop dilated cardiomyopathy, where the heart becomes enlarged and has trouble pumping blood throughout the body.

Exercise

- Offer a variety of physical and mental exercise for your dog. While this is important for all dogs, a large dog who is stressed or bored can cause more damage than a small one. Low-impact exercise, enrichment, and socialization with other dogs will keep your pet happy and healthy.
- Choose low-impact exercise. Because of these dogs' size, high-impact movements like repetitive ball chasing can put immense stress on the body. Good choices for lower-impact fun are walking and swimming.

Grooming

- Keep in mind bathing a large-breed dog can be difficult in your home, and you may need to use a groomer. If they have long hair, haircuts and trims may be necessary, too. Grooming is a regular time commitment, and expense is partially dependent on the animal's size.

Training

- Basic puppy problems can be more impactful with a large dog versus a small one. A large dog who jumps or mouths is harder to manage than a smaller-breed dog. For this reason, it is especially important to work on consistent training and good behavior skills.
- Start young with proper socialization, and work with a certified trainer to help curtail future behavior problems.