



Service Policy

Introduction

Pets of the Homeless ('POTH' or 'we/us') works in partnership with social service agencies to support people who are currently experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This policy describes how caseworkers from social service agencies ('caseworker' or 'you') can access our service, what we can do for you, and what we ask of you in return. We require all users of our service to agree to this Service Policy.

Service Overview

Pets of the Homeless is a not-for-profit volunteer-powered organisation that works with social service agencies to aid the pets of people currently experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We liaise directly with case workers and rely on you to assess the needs of your clients and be their contact person. Part of this policy is that you **do not ask** your clients to get in touch with Pets of the Homeless directly.

Referrals

We do not provide a public facing service, therefore please do not send your client to us with a referral. We rely on you to liaise with us on behalf of your client. If individuals approach us directly for assistance, we will refer them back to their case manager or social worker. We are a very small organisation and have very limited capacity to deal directly with clients. Our service model is designed for efficiency and cost effectiveness, allowing us to continue to provide the services for your clients and their pets.

We are unable to accept referrals from:

- Doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, financial practitioners.
- Unregistered or non-professional practitioners.

Service Scope

We aid with pet food and supplies, veterinary care, emergency boarding and other miscellaneous costs such as pound release fees. Please note that the amounts specified below are the maximum allowances that we will provide for each of your clients.



(1) Pet Food and other pet supplies

We currently distribute pet food through our network of Community Partners. The list of organisations can be found on our website at [Pets of the Homeless - Community Partners](#). Please use the search tool to find your nearest Community Partner. Each Community Partner is responsible for assessing the suitability of the client to access their service.

You can also fill in our [order form](#) and pick up the items your client requires from our warehouse at 84A Keys Rd, Cheltenham VIC 3192. Once all the items you have ordered are ready for collection, possible collection dates and times will be confirmed by email. Please allow 48-72 hours for our team to organise your order.

As POTH provides supplementary assistance to pet owners, we can provide material aid via the order form for a **duration of 12 months only**, per client.

If your client has an existing pet that POTH has been supporting with material aid via the order form and they take on a new, additional pet during this time, POTH **will not supply material aid for the additional pet**.

(2) Veterinary care

All veterinary services are performed at one of our **approved partner vet clinics**. Once your request has been approved, we will ring the clinic to make an appointment for your client. We will send you a confirmation email along with our Authorisation for Veterinary Services Form which you will need to sign on behalf of your client. Your client will then need to take a copy of the form to their appointment. If your client does not have access to transportation, it is your responsibility to organise transport for the pet.

We will cover the following cost of service per client:

General or routine care (desexing, dental, diagnostics, etc.)	Up to \$500
Emergency care (surgery)	Up to \$1000

We will cover either of the costs but not both. For example, if the client has already received a \$450 subsidy for their pet's routine care, they will only be eligible to receive \$550 towards the cost of an emergency care when required.



Please note that we require **all pets to be vaccinated, microchipped and desexed** and if they are not, we will do so on behalf of your client unless there is a serious medical reason deeming it unsafe. You will find this clause in our Authorisation Form which you will need to sign on behalf of your client. This condition of service is non-negotiable as Pets of The Homeless encourages responsible pet ownership in the name of good animal welfare.

- Vaccination is the only sure way to protect pets from diseases such as Canine Distemper, Hepatitis, Feline Enteritis, Cat Flu and Parvovirus. Treatment is costly and not always successful. Vaccination is the only effective form of protection.
- A microchip is a permanent form of identification which can quickly reunite lost or injured pets with owners, literally saving a pet's life. Microchipping is compulsory in Victoria.
- Research has shown that desexed pets live longer and are less likely to suffer from certain illnesses, such as uterine infections, mammary or prostate cancers. The social benefits include a reduction in behavioural problems, such as marking, aggression and roaming and desexing is the most effective strategy to stop unwanted litters burdening over-crowded pounds and shelters.

(3) Vet Fees

Due to the rising costs of vet care and increasing instances of clients not attending booked appointments, we have implemented a fee structure for all vet care requests, which must be met before an appointment is booked. This fee is non-negotiable and non-refundable.

Vet appointments (general health checks, vaccinations, diagnostics, etc.)	\$25 per pet
Desexing fee: cats	\$50 per pet
Desexing fee: dogs	\$100 per pet

(4) Microchipping

A **Source Number** is required when implanting a microchip into a **dog or cat born after 1 July 2020**. We need this number from your client to organise microchipping. If your client has been given a pet without a Source Number, they should register a new account with the [Pet Exchange Register](#) and provide us with the Source Number before microchipping is organised. The application fee is a one-off payment and there is no need to renew annually.



(5) Farewell Fund (Euthanasia and Cremation)

The Farewell Fund will cover the cost of veterinary euthanasia for sick pets, as well as paying for cremation and the return of the pet's ashes.

We will cover the following cost of the service, per pet:

Veterinary Euthanasia and Cremation	Up to \$500
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(6) Safe Shelter

Kennels or Cattery

We cover **up to \$650 per client for Safe Shelter** in a commercial boarding facility. It is your responsibility to source the facility, which must be a registered animal business with an ABN for tax/invoice purposes.

We will cover the following cost of service, per client:

Commercial Boarding	Up to \$650
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To be able to access this service, your client's pet will need to be **up to date with their vaccination** and they will need to provide a vaccination certificate to the boarding facility as proof that the animal has been vaccinated in the past **12 months**.

Boarding facilities are unable to accommodate any unvaccinated animals. If your client requires assistance with vaccination, please note that in the request form but know that it takes **ten to twelve days** for the vaccination to be effective so the pet can only be admitted into boarding after this time.

Foster Care

We also offer Safe Shelter through our network of community foster carers, where the pet will be placed in an approved volunteer's home for care, however, this service is reliant on the availability of volunteer foster carers. We have two services available:

1. **Short Tails** – stays of up to 6 weeks. Open to the clients of AOD Clinicians, Hospital Social Workers, Community Social Workers, Mental Health Support Workers etc.



Client’s proof of hardship is required.

2. **Long Tails** – stays of up to 12 weeks. Open to clients of Homelessness Case Managers and DV Support Workers. Client’s proof of hardship is required.

Foster Care: Short Tails

Once an approved carer is found, the pet will be placed in foster care for a **maximum duration of 6 weeks**. This accommodation cannot be extended. Pets will need to be up to date with vaccination and if your client requires assistance with vaccination, please note that in the request form. **An unvaccinated pet can still be placed in a foster home**, but they will be vaccinated once in care. The charges for this service are noted below.

First time in foster care	\$50 per pet
Subsequent foster care requests	\$100 per pet

Foster Care: Long Tails

Once an approved carer is found, the pet will be placed in foster care for a **maximum duration of 12 weeks** with potential to extend the term on a case-by-case basis (provided two weeks’ notice is given). The charges for this service are noted below.

First time in foster care	\$50 per pet (up to 12 weeks)
Foster care extension	\$75 per pet (up to 12 weeks)
Subsequent foster care requests	\$100 per pet (up to 12 weeks)

Pets will need to be up to date with vaccination and if your client requires assistance with vaccination, please note that in the request form. **An unvaccinated pet can still be placed in a foster home**, but they will be vaccinated once in care.

Vaccination and Desexing

To access our Safe Shelter Program, we require **all pets to be vaccinated, microchipped and desexed** and if they are not, we will do so on behalf of your client unless there is a serious medical reason deeming it unsafe. This is a **non-negotiable condition of service**. You will find this clause in our Admission Form/Agreement which you or your client will need to fill in and sign. If the pet requires any other veterinary attention, POTH will provide this during their stay if appropriate and within the Service Policy guideline.



Transportation and Visitation

To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of our carers, we **do not allow** owners to drop off/pick up the pet **at the carer’s home**. Drop off/pick up at the carer’s home will need to be done by yourself or POTH volunteers. Whenever possible animals will be moved to and from our Cheltenham warehouse, where owners are welcome to drop off/collect their pet.

Visitation is only open to dogs in our care and is not a viable option for other pets. Your client **may visit** their dog provided sufficient notice is given. Visitation will occur in a neutral location (i.e., not at the carer’s home) as agreed by both parties. We will endeavor to provide you and your client with regular updates of the pet.

Admission Form/Agreement

You or your client will need to fill in and sign an agreement before the pet can be placed in our Safe Shelter Program. The form will give us additional information that we need about the pet, and it also stipulates the terms and conditions of the program such as the admission and discharge dates and the consequences if the terms and conditions are not met.

(7) Others

While it is not an advertised service, we may also assist with miscellaneous costs incurred by your client due to pet ownership, such as pound release fee. **Pound release is capped at \$300 per client**. The costs of other services to be agreed depending on case assessment. Please note that POTH does not pay infringement notices issued to pet owners by Council.

Pound release	Up to \$300
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Handover

If at any time your client has been assigned to a new case worker either from the same or different organisation, please ensure that there is a **proper handover** to ensure continuity of the case for your client.

Client Unable to Take Pet(s) Back

If your client has chosen to relinquish their pets, it is the responsibility of the client to take their pet to a shelter as **we do not rehome pets**.



The Waiting List

We are a small volunteer-powered organisation and with no ongoing funding. As we often do not have enough resources to assist with all requests immediately, requests will be placed on a waiting list. We prioritise the emergency cases first.

If you need to make alterations to a request, please email us immediately and we will update your form and reassess your place on the waiting list. Similarly, if your client no longer requires assistance, please let us know immediately so we can remove the request from the waiting list.

Once your request is received, we will review it and we aim to acknowledge all requests within 48 hours of submission.

Photography

Our organisation has a strong social media presence, and we rely on our community's support to be able to continue our work. To keep our donors/supporters engaged and up to date with Pets of The Homeless, we request your consent to use your client's story and pet photos to show our supporters' how we have helped. All stories can be de-identified to protect your client's identity and privacy. We understand that in some instances this may not be possible, but we would really appreciate your support to make this possible so we can continue supporting your clients.

Questionnaire

For us to improve our programs, you may be asked to fill in a short questionnaire before and after the completion of the service provided.

Non-adherence to these terms of service

If you do not comply with these terms of service, we have the right to temporarily suspend or permanently revoke your ability to use our services.



How to request assistance

- **Read** through our Service Policy thoroughly to understand all our policies, terms, and conditions.
- **Fill** in our [Request Form](#) to give us as much information on the case as possible. This will help us with our assessment and will expedite the process for your client. The aim is to avoid having to go back and forth to get all the required information for the case to proceed.
- For **vet care** requests, please include information such as **why the pet requires vet treatment** and **suitable dates and times** for us to book in the appointment.
- For **safe shelter** requests, please let us know **when care is required** as well as the **duration of care**.
- Please pay particular attention when answering the question “Does your client have access to transportation for the pet(s)?” especially for safe shelter requests. **Only answer YES if you can help with the transport or if your client is able to pick up or drop off from our office.**
- *Examples of incomplete answers: Client’s pet requires vet care or client needs to go into a refuge and needs their pet cared for.*
- *Examples of good answers: Client’s pet requires their yearly vaccination. Client can take pet to the clinic and is available on weekdays from 10am-1pm to attend vet appointments.*



THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PET OWNERSHIP

There is a lot to consider before deciding to become the guardian of a new pet. Pets can be a wonderful source of happiness and companionship, but there are ongoing costs involved with caring for an animal that need to be carefully considered, and the decision to get a new pet should not be made on a whim. Your pet could be with you for 15 + years, and it is essential that an animal's needs can be met by their human for the duration of their lifetime.

Upfront costs of new pets (before you bring them home)



If you get your pet from a shelter, they will already be desexed and microchipped, and will have received their initial vaccinations.

If you obtain a pet privately through other means, you will need to provide this yourself, and the costs can add up quickly.

In the first year alone, a new pet could cost you up to \$6000 if you include all the basic set up costs, depending on size and breed.



Ongoing yearly costs

After your first year, these are some of the average yearly costs that you may need to pay to keep a healthy, happy dog:



Annual food consumption
\$2025

Annual vaccinations and routine vet check ups
\$450

Grooming
\$200

Pet insurance
\$360

Annual Council registration
\$100

Flea and worming treatments
\$120

Accessories
\$80



Cats are marginally less than this, with a slight reduction in feeding and grooming costs, however the average life span of a cat is 15 to 18 years, whereas a dog is 11 to 13 years. Some cats have been known to live for over 20 years.

Unexpected emergency vet visits

Animals can get themselves into all sorts of trouble, and it's not uncommon for vet bills in emergency situations to be up in the thousands of dollars. As pets age, it is inevitable that their vet care costs may also increase.

eg. A typical overnight stay at the vet for emergency cases can cost \$1000+ per night.

eg. If your pet swallows part of a toy and it causes an internal obstruction, the surgery to remove it could cost \$5000+



The average yearly of keeping a healthy, happy pet

\$3218



\$1715



According to the Pet Ownership Report produced in 2022 by Animal Medicines Australia, the average dog costs up to \$3218 per year to keep, and the average cat costs up to \$1715 per year. This cost is also dependant on the size and the breed type, as some breeds may experience more health issues during their lifetime.

The average cost of a routine vet visit

\$150-\$300



On average, you can expect to spend around \$450- \$600 a year on routine vet visits. This could include check-ups and yearly vaccination costs. This does not typically include specialist services such as dental cleaning, and does not include emergency vet visits.

Beyond vet visits, you also have routine medicines to consider - think Flea and Worming treatments etc. Later in life, your pet may also need specialty food due to health conditions, which can cost much more than regular pet food.



For more information, please contact us at

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W: www.petsofthehomeless.org.au

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