



Service Policy

Introduction

Pets Of The Homeless ("POTH" or "we/us") collaborates with social service agencies to support individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This policy outlines how caseworkers from social service agencies ("caseworker" or "you") can access our services, what assistance we provide, and the responsibilities required in return. All users must agree to this Service Policy before accessing our support.

Service Overview

POTH is a not-for-profit, volunteer-driven organisation dedicated to assisting the pets of those facing homelessness. We work directly with caseworkers, relying on them to assess clients' needs and act as the primary contact. Clients should not contact POTH directly; instead, all communication must go through caseworkers to ensure efficient service delivery.

We do not accept referrals from:

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

Services Provided

POTH helps with pet food and supplies, veterinary care, safe shelter, and other miscellaneous costs such as pound release fees. The following are the maximum allowances per client.

(1) Pet Food and supplies

Pet food is distributed through our [Community Partners](#) network. A full list of partners is available on our website. Each Community Partner determines client eligibility for assistance.

Caseworkers may also submit an [order form](#) for pick-up at our warehouse (84A Keys Rd, Cheltenham VIC 3192). Once processed, collection details will be confirmed via email within 48-72 hours.

- **Material aid is available for 12 months per client.**
- **If a client acquires a new pet during this period, POTH will not provide material aid for the additional pet.**



(2) Veterinary care

All veterinary services are provided through our approved partner vet clinics. Upon approval, POTH will arrange an appointment and provide an **Authorisation for Veterinary Services Form**, which must be signed by the caseworker on behalf of the client. Clients must bring this form to their appointment.

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

Clients may only access one of these categories per pet (e.g., if \$450 has been used for routine care, \$550 remains for emergency care).

Mandatory requirements

To promote responsible pet ownership, all pets must be:

- **Vaccinated** (to prevent serious illnesses such as Parvovirus, Cat Flu, and Feline Enteritis)
- **Microchipped** (a legal requirement in Victoria, essential for pet reunification)
- **Desexed** (reducing health risks and preventing unwanted litters)

POTH will arrange these services unless there is a serious medical reason preventing them.

(2.1) Vet Fees

Due to rising costs and frequent no-shows, a **non-refundable** service fee applies:

Vet appointments (routine care, diagnostics, etc.)	\$25 per pet
Desexing fee: cats	\$75 per pet
Desexing fee: dogs	\$125 per pet

(2.2) Microchipping

A **Source Number** is required when implanting a microchip into a **dog or cat born after 1 July 2020**. 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.

(2.3) Farewell Fund (Euthanasia and Cremation)

POTH provides financial assistance for euthanasia and cremation services:

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

Safe Shelter assistance is available through **commercial boarding facilities** and **foster care**.

(3.1) Commercial Boarding

- **Coverage per client:** Up to **\$650**
- The boarding facility must be a **registered animal business with an ABN**.
- The pet **must be vaccinated** (a certificate is required).
- If vaccination is needed, we can assist with a vet visit but clients must wait **10-12 days** before boarding.

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

Commercial Boarding	Up to \$650
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(3.2) Foster Care

Foster placements depend on the availability of volunteers.

- **Clients may access foster care up to 3 times.**
- For subsequent placements, a **sliding scale fee** applies:
 - **First subsequent foster care request: \$100 per pet**
 - **Second subsequent foster care request: \$200 per pet**



(3.2.1) Foster Care Programs

1. **Short Tails** – 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. This accommodation cannot be extended.

First time in foster care	\$50 per pet
First subsequent foster care request	\$100 per pet
Second subsequent foster care request	\$200 per pet

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

First time in foster care	\$50 per pet (up to 12 weeks)
Foster care extension	\$75 per pet (up to 12 weeks)
First subsequent foster care request	\$100 per pet (up to 12 weeks)
Second subsequent foster care request	\$200 per pet (up to 12 weeks)

All pets in Safe Shelter must be **vaccinated, microchipped, and desexed**, unless a medical reason prevents it. This is a **non-negotiable condition** of the program.

An unvaccinated, entire pet can still be placed in a foster home, but they will be vaccinated and desexed once in care.

Transportation and Visitation

- To protect carer privacy, **clients cannot pick up/drop off pets at the foster home.**
- Caseworkers or POTH volunteers will coordinate transport.
- **Visitation is allowed for dogs only** and must be arranged in advance at a neutral location.



Admission Form/Agreement

Caseworkers or clients must complete an **Admission Agreement**, outlining care terms and responsibilities.

(4) Miscellaneous Support

POTH may assist with **pound release fees** (capped at **\$300 per client**). Other requests are assessed on a case-by-case basis. **POTH does not cover infringement fines issued by councils.**

Pound release	Up to \$300
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Waiting List and Case Prioritisation

As a **small, volunteer-powered** organisation, POTH often operates at capacity. Requests are placed on a **waiting list**, with priority given to emergency cases.

Caseworkers must inform POTH **immediately** if a request needs modification or if a client no longer requires assistance.

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.**

Privacy and Consent for Media Use

POTH relies on community support and storytelling to continue our work. With consent, we may share pet photos and client stories (with identities de-identified if needed).

We appreciate caseworkers' support in obtaining this consent, though we understand that it may not always be possible.

Service Adherence and Suspension

Failure to comply with this Service Policy may result in the **temporary suspension or permanent revocation** of service access.



How to request assistance

- **Review this policy** to understand our terms and conditions.
- **Submit a [Request Form](#)** with complete details.
- **For veterinary requests**, include:
 - o The reason for treatment
 - o Available dates/times for an appointment
- **For safe shelter requests**, specify:
 - o Required care start date & duration
- Ensure accurate transport details. **Only mark 'Yes' if transportation is arranged.**
- Provide **clear, detailed responses** to avoid delays.

For more information, please contact us at

E : hello@petsofthehomeless.org.au

W: www.petsofthehomeless.org.au

A: 84A Keys Rd, Cheltenham VIC 3192



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.