

Cancer Patients Worry About Losing Their Pets

For one thing, the cost of caring for beloved pets can be a major challenge, finds a survey by CancerCare's Pet Assistance & Wellness (PAW) Program.

April 29, 2024 By [Trent Straube](#)

We humans love our [pets](#). Many of us consider our pets our best friends or close family members as well as a consistent source of [support](#). Sadly, many people with cancer risk giving up their pets, mostly because of the [financial costs](#) associated with keeping them.

In fact, 87% of surveyed cancer patients with pets reported having trouble taking care of their pets because of the expense. And nearly half (44%) said they worried they might not be able to keep their pet. Some respondents (15%) valued their pets so much that they considered ending or pausing cancer treatment in order to keep them.

The survey was conducted by CancerCare's Pet Assistance & Wellness (PAW) Program, which helps folks diagnosed with cancer keep their beloved pets. The PAW Program offers financial assistance as well as low-cost and free pet care services.

According to survey findings, [posted April 18 on the CancerCare blog](#), other patients faced different challenges caring for their pets, often stemming from cancer treatment side effects. For example, 67% had trouble maintaining pet care because they couldn't walk, lift or bend down; 59% reported challenges walking their dog; and 86% needed help specifically to care for pets.

A pet's unconditional love can be a vital comfort during the cancer experience. In the survey, 92% of respondents reflected that their pet was extremely important throughout their cancer diagnosis.

The CancerCare report includes patient testimonies about their pets.

"She was my one and only 24-hour companion," Mia says about her dog, Brunilda. "She would always be by my side. When she would hear me crying, she would literally come up to me and lick my tears away. She was always cuddling with me and just giving me pure unconditional love."

"Since my brain surgery, I have been confined to a wheelchair due to nerve damage that caused my left side to be flaccid," shares John. "Just knowing [Bruno] is there is very comforting. He sits in my recliner with me every day on my left side."

But when coupled with the costs of cancer treatment and care, the financial burden of having a pet can be overwhelming. “Vet expenses are hard when paying for all the ‘extras’ that come along with cancer (e.g., vitamins, OTC creams, protein drinks),” CancerCare client Rob said.

He’s not alone. Over three quarters (77%) of survey respondents said they found it difficult or impossible to manage the cost of pet food, and 78% said the same about visits to the vet. (Over 90% of these people said they did not experience financial problems regarding their pet care before their cancer diagnosis.)

“If it was not for my grant from CancerCare for Angel, I do not know if I would have been able to keep her,” Karen, a client of the program, shared in the report on the survey. “I am so blessed to have her. She is my rock that keeps me fighting for my life. I have now lived four years longer than was thought, and I owe a lot to Angel for being there for me.”

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/article/cancer-patients-worry-losing-pets>