

We break down adoption fees and home requirements at both animal shelters and rescues.

BY MARY SCHWAGER

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**h**ow much does it cost to adopt a dog? Dogster's nationwide survey of adoption fees found that the price can vary depending on the dog's age, location and even where the pup came from. "Every organization is different," says Lindsay Hamrick, the director of shelter outreach and engagement for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

An adoption fee is money adopters pay to a shelter or rescue to help the organization recoup some of the costs it spent caring for a dog. Some shelters charge reduced or no fees to battle what animal welfare experts say is a national crisis: dwindling adoptions and increasing euthanasia rates.

"The shelter is willing to drop the fee to get more people in their doors because animals are at risk," says Marc Peralta, the chief program officer with Best Friends Animal Society. "Adopting means saving an animal's life and getting a family member that needs you."

But adopting from a shelter comes with different requirements, including different prices, than adopting from a rescue. We break down what you need to know about each.

### shelter adoptions

City and county shelters often have the lowest adoption fees. Dogster found prices ranging from \$20 to about \$350. "It is just really locally based," Lindsay says. "For government-funded shelters, their fees may be set by law."

There's a vast array of government-funded shelters. Some are ramshackle holding pens with concrete floors surrounded by fencing and a tin roof. These bare-bones shelters are usually required to take every dog who comes through the doors but can't afford to provide vaccines, microchips or veterinary care. When the place is full, dogs are euthanized. "Those shelters need your support the most," Marc says. "You could adopt a fantastic dog. It's about saving lives."

Other shelters have modern, climate-controlled buildings with veterinarians on staff and provide a well-vetted dog. San Antonio Animal Care Services (ACS) spays, neuters, vaccinates, microchips and tests dogs for heartworm.

The city's adoption fee is \$86 for dogs under a year old and \$50 for dogs older than a year. But if a dog's three-day hold time at the shelter is up and the dog is at risk of being killed, the adoption fee is reduced to \$25. "Due to the overpopulation of pets in need, ACS does have to make the heartbreak-