

By Alison Sebastian
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What is your name?
Doris Avery

How many dogs do you own?
I have two boxers.

Why do you own dogs?

They're family members, they're part of the family, they're fun to live with. I like showing. Showing is just a hobby for me, I'm not a breeder.

Why do you like showing so much?

Competition. I think it's just kind of fun, and meeting other people who love dogs just as much as you do, who have the same interests.

How much do you think you spend on your dogs?

In a year or a lifetime?

In a year.

You mean like showing, food? My older one I've spent \$900 on health testing in the last year so I could use him for stud. But normally the food they are on very high kibble plus I cook for them. For food I'm going to guess around a \$1,000 a year. And then there's the vet care, like the shots every year and the shows. I mean you can spend \$500 on a weekend for the shows if you are travelling away for hotel expenses.

What do you cook them?

I have a home recipe that's got lean ground beef, potatoes, carrots, beans, green beans, kidney beans, tomatoes, oatmeal, garlic, canola oil. It's like a meatloaf. They have their kibble but they get a slice of this meatloaf each meal too. They love it.

Is it worth it?

Yes, the dogs look really healthy, the vets comment on their coat condition, if you mean the food part. As far as all the other money, just living with them and they're fun and really loving. They're good listeners when you've had a bad day at work. It's definitely worth it.

Getting to know you ...

What is the most pleasing part of being a dog owner?

I think for me coming home from work and having them so excited to see me no matter what you look like or what your mood is, they're always happy to see you and just hang with you no matter what. It's unconditional.

What duties do you find the most difficult?

If you want to go on a vacation without them I think that's the hardest thing is leaving them with somebody else, finding someone you trust enough that you want so. It's almost like they are your kids and it is hard to leave them but everything else is such a routine of life I don't consider anything difficult. I guess if they get old and you have to put them down that's got to be the ultimate horrible thing, I've only had to do it once.

If you could be any animal what would you be?

I would think I'd love to be a boxer. My dogs have a really good life and it's all about fun, they love their toys and I've been told I spoil them rotten. Yeah, I would like to be one of my dogs.

Do you find being a dog owner challenges you in unexpected ways?

I think it makes you more patient, to try and think things through. They don't know our language . . . Sometimes you get through, sometimes you don't.

How do you react to people who don't like dogs?

I would probably just keep my dogs away from them. If they don't like dogs and they're not comfortable with them, chances are your dog is not going to be comfortable with them either, so why put either person or dog through it? Just because I love them I

don't need to force it on other people.

What's the main quality you need to be a dog owner?

I think you need to be a compassionate, patient person. You have to be patient, definitely, try to be understanding of their needs and that they have a tough time letting you know what they want. I guess understanding.

Do you think dogs are replacing children in our society?

Not really, but my daughter is almost 22 now and grown up so in a way they kind of are. They're my kids now that she's gone. But in society in general that's possible because a lot of people put their career up and they don't really have time to have children so they might find it easier to have a dog.



Doris Avery takes one of her boxers for a walk.
ALISON SEBASTIAN/Times Herald