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OWNING A SAMOYED DOG – COST ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effects and expenditures related to maintenance of Samoyed dogs, specifying the contribution of individual factors affecting the overall economic account. The research material consisted of data obtained from surveys conducted among 111 owners of Samoyeds kept in Poland. The survey asked questions about the costs associated with owning a dog. The results were compiled with the minimum, maximum and average costs, and distinguished the percentage share of individual annual costs. The obtained results were the basis for the conclusion that owners of male dogs incur higher annual costs than owners of bitches. The largest share in the annual costs was related to feeding, and in one-off costs it was the purchase of an animal. In addition to the financial aspects of having a dog, also taken into account should be the effects and non-measurable costs associated with it. It seems that awareness of the costly nature of owning a pure-bred dog can increase the responsibility and reduce the number of abandoned dogs.

Key words: Samoyed, dog, costs, economic account

INTRODUCTION

Nordic sled dogs (Greenland Dog, Alaskan Malamute, Siberian Husky, Samoyed and, more recently, the Canadian Eskimo Dog), are very similar in exterior. They are characterized by a bulky body silhouette, long limbs, thick fur, erect, small ears and a tail set high and thrown over the back. The breeding of these animals was aimed mainly at obtaining dogs with physical features enabling them to survive the harsh northern weather conditions, often combined with a lack of food and shelter. Breeding selection made it possible to obtain healthy specimens with thick hair with an undercoat enabling them to survive the most severe frosts, a strong body structure and a proper gait predisposing them to work in a harness. Also important was the hunting instinct, although not as important as the functional features enabling pulling a sledge. These dogs were used in hunting, and sometimes they themselves became a meal for their owners with their furs being used for making clothes [Räber 1999].

Nowadays, they are often selected as family and herding dogs, and as companions of active people and sportsmen, as well as in dog therapy. Samoyeds do great in

cynological sports such as sledding, canicross or bikejoring [Grabowska 2014].

According to the classification of *Federation Cynologique Internationale* [2019], Samoyed dogs (Russian: *Samoiedskaia sabaka*) belong to the first section of the V group of spitz and primitive type dogs, i.e. Nordic sled dogs. In cynology, primitive dogs are those that are genetically most similar to a wolf, meaning that they originate from the first ones that had been domesticated by humans 10 thousand years BC. The name of the breed comes from the nomadic Uralic people of the Samoyeds (formerly known as the Nenets), who raised reindeer. In north-western Siberia, they appeared in the Pleistocene [Adamska 2018].

Initially, the Samoyeds had various colours: white, black, brown and spotted [Räber 1999]. As a result of focusing breeding work on the white colour, contemporary Samoyeds are exclusively white with biscuit markings allowed. Samoyed is a versatile, gentle, sociable and active dog [Adamska 2018].

The data obtained from the Polish Kennel Club website allows for an observation that the number of Samoyeds in Poland has increased since 2009. In 2009,

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registered were 230 individuals and in 2020 this number was already 705 [The Polish Kennel Club 2020].

Having a dog requires certain financial costs, first of all, the purchase of an animal and providing its maintenance, including: food, preventive medicine and treatment, care and grooming services, shows, trainings, participation in competitions and work trials, training and care accessories, possible care of a pet-sitter or a hotel for animals and other unpredictable expenses.

The available literature offers no reports on the economic account of keeping pure-bred dogs. The only available data come from diploma theses carried out at the Faculty of Biotechnology and Animal Breeding of the Agricultural University in Szczecin by Bodnar [2000], Pabich [2000] and Żelech [2005].

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effects and maintenance costs of Samoyed dogs, and to determine the share of individual factors influencing the general economic account.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research material consisted of data obtained from surveys conducted among 111 owners of Samoyeds kept in Poland. The analysis included 110 dogs with documented origin and one dog without pedigree. The study group included 63 dogs (56.8%) and 48 bitches (43.2%).

In order to make an economic account, an electronic questionnaire which was then published on a social network in the group associating the breed owners was created. The survey included questions about dog maintenance, including the costs of feeding, grooming and training, pet-sitter or animal hotel care, veterinary services and treatment, preventive healthcare, purchase of various accessories and gadgets, taxes on dog ownership, membership fees in cynological organizations, fees related to breeding (costs of mating, shows, rearing pupdog, promotion of breeding and the tax paid from it), fees paid by owners of stud dogs (advertising and tax on having a stud dog). The survey also included questions about revenues, including sales of pupdog and mating. The data obtained from the respondents was compiled with the minimum, maximum and average costs, with the percentage share of individual costs per year. The minimum, maximum and average cost values are given with accuracy to 1 PLN.

The types of individual costs and revenues were analysed in groups, broken down by gender (all Samoyeds together, and dogs and bitches separately). The analysis included two sets of variables for the population (costs incurred one-off and other costs in an annual perspective).

RESULTS

The vast majority of respondents (81.1%) had only one dog at home. The analysis showed that most of the re-

spondents lived with their pet in a block of flats (62.2%), 36.9% of dog owners had a house with a garden, and one Samoyed could use a cot, paddock and had permanent access to the house.

One-off costs included: purchase of a dog, layette, pedigree, grooming accessories, grooming equipment, training, sports accessories, castration or sterilization (Table 1). The respondents stated that the one-off costs they incurred ranged from 30 to 129 PLN (on average 65.34 PLN). The largest one-time cost was the purchase of a dog, and the smallest obtaining a pedigree.

Most respondents purchased their Samoyed from a breeder (91.0%). Others reported that the way they acquired the animal was through adoption, gift or own breeding. Half of the respondents (48.6%) had a Samoyed with a pedigree, and only 50.5% of owners had a birth certificate for the dog. The average cost of purchasing a Samoyed was 4008 PLN. The owners spent an average of 58 PLN on obtaining a pedigree.

The cost of the layette ranged from 30 to 6000 PLN and included: leashes, balls, tug toys, other toys, bowls, collars. Significantly fewer respondents purchased whistles, cots and transporters.

Grooming accessories are indispensable equipment for the owners of Samoyeds. 29% of respondents decided to purchase such equipment, and the most frequently chosen items included dryers (29% of respondents) and grooming tables (9% of respondents). The owners also mentioned the purchase of towels, grooming booms and bathtubs.

The most popular among one-time training courses was the puppy training, which was completed by 26 Samoyeds (23%). The owners also mentioned handling, companion dog training, dog motivation seminar, dog therapy course, consultations with a zoo-psychologist and obedience classes. On average, the respondents spent 212 PLN on these purposes.

The owners spent an average of 180 PLN on the purchase of sports accessories. Lanyards with a shock absorber (17) and sled harnesses (13) were the most popular. Other sports accessories purchased by the respondents included: belts, sled ropes, helmets, scooters, half-clamp collars, balls, harnesses and training lines.

24 respondents decided to castrate or sterilize Samoyeds. On average, the owners spent 141 PLN on this.

It was found that one-off costs incurred by owners of dogs and bitches are similar (Table 1). The only noticeable difference was in the costs of castration/sterilization, which is on average twice as expensive for bitches than for dogs. The highest average cost in both cases was the purchase of a puppy, and the bitches were slightly more expensive. In turn, the lowest cost was obtaining a pedigree.

Table 1. One-off costs incurred by Samoyed owners (n = 111), broken down by gender (PLN)

Type of cost	Value		
	min	max	average
Purchase of a dog	0.00	11,000.00	4,008.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	11,000.00	3,977.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	8,000.00	4,050.00
Layette	30.00	6,000.00	1,414.00
dog (n = 63)	30.00	6,000.00	1,497.00
bitch (n = 48)	100.00	3,000.00	1,305.00
Pedigree	0.00	500.00	58.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	170.00	55.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	500.00	62.00
Grooming accessories	0.00	1,000.00	187.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	800.00	186.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	1,000.00	204.00
Grooming equipment	0.00	2,129.00	334.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	2,129.00	332.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	2,129.00	335.00
Training	0.00	3,700.00	212.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	1,050.00	210.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	3,700.00	229.00
Sports accessories	0.00	2,000.00	180.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	1,410.00	161.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	2,000.00	190.00
Castration/sterilization	0.00	1,800.00	141.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	600.00	94.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	1,800.00	205.00
Total	30.00	28,129.00	6,534.00

Table 2. Annual costs incurred by Samoyed owners (n = 111), broken down by gender (PLN)

Type of cost	Value		
	min	max	average
Nutrition	360.00	15,000.00	3,972.00
dog (n = 63)	480.00	11,400.00	4,160.00
bitch (n = 48)	360.00	15,000.00	3,740.00
Care	0.00	12,360.00	994.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	12,360.00	1,141.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	6,000.00	814.00
Preventive healthcare	20.00	2,840.00	545.00
dog (n = 63)	20.00	2,640.00	614.00
bitch (n = 48)	100.00	1,600.00	525.00
Veterinary services and treatment	0.00	17,100.00	809.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	14,700.00	774.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	12,400.00	810.00
Sports and training	0.00	11,640.00	320.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	11,520.00	300.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	7,080.00	354.00
Union fees	0.00	7,800.00	373.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	6,100.00	350.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	7,800.00	398.00
Others	0.00	6,180.00	95.00
dog (n = 63)	0.00	6,180.00	128.00
bitch (n = 48)	0.00	900.00	49.00
Total	380.00	72,920.00	7,108.00

Samoyed owners also incurred fixed costs, defined as annual in this study (Table 2), which included: nutrition, care, preventive healthcare, veterinary services and treatment, sports and training, union fees (understood as costs related to membership in cynological organizations and associations, and participation in shows) and others (concerning the municipal fee for owning a dog and the services of a pet-sitter or of a hotel for animals). It was shown that among the annual costs, nutrition was the most expensive, and the cheapest was the so-called others, such as payments of the municipal tax for owning a dog and the services of a pet-sitter or a hotel for animals. Annually, the cost of maintaining Samoyeds ranged from 380 PLN to 72,920 PLN (on average 7108 PLN).

A detailed analysis of the data showed that in the costs of feeding Samoyeds, maintenance food had the largest share (2506 PLN on average), and teethers the lowest (402 PLN on average). The owners also bought delicacies (on average spending 605 PLN) and dietary supplements (with the cost of 459 PLN per year).

Samoyed care costs averaged 994 PLN per year. Grooming services had the largest share (345 PLN), and the purchase of cosmetics the smallest (127 PLN). The respondents used grooming services on average 5 times a year. The vast majority of the respondents (92.8%) groomed Samoyeds at home, including 96 people doing so at home. The respondents spent an average of 308 PLN on shampoos, and 214 PLN on the purchase of conditioners.

Prevention against ectoparasites (on average 286 PLN per year) had the largest share in the costs of preventive healthcare, and compulsory vaccinations (60 PLN on average) had the lowest share. Non-compulsory vaccinations (against parvovirus, distemper, Rubarth's disease, kennel cough, coronavirus disease) cost the respondents on average 105 PLN per year, and as many as 87.4% of the respondents decided to vaccinate their dogs. In order to protect the Samoyeds against endoparasites, the owners spent an average of 94 PLN a year. Preventive healthcare was used by 96.4% of owners, mainly by administering a de-worming pills and performing coproscopic examinations.

Treatment had the largest share in the costs of veterinary services (on average 561 PLN per year), and chemical castration had the lowest share (only 23 PLN). It is worth mentioning that the costs of treatment were related to the diseases suffered in the last year and concerned 44.1% of the studied population. The respondents mentioned diseases such as conjunctivitis, internal inflammation, colds, and poisoning. Owners of 18 Samoyeds suffering from chronic diseases and/or requiring regular visits to a veterinarian, additionally incurred the cost of purchasing drugs (on average 71 PLN) and visits to the clinic (on average 154 PLN).

Sports (nosework, dog trekking, bikejoring, obedience, swimming, agility, man-trailing, dog scootering) were practised by 1/3 of the studied population. Its costs were on average 320 PLN per year.

The costs incurred by the owners of Samoyeds for the membership fee in organizations and cynological associations and participation in dog shows in total amounted to an average of 373 PLN per year. 16 respondents participated in pure-bred dog shows, and the owners spent an average of 345 PLN per year on this.

13.5% of respondents lived in a municipality with a dog tax. On average, the respondents spent 10 PLN per year to this purpose. 10 owners had used a pet-sitter's or a hotel for animals' care services for their Samoyeds. These services cost the owners on average 85 PLN per year.

Comparing the annual maintenance costs of Samoyeds by gender, it can be observed that on average owners of male dogs incurred higher costs than owners of bitches (Table 2). In the case of both groups, the largest share in the annual costs was food, and the lowest that of costs of hotel for animals or pet-sitter services and municipal taxes for owning a dog. Grooming had a significant share in the annual costs of both dogs and bitches. Dog owners spent more on feeding, grooming and preventive healthcare than owners of bitches. They incurred lower costs for veterinary services and treatment, sports, training and union fees.

DISCUSSION

The analysis showed that nutrition and care had the largest share in the annual costs incurred by Samoyed owners. Similar results were obtained by Żelech [2005] analysing the costs of maintaining dogs living in Gryfino, which also indicated nutrition as the highest costs. Similarly, Pabich [2000] and Bodnar [2000], who investigated the costs of maintaining dogs of various breeds, reported that nutrition had the greatest share.

Bodnar [2000] reports that in keeping dogs the least expensive are prevention, treatment, advertising breeding and fees for membership in cynological organizations. These results differ from those obtained in the authors' own research showing that the lowest share in the cost of maintenance of Samoyeds was related to the municipal tax for owning a dog and the services of a pet-sitter or a hotel for animals. On the other hand, Pabich [2000] states that the factors having the least impact on the cost of dog maintenance are veterinary services, membership in associations of dog owners and advertising of breeding. The results of the studies by Żelech [2005] indicate that other costs have the lowest share. Although they were divided in a different way than in this study (i.e. the cost of the dog tax, entry fee in cynological organizations), their common feature is the indication of the tax on dog

ownership as one of the least contributing factors. The differences in the presented outcomes may result from the differences in the surveyed populations, and the author adopting slightly different calculation methods and the breakdown of the analysed costs. It is also possible that they are caused by the change in the availability and popularity of various accessories and services (e.g. a hotel for animals). The results of own research indicate that owners of male dogs incurred higher annual costs than owners of bitches. Żelech [2005] noted a similar dependency.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research carried out in this study are extremely important, especially for people who want to be financially prepared before purchasing a dog. It is possible that awareness of the costs of keeping a dog will increase the responsibility of their potential owners. Better thought-out purchasing decisions can reduce the number of abandoned pets. An interesting, and at the same time little known, topic in cynology, are the effects and immeasurable outlays of breeding and keeping pure-bred dogs. Perhaps this work could become an inspiration for research in this area. Moreover, the obtained results could be a starting point for a reliable analysis of the profitability of owning stud dogs and breeding Samoyeds.

RACHUNEK EKONOMICZNY UTRZYMANIA PSÓW RASY SAMOYED

STRESZCZENIE

Celem pracy była ocena efektów i nakładów związanych z utrzymaniem psów rasy samoyed, z określeniem udziału poszczególnych czynników wpływających na ogólny rachunek ekonomiczny. Materiał badawczy stanowiły dane uzyskane z ankiet przeprowadzonych wśród 111 właścicieli samoyedów utrzymywanych w Polsce. Ankieta zawierała pytania dotyczące kosztów związanych z posiadaniem psa. Wyniki opracowano z podaniem kosztów minimalnych, maksymalnych oraz średnich wraz z określeniem procentowego udziału poszczególnych kosztów rocznych. Na podstawie otrzymanych wyników stwierdzono, że rocznie właściciele psów ponoszą większe koszty niż właściciele suk. Największy udział w rocznych kosztach miało żywienie, a w kosztach jednorazowych zakup zwierzęcia. Oprócz finansowych aspektów posiadania psa należy wziąć również pod uwagę efekty i nakłady niemierzalne, jakie są z tym związane. Wydaje się, że świadomość kosztowności posiadania psa rasowego może zwiększyć odpowiedzialność ludzi oraz ograniczyć liczbę porzuconych psów.

Słowa kluczowe: samoyed, pies, koszty, rachunek ekonomiczny

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