



PET INSURANCE: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Veterinary medicine is one of the few medical professions that are not financially based on insurance. The owners of the pets are responsible for veterinary costs including preventive care, emergency care, and on going treatment.

Coverage for dogs, cats and birds is available through several different companies. If you are thinking of pet health insurance, research several different companies to determine what is covered, what is excluded, and the costs of the policies. Pet health insurance policies are similar to human insurance policies; annual premiums and deductibles may vary depending on the health of the insured, and the different plans available.

Types of things to look out for are the following:

What ages of pets are accepted for coverage?

Some policies have a limit on the age at the time coverage begins or drops coverage when the pet reaches a certain age. The ages depending upon species, breed, and life expectancy. If the coverage is not cancelled, the premium may rise.

Which breeds are accepted?

Some policies do not cover breeds such as the Shar Pei, which have predispositions to a number of health problems. Some policies cover bites inflicted by the dog but certain breeds due to aggressive tendencies in the breed.

Who decides what is excluded and why is it excluded?

If you have a breed of dog that has a genetically higher incidence of hip dysplasia, diagnostic tests and treatment of hip problems may not be covered by the policy. In this case, you are own to pay for the total hip replacement surgery regardless if you have been paying premiums since the puppy was 8 weeks old.

What is covered and what is the amount of coverage in each policy?

Some policies cover certain medical procedures only to a certain price level, while other policies cover a certain percentage of the price.

Does the policy cover routine exams, vaccinations, heartworm tests, heartworm preventative, and dental cleaning?

Some companies include this in the regular policy while others have the coverage available at additional costs. Add up your typical veterinary clinic charges for yearly routine care and compare that with what the policy covers and the cost of that coverage.



Does the policy have deductibles and Co-payments?

Some do; others pay only a flat fee per ailment, irregardless of the actual cost.

Are pre existing conditions covered?

Pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or breed-based genetic ailments are often excluded. Pre-existing conditions are typically those, which have an on-going treatment or have, been treated within the past 6 months. Read the policy carefully.

Is there maximum pay out?

Some policies may have maximum pay out per ailment, per year, or per pet.

For what reasons can the insurance company cancel the policy? Late payment? Change in the health or age of the pet?

Are you insured against damage to the property if your pet causes injury to another dog or causes an accident?

Home owners or renter's insurance may already cover this. Be careful though, as some insurance companies will cancel the insurance if the pet bites and you keep the pet.

Pet health insurance brings peace of mind for some owners while others would rather set money aside on their own, in case it is needed. Determining the need for pet health insurance is a personal choice. For more information please contact the individual insurance companies.