

Pet Insurance Information Handout

Pet Insurance is a fantastic resource if you take out insurance when your puppy or kitten is very young and before they have any medical problems. The cover provided is generally excellent across all insurers and can cover up to \$12,000 per year, and pet insurance companies generally repay 80% of your vet bills for accidents and illness. However – it is important to remember that ALL INSURANCES are an offshoot of the banking industry and generally exist to make a profit only. Therefore – you need to be well informed about pet insurance prior to taking out a policy.

A few good examples of when pet insurance can be useful:

- Your cat or dog is hit by a car and requires specialist surgery – this could very quickly reach \$5000 - \$8000
- Your dog eats a sock and has to undergo major surgery which may cost \$2000
- Your cat is involved in a cat fight and develops a cat fight abscess which may cost \$600
- Your geriatric pet develops a metabolic condition (e.g. Diabetes) which requires ongoing diagnostics and treatments/medications

There are some key things to understand about Pet Insurance prior to taking out a policy – including some key differences with human health insurance:

- They DO NOT COVER pre-existing conditions
 - For example – if you have a two year old pet who develops diarrhoea, and you then take out insurance, the entire gastrointestinal system will be excluded from your policy preventing ANY further claims for this body system.
- There is NO SUCH THING as a waiting period in pet insurance
 - As mentioned above – anything pre-existing is NOT COVERED.
 - As soon as you take out a policy you must provide ALL PREVIOUS veterinary records for your pet. Failure to do so is insurance fraud.
- Once your animal has been sick with a condition – it is then too late to get cover for that condition, and for any future times your pet may present with a similar or related problem
- Pet Insurance generally does not cover routine care such as vaccinations, flea treatments, pet food, desexings and dentals (see below)
- There are generally three levels of cover offered by all pet insurance companies
 - Accident only (e.g. hit by car)
 - Accident and Illness – *****OUR RECOMMENDED COVER*****
 - Accident, Illness and dental (sometimes called top cover)
 - In our opinion this top cover is a waste of your money. For example – when you animal reaches 10 years old and you are advised it needs a dental and this may cost \$800, your insurance provider will likely only pay you \$100 - \$200 back. This top cover is not cost effective.

Company Recommendations:

- It is against the law for a veterinary hospital to recommend a single insurance company. There are many options on the market and all are very similar. The key is to get the insurance early in your pet's life
- You can often put your pet onto YOUR private health insurance – should you have this. Companies that presently offer this include Medibank, HCF and BUPA.
- Don't be too fooled by charities that offer insurance – there are only two underwriters in the pet insurance industry (Allianz and Hollard). Charities that offer pet insurance are actually one of these two companies who are offered a small amount of money to use the charities brand name.
- An example of a top level insurer would be PetPlan Pet Insurance. These often have higher premiums.
- An example of a mid-range insurer would be Woolworths Pet Insurance – and their middle level cover (accident and illness) is quite cost effective.

For Older and Senior Pets:

Generally speaking pet insurance companies do not offer new policies to animals over the age of nine years old - and if your adult pet has had lots of medical problems (e.g. itchy skin, gastrointestinal issues) it may not be cost effective to take out an accident and illness policy. Please don't hesitate to ask us if your pet is a little older if we think it is worthwhile you taking out a policy (we can generally ascertain what will be potentially excluded from your pet's medical record).

What you can do if your pet is older is start your own "insurance policy". Work out how much you would pay in premiums per month (ask us!) and start an online savings account for your pet (you can even call it your pet's name!) with that amount or more direct transferred from your everyday account. You would be surprised how quickly funds in this account will build up so you have your own little "insurance policy" in case your pet becomes unwell.

*If you are considering pet insurance – **our advice is to do it NOW**. We consistently see clients who leave pet insurance until it is too late.*

People often put it in the "I'll get around to it later" to do list – and then when something does go wrong, it is too late.