

## **Insurance for your pet**

The first thing to keep in mind is that you have to pay the veterinary bill out of your own pocket. With human health insurance, your doctor invoices your insurance company and you may never even see the bill. However, with pet insurance, you have to pay your veterinary bill and then submit your claim to your insurance company for reimbursement. (This is because pet insurance is considered a form of property insurance.) There are no copays or visits covered in advance. The relationship is between you and your insurer, and your vet doesn't participate in that relationship. There are no deals between vets and the pet health insurance company. As with human insurance, coverage and premiums are directly related. If you seek a higher level of coverage, you will have to pay more in premiums. Some insurance companies offer coverage only for unexpected, catastrophic medical events which are difficult to budget for, while other companies offer wellness preventative care coverage as well. It does not always make the best financial sense to add the Routine/Wellness coverage to your package, as these can potentially end up costing even more than if you paid for the procedures out of your own pocket. Be sure to do the math for the particular plan you are considering and read the 'fine' print to make sure it is right for you and your pet.

One of the best resources for learning more about pet insurance is independent review website [www.petinsurancereview.com](http://www.petinsurancereview.com). There you can learn more about pet health insurance for dogs and cats, compare costs, benefits, and exclusions of the leading pet insurers and pet health plans. On this website you can read insurance companies reviews submitted by their customers who also rate these companies they use, based on their own experience. Below are contacts for four pet insurance companies that have the best reviews and ratings by their customers on [petinsurancereview.com](http://www.petinsurancereview.com). After you do some research and find a few companies you might like to work with, it's time to dig a little deeper. Use this list of questions to find the level of care that's just right for you and your pet.

### **20 questions you should ask to help you choose a pet insurance provider:**

1. Is the company licensed in your state? Which of their policies are available in your state?
2. Does the company have a good reputation? What do the Better Business Bureau or other independent organizations have to say about it? How long has the company been around?
3. Are the policies and information provided reasonably easy to understand? Are the people you talk to knowledgeable and helpful?
4. Does the company offer customer service during reasonable hours?
5. Can you see any veterinarian or specialist you want?
6. Have premiums increased over the past few years? If so, by how much?
7. What happens to coverage and premiums as your pet gets older?
8. Are there any reasons you wouldn't be able to renew your policy?
9. What type of coverage and co-insurance does the policy require?
10. Is there a "usual and customary charges" clause? How are those limits determined?
11. What kinds of care are excluded or limited? Are congenital or hereditary diseases covered? What about cancer? Is dental care covered?

12. Are conditions diagnosed within one year excluded as preexisting conditions the next?
13. Are benefits available for wellness or preventive care for your pet?
14. Can you choose a deductible? Can you change the deductible from year to year? Is the deductible annual or is it applied to each medical incident?
15. Are the waiting periods before coverage begins reasonable?
16. Is there a maximum age for enrollment?
17. Are there limits per incident, per year, per lifetime, or per body system? What are those limits?
18. Is a physical examination required for enrollment or renewal?
19. How quickly are claims processed and paid?
20. Are there any billing fees or discounts?