



## What else do I need to know?

### **Changing your insurance**

When choosing a policy it is important to check the type of product and the level of vet fees covered to ensure it will meet your needs, now and in the future. If you decide to change your insurance after a medical condition has occurred, that condition will probably be excluded under any new insurance whether or not a claim was ever made. Remember, your pet's medical history may be requested and your vet will be obliged to disclose your pet's full medical records.

### **Excess**

Most policies have an 'excess'. This is a sum that the policyholder must pay towards the cost of their insurance claim. Excesses can vary so refer to your policy terms and conditions.

### **The cost of insurance – Premiums**

The cost of pet insurance can vary according to a number of factors, including where you live, the breed of cat or dog, its gender and age. Veterinary charges influence the premiums charged – generally in urban areas, charges are higher than in rural areas and premiums will reflect this. As your pet ages the premium and policy excess are likely to increase because, like humans, the risk of illness increases.

### **Breeds**

Pedigree dogs and cats are normally more expensive to cover than crossbreeds as crossbreeds are less likely to be predisposed to medical conditions.

### **Age**

Most policies will not cover pets less than eight weeks of age. When a pet gets older, pet insurance may be more difficult to find as some companies will not offer new insurance above a specified age. If you have taken out a policy when the pet was younger it can usually be continued with the same provider.

## **REMEMBER**

- Shop around for the policy that best meets your needs.
- Always read the policy and Key Facts document for details of the benefits and significant exclusions of the policy.
- Always answer the insurer's questions honestly. If you do not, the insurer may refuse to pay your claim.
- Your vet may be able to help you further.

## Pet Insurance Consumer Guide

### **People Need Pet Insurance**

With unexpected treatment often costing hundreds of pounds, it is not surprising that some pet owners struggle to afford unplanned care for their pets. Pet insurance protects you against the unexpected costs when your pet needs treatment and can help your pet live a longer, healthier life.

### **What are the benefits of taking out pet insurance?**

Pet insurance principally provides cover for veterinary fees if your pet is injured or becomes ill. However, other benefits **may** include:

- Third party liability cover if your dog injures someone or damages someone else's property.
- The purchase price of your pet if it is lost, stolen, dies as a result of an injury or an illness before a certain age.
- The cost of advertising a reward for the return of your lost or stolen pet, and the cost of the reward itself, if your pet is found or recovered, up to a set amount.
- Paying the costs of looking after your pet if you have to go into hospital for emergency medical treatment.
- The cost of your holiday if it is cancelled because your pet needs emergency surgery close to departure.
- The cost of emergency veterinary treatment for your pet if you take it abroad under the Pet Travel Scheme (<http://www2.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/pets/travel/>).

The cover provided by different products can vary considerably. If you are looking to take out pet insurance you should take care to choose the type of product and the level of cover to meet your needs.

### **Mickey's story \***

Mickey the cat forgot to look both ways when crossing the road late one night and was hit by a car. He needed emergency, out of hours treatment for shock and pain that night, then x rays and an operation to insert a plate to mend his broken leg the next day. He spent four days in hospital.

**Mickey's treatment cost £956 \***

## What types of pet insurance policies are available?

### Accident Only

Your pet will be covered against **accidental injuries** which occur inside or outside the home. Some policies may also cover illnesses that result from an accident.

### Time and Benefit Limited

A 12 month policy provides insurance for each new medical condition, up to a set financial limit. Each condition is covered for 12 months, usually from its onset or diagnosis, as long as the insurance policy remains in force. If the financial limit is reached within the 12 month period, the insurance will stop paying for that condition. Once the limit has been reached the condition becomes an excluded condition and is excluded from future claims.

### Benefit Limited/Maximum Benefit

There is a financial limit for **each** new condition the animal may suffer. Each condition is insured until the financial limit has been reached, as long as the insurance policy remains in force there is no time limit on your claim. Once the financial limit has been reached, the medical condition becomes a pre-existing condition and is excluded from future claims.

### Cover for Life / Lifetime Cover

*This is also known as a renewable benefit or reinstatement policy.*

All new medical conditions are insured, up to a set total financial limit each year, as long as the insurance policy remains in force. Where the total financial limit has been reached, no further claims will be paid until the policy is renewed, at which point the limit may be fully reinstated (check with your insurer).

An ongoing condition that has reached the total financial limit will continue to be covered in the policy the following year. There is no limit on how many times the condition can be covered in this way, as long as the insurance policy remains in force.

**The cover provided by different products can vary considerably. If you are looking to take out pet insurance you should take care to choose the type of product and the level of cover to meet your needs.**

### Bessie's story \*

Miss P became worried when her dog Bessie went off her food shortly after being in season. Surely it wasn't possible for Bessie to be pregnant? She was taken to the vet who performed an examination, blood tests and an ultrasound scan and informed Miss P that Bessie actually had an infection in her womb which meant she needed an emergency hysterectomy. Bessie recovered completely.

**Bessie's treatment cost £872 \***

## What is not covered?

The most common exclusions in a pet insurance policy include the following, however this is not an exhaustive list and you should check your policy.

- Anything that relates in any way to your pet's medical history before the policy started. This is known as a pre-existing medical condition. This also applies if you change your insurance provider, whether or not a claim was ever made.
- Anything related to pregnancy and/or birth.
- Any routine, preventative or planned treatments, such as flea, worm and tick treatments, vaccinations, grooming, claw clipping, dental maintenance, spaying and castration.
- The purchase price of your pet if it dies after a certain age, typically nine years, is likely to be excluded.

Most policies have a medical exclusion period from the start of the policy, often called a 'waiting period,' which ranges from 10 to 30 days. Claims can only be made for illnesses that begin to show symptoms after this date.

Some policies require payment of the full annual premium if your pet dies and a claim is made. For policies paid by monthly instalments, the outstanding annual amount may be deducted from the claim settlement.

### Holly's story \*

Mr W had noticed his spaniel, Holly, drinking more and more over the last few weeks. When he took her to the vets they performed several tests and informed him Holly was suffering from diabetes. She needed hospitalisation for a few days to get her stabilised and, as with most dogs so diagnosed, will need daily insulin injections for the rest of her life and regular checkups and blood tests.

**Holly's treatment cost £536 \***

**Holly's ongoing monthly costs £100 \***

\* Case studies provided courtesy of the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS). Costs are current as of January 2011.