

Do you need pet insurance?

As veterinary medicine becomes more technologically advanced, the cost of care increases. That's because of the higher costs associated with the equipment, facilities and training required to provide these higher-quality services. Pet health insurance can help by offsetting some or most of the costs of diagnosing, treating, and managing your pet's illness or injury.

There's no magic formula to tell you if pet health insurance is right for you and your pet. Talk with your veterinarian about it, and research your options. AVMA's policy on pet health insurance spells out numerous provisions that are important in insurance policies. Here are some basic considerations:

- Regardless of the insurance provider, your veterinarian should be monitoring the health of your pet as part of a veterinarian-client-patient relationship.
- An insurance provider should clearly spell out to you the details, including the limitations and exclusions, of coverage for routine and/or wellness care, as well as emergency treatments and conditions that require extensive care. Find out how your premiums will increase as your pet ages or if you make any claims.
- See if there are add-on options to provide any specific coverage you may want, such as dental care or travel insurance.
- Find out how the provider defines and handles pre-existing conditions, including any diseases and conditions your pet has now or had in the past before you bought your insurance plan.
- In some cases, insurance providers will not insure a specific pet or breed of pet, or they may limit the number of pets you can insure, if the pets are considered "high risk."
- Some providers offer pricing discounts for multiple pets.
- All charges, including co-pays, deductibles, add-on charges and other fees, should be clearly explained to you so you fully understand the policy and its limitations.
- You should be allowed to choose the veterinarian who will care for your pet.
- Pet insurance plans are generally reimbursement plans – you pay the bills up front and are reimbursed by the insurance provider. Ask the insurance provider how claims are processed and what the timeframe is for reimbursement. If you're concerned about covering the expenses up front, ask your veterinarian about payment options that will work for you in case you need to make arrangements. It's best to know your options ahead of time so you don't have the added stress of trying to make payment arrangements during an emergency.
- For more information, see the AVMA's pet health insurance policy.

Pet insurance providers

Your veterinarian may be able to recommend a pet insurance company based on his or her experience. But it's ultimately your decision whether to buy, what coverage to choose, and from what company. There are consumer websites that compare features and costs of pet insurance, and/or offer reviews, and you might find these helpful. This alphabetical list of pet insurance companies can help you investigate and decide if pet insurance is right for your pet. The AVMA does not endorse or recommend any provider over others.

- 24PetWatch
- AKC Pet Insurance
- ASPCA Pet Health Insurance
- Best Friends Pet Insurance
- Embrace Pet Insurance
- Figo Pet Insurance
- Healthy Paws
- Lemonade
- PetFirst Healthcare
- Pets Best
- Petplan
- Pumpkin
- PurinaCare
- Trupanion
- VPI