

PET INSURANCE

It's the time of year when we often see an increase in the pet population as many proud parents are having litters of puppies and kittens who are finding new homes! If you're thinking of adding a new fuzzy member to your family, pet insurance may be worth thinking about. Consider this, you insure your car, your house, even we have medical insurance for ourselves in case we need it.

Why should our fur-kids be any different?

Most pet insurance companies offer a range of coverage from preventive care (annual wellness, vaccines, deworming, spay/neuter surgery etc.) to accident and illness coverage for those unforeseen surprises. The sooner you enroll the better, as anything on your pet's medical record before you enroll is considered a pre-existing condition and cannot be covered by your pet insurance plan.

There are many pet insurance companies to choose from, so it is important to do your homework and find the one that's right for you and your pet.

Is it worth it?

This is one of the most common questions owners have about their pet's health care. Veterinary medicine is always advancing, and more treatment options and diagnostic procedures are becoming available all the time. With the rising cost of medical care, pet insurance is becoming a popular option for many pet owners.

Here are some pros and cons to help you decide if pet insurance is right for you:

Pros:

- Expensive care made affordable - Many insurance plans offer 80-90% coverage on your vet bills. Customized coverage options - Most companies offer a variety of plans ranging from accident and illness coverage only, to full coverage for things like annual wellness visits, vaccinations, and flea prevention.
- Peace of mind in case of an emergency - If your pet is badly injured and requires critical care or even surgery, insurance provides a safety net and makes the decision to consent to treatment much easier.
- Coverage for therapeutic diets and other specialized treatments? Some insurance companies are now offering coverage for things like veterinary recommended diets, chiropractic care, holistic treatments, and rehabilitation therapy.

Cons:

- Deductibles and payout limits - Be sure to read over your insurance policy thoroughly as it may include either an annual or per incident deductible or payout limit. High risk, high premiums - The best time to get pet insurance is when your pet is young. An older pet or a pet with a long medical history is considered high risk and may cost you more to insure.
- Limited coverage - Most companies do not cover hereditary or breed specific diseases such as hip dysplasia, and are very unlikely to provide future coverage for any illnesses which first occurred before enrollment. Again, if you're going to buy pet insurance, the sooner the better.
- You may pay more than you get back - You may wind up paying a monthly premium for pet insurance, and never need it.

Pet insurance may not be an option for everyone, but if the time comes when you need to decide between taking on a financial hardship and saying goodbye to your beloved pet, it can help make your decision that much easier, and insure that you can provide the best possible care for your furry friend.



Spring into Action against this frustrating condition!

Does your dog or cat have allergies? He may, if he has any of these symptoms: Frequent ear or skin infections, scratching, licking or chewing ears, paws or body, rubbing face against the furniture or floor, sneezing or runny nose, red or watery eyes, reddish discoloration of the hair on the paws or between the toes, vomiting or diarrhea, and coughing or wheezing.

Allergies usually affect dogs and cats over two years of age, although they have been reported in pets as young as five months old. This means that dogs and cats who are affected by allergies often suffer their entire lives and symptoms often become worse with age. As a pet owner, it is important to educate yourself about allergy symptoms and treatment options to help keep your best friend comfortable.

4 Types of Allergies:

1. Environmental Allergies

Airborne allergies to particles your pet inhales is called atopy and is very common. Common allergens include tree, grass and weed pollens, molds, mildew and house dust mites. Many of these allergies occur seasonally, such as ragweed and grass pollens. Others, such as molds, mildew and house dust mites are year-round problems.

2. Flea Allergy

Most dogs and cats will have minor irritation and itching from a flea bite, but a pet with a flea allergy will have a severe reaction to a single flea's saliva. They will often bite and break the skin and even remove large patches of their own hair. The most common area of the body affected by flea allergy is the base of the tail or the hind legs.

3. Food Allergies

Food allergies and atopy often occur together. Allergies to any protein or carbohydrate can develop and strike at any age, with allergies to beef, pork, chicken, turkey, eggs, soy, corn and wheat being the most common. Pets will often have ear yeast infections and skin infections that respond to antibiotics, but recur as soon as the antibiotic is finished. Some pets with food allergies will also have increased bowel movements and soft stool. Food allergies should not be confused with food intolerances which generally cause more severe vomiting and diarrhea.

4. Contact Allergies

This is the least common type of allergy but one we are seeing in increasing numbers. It is caused by something your pet comes into contact with, such as carpet, bedding, plastic, cleaners, detergents, lawn chemicals, or grasses. The area of the body affected is the contact surface, such as the stomach, bottom of the feet, muzzle or elbows.

So what can you do if you suspect your pet has an allergy?

Start by scheduling an appointment to come in and see us! We can help you to determine what is causing your pet's symptoms and how best to treat them. Individual pets can have varying responses to treatments, so it may take some time to discover what works well for your furry one. Luckily there are a number of allergy tests available as well as holistic and conventional remedies to help treat allergies.



Allergy Testing Options Offered at Healing Paws



1. Saliva testing

This type of test is called Nutriscan and is limited to 22 common food allergens only. The saliva is collected by placing an absorbent rope in the mouth until the rope is saturated. We then ship the specimen by courier to a laboratory in California.

2. Blood testing

This type of test is done by measuring a kind of antibody in the blood called IgE which is present in pets with allergies. We simply draw a blood sample from your pet and send it to the laboratory. They will test against a number of common regional allergens to see if your pet has IgE antibodies against those allergens. There are a number of different blood testing options which range in the number of allergens tested, including one called Spectrum which tests for both food and environmental allergies – 91 in total! A booklet is also provided which will educate you on your pet's results and even suggests appropriate diet options.

Once you've determined what your pet is allergic to, what can you do next?

Reduce exposure

If a contact allergen is discovered, remove it from your pet's environment. If your pet has an environmental allergy, for example if a dog or cat is allergic to pollen, he should be kept inside when pollen counts are high or the grass is being mowed. Regular bathing with plain shampoo or with products like oatmeal colloid can help in reducing itching by removing contact allergens and potential toxins from the skin. Wiping the paws after walks can help as well. Air filters can also help to remove many airborne allergens to keep the home environment clean.

Allergy shots

These may be recommended if specific allergens have been identified. With allergy shots, very small amounts of the offending allergen are injected weekly to help your pet become less sensitive to it. It is worth mentioning that it may take several months (up to one year) to see the full effect of this treatment.

Flea control

If your pet suffers from a flea allergy, you must ensure he is always protected with a flea prevention product such as Revolution. Fleas can be very difficult to get rid of but with modern flea medicine and home treatment options, it is possible to help you rid your home and pets of these pests.

Diet trials

For food allergies, feeding your pet a diet that does not contain the allergen is the best treatment. One of the ways to identify a food allergen is by performing a diet trial. In a diet trial the goal is to put the pet on a strictly controlled diet with a limited number of ingredients for 8 to 12 weeks. This can be a commercially made hypoallergenic diet or a homemade diet. During this time, your pet must ONLY eat the prescribed food, meaning no table food, scraps, treats, and sometimes vitamins or other supplements can be given.

Nutritional supplements

There are a number of supplements which can help to reduce allergy symptoms when given with direction from your veterinarian. Some of these include vitamin and c, fish oil, digestive enzymes and probiotics, detoxifying herbal tinctures, and essential fatty acids.

Medications

Luckily, we are now able to offer two new medications, called Apoquel and Cytopoint, which work by stopping the itch before it happens! These have less side effects and can be used with other medication which helps us to avoid prescribing harsh medications which only treat symptomatically. Ask us about your options when you come in for your consultation!

In conclusion

Unfortunately, there is no single way to eliminate allergies, but when good people come together and commit to cooperative efforts, many allergy patients can be helped. It takes time and hard work, but using a balanced approach of supportive and symptom controlling treatments, together we can help your pet on his way to a happier, more comfortable and rewarding life.

FLEAS

Spring is here which means it's time to start thinking about your pet and fleas! Fleas are parasitic insects that feed off warm-blooded creatures like our unsuspecting furry friends. They can be picked up in all of your pet's favourite (and not so favourite) places such as daycares, groomers, boarding kennels, dog parks, and communal bathroom and play areas. If one of your pets has fleas, it's safe to assume they all do!

The complete life cycle of a flea takes 21 days. Adults feed on the host (your cat or dog) and take a blood meal.

They then lay their eggs which can remain on your pet or fall off into the environment only to hatch and re-infest the host later on. Adult fleas can lay up to 50 eggs per day! These eggs then hatch into larvae, and larvae into adults. This cycle repeats itself and before you know it you have a full-blown infestation- yikes!

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT FLEAS

- They can survive outside of the host (dog, cat or other animals) for six or more months, feeding only on debris and dander. These critters have been found in carpets of homes that have stayed vacant for many, many months!
- Cats are the preferred meal for an average flea, followed by dogs and humans.
- Pets eating diets that are rich in carbs and fillers, such as wheat, corn and glutens, are likely to become a preferred host for flea infestation.
- They have a sweet tooth!

Peak activity periods for fleas are early spring and fall, however due to our mild temperatures and humid climate, fleas can be pests year-round. Having said this, not every pet requires year-round flea protection. This entirely depends on your pet's life style, age and any concurrent medical conditions. There are many treatment and prevention options available including topical and oral medications, some of which treat and protect against fleas only and others which have the added benefit of protection against other parasites such as worms, lice, and ticks. Additionally, if you prefer not to use medication, some easy and safe alternatives are flea combs and natural flea dips and baths infused with some essential oils.

No matter what your preference may be, the veterinarians and staff at Healing Paws can help you decide which method of protection is right for your pet!



UPCOMING EVENTS & PROMOTIONS

- **New clients - 50% off**, of the consulting fee, on the 1st booked appointment (one per family)
- **20% off, of the Allergy Consultations**, until May 31, 2018!
- Keep an eye on our web site for upcoming events!