

Benefits Insights

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Pet Insurance

Many American households have at least one pet. In any given year, one in three of these beloved family members will need costly veterinary care, even if it is for routine exam visits and vaccinations. Should a pet become severely ill and need emergency care, costs can sometimes be more than pet owners can bear. However, if they have pet insurance, owners will never have to make a decision about their pets wellbeing based on cost.

Though pet insurance is a nontraditional benefit and is generally paid for by the employee, it is becoming increasingly popular in the workplace to help employees care for their pets without going bankrupt. This benefit is particularly valuable, as pet care is increasingly expensive. In fact, offering insurance for man's best friend is a great marketing and PR initiative for companies that want to add to their image of being a great place to work.

Pets typically visit the vet for the following reasons:

- Accident care
- Illness care
- Routine preventive care
- Lab work
- X-rays
- Surgeries
- Diagnostic testing
- Prescription therapy

These services are the same or similar to the reasons why you or your employees would visit the doctor, and often carry a steep price tag. Specifically, here are the typical costs for the following common pet injuries and illnesses:

- Dog involved in a motor vehicle accident = \$4,890
- Dog or cat ingesting a foreign body = \$4,280
- Dog cancer treatments = \$3,570
- Dog bladder infection treatment = \$2,760
- Dog hip dysplasia = \$2,390
- Cat fractured leg = \$2,300
- Cat pneumonia treatment = \$1,900
- Cat diabetes treatments = \$1,740

Coverage Details

Employers sign up for a group discount code that can be used by their employees, typically without a minimum enrollment number required. Then, pet owners can select a coverage percentage or monthly premium that will work best for their budget and needs. Under the policy, the pet must have an annual examination and the owners must adhere to the recommendations given by the veterinarians to remain covered. Beyond that, most policies do not cover existing conditions or injuries but do assist in paying for the following:

- New accidents and injuries
- X-rays
- Surgeries
- Cancer care
- Prescriptions



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- Hospitalization
- Vaccinations
- Heartworm therapy
- Flea control
- Urinalysis
- Dental care
- Spay/neuter

Compare Your Options

If your organization is considering this benefit for your employees, consider asking the pet insurance companies the following questions before making your selection:

- How long has your company been in business?
 - Is coverage available in our area?
 - Is coverage available where our employees may travel?
 - Can employees use any veterinarian and animal hospital?
 - Do you offer discounts for multiple pets?
 - What are your customer service hours and availability?
 - What are the coverage plan options available to employees? What are the deductible options?
 - What is the average annual premium increase?
 - Can our company lock in a premium rate?
 - Is there a penalty for changing plans?
 - Is preapproval for services required?
 - What are the limits to the policy? Lifetime caps?
 - Can employees find out the insurance reimbursement before authorizing their pet's veterinarian to perform procedures?
 - Do reimbursement amounts vary depending on the specific veterinarian's fees?
 - Can pets be dropped from the coverage? If so, why?
- What is the claims filing process?
 - How long does it typically take to receive payment for a claim?
 - How are claim disputes resolved?
 - How does the policy determine reimbursement for claims?
 - Is there a maximum amount paid per procedure? Per calendar year? Per disease?
 - What diseases are excluded from the policy coverage?
 - Are there breed-specific diseases excluded from the policy coverage?
 - Are pre-existing conditions covered after a certain amount of time?
 - Are alternative medicine techniques covered?
 - Are consultations with specialists covered? Second opinions? After-hours emergency care?
 - Does the policy provide coverage for behavioral problems?
 - Is preventive care covered (vaccinations, heartworm testing, spaying/neutering, dental work, flea/tick control, microchipping, etc.)?

If you are considering offering this benefit to your employees, visit www.petinsurancereview.com. This site will allow you to compare various pet insurance carriers and read feedback about different carriers from other pet owners and employers. Then, you can decide which company would suit your employee group the best.

