

# **SOUTH COAST VET CARE ~ TALKING ANIMALS**

## **PET INSURANCE – IS IT WORTH IT?**

The question about whether or not to insure your pet is something that many pet owners face, especially those who have just acquired a new four-legged friend. Our pets do become very dear to us and we become emotionally attached to them. These animals nearly always have a very important part to play in the home and in a small way become part of the family. People become very distressed when their pets become ill and the shedding of tears over a pet is not unusual at vet clinics. Clients are also often overjoyed to see their pets in good health, particularly after a nasty illness.

Unfortunately, despite the miracles of how the body works, accidents and illnesses do befall our animals. Veterinary medicine, whilst able to diagnose and treat a wide range of conditions, is a very complex science and does not always come at an easily affordable price. A lot of training is required to provide the levels of expertise to practise veterinary medicine. X-ray facilities, ultrasound machines, surgical and theatre equipment, ECG machines, dental equipment, microscopes and many medications do not come cheaply. Furthermore there is no state funding for veterinary practice.

This means that invoices for the treatment of conditions such as road accidents, snake bites, canine bloats, complex skin cases, snail bait poisoning, heat stroke, shock, surgical biopsies, urinary tract disorders, womb infections and ongoing cases such as arthritis, heart conditions, diabetes, cancers and many metabolic disorders can amount to several hundred or several thousand dollars. Any veterinary referral or veterinary attention in the middle of the night is likely to result in a large bill. When sufficient funds are not available, a full diagnostic workup and optimum treatment plan are often very difficult or impossible to provide.

It is a completely understandable but unfortunately very common fact that often we are unable to pursue the diagnostic or treatment procedures we would choose because of financial constraints.

Pet insurance policies therefore, as with most insurance policies, provide peace of mind. As with all insurance it is something one hopes one will never need, but the fact is that nearly all pets will visit the vet sooner or later for an accident or illness. Statistically speaking, if you have pet insurance you are far more likely to use it than your home or car insurance. Pet insurance is another small piece out of the monthly household budget, but takes away the worry of large veterinary fees. Clearly pet insurance is no guarantee of your pet's health, but it will hopefully enable you to do as much as you can for your pet.

Pet insurance is mainly targeted at dogs, cats and horses, but it may be found for more exotic species. It may be more difficult to find insurance for very elderly or sick pets who were not previously insured. The cost of insurance will vary according to a number of factors. These include the species animal, breed, how old the animal is, level of cover that is required, the excess payable and where the animal is kept. Some research into the fine print is required. Factors such as age, breed and species will affect the likelihood of your pet requiring more expensive treatment. Older animals are more likely to have degenerative diseases of the joints or heart. Cover for ongoing illnesses such as arthritis or diabetes will be more expensive than a policy just covering road accidents or other one-off conditions. Some household insurance policies also have a pet clause.

If you decide not to have pet insurance, calculate what you spend on food, worming treatments, vaccinations, registration and maintenance items each month. Add 20% to this and budget to keep this in reserve for ongoing and unforeseen expenses for your animals so that you will not be caught short in emergencies.