

Top 10 Reasons Pets Visit Veterinarians

In a recent review of its policyholder claims Veterinary Pet Insurance (VPI) found that for the second year in a row, urinary tract infections were the number one medical condition that cat owners filed medical claims for in 2005. Veterinary visits for skin allergies resulted in the most claims for dogs in 2005.

2005 top 10 claims by incident—dogs (ranking in 2004)

1. Skin allergies (2)
2. Ear infections (1)
3. Stomach upsets (3)
4. Bladder infections (5)
5. Benign tumors (4)
6. Osteoarthritis
7. Sprains (7)
8. Eye infections (8)
9. Enteritis
10. Hypothyroidism

2005 top 10 claims by incident—cats (ranking in 2004)

1. Urinary tract infections (1)
2. Stomach upsets (2)
3. Kidney disease (10)
4. Skin allergies (5)
5. Respiratory infections (3)
6. Diabetes
7. Ear infections (4)
8. Colitis (8)
9. Eye infections (6)
10. Wound infections (7)

Most Pet Owners Will Spend Anything to Save Pet's Life, Survey Says

If you would pay any amount of money to ensure a long and happy life for your pet, you're not alone.

According to a recent survey of Veterinary Pet Insurance (VPI) policyholders and other pet owners who visited the VPI website, 70 percent of those who responded said they would pay any amount to save their pet's life. The latest opinion poll is available through its quarterly newsletter, *The Retriever*, and was also accessible on the company Web site, my.petinsurance.com/newsletter.

Of the more than 5,200 responses to the latest survey, just 3 percent of respondents said they would pay up to \$500 to save their pet's life. Ten percent of pet owners would pay up to \$1,000, and 17 percent would pay up to \$5,000.



The findings are in line with national surveys on the topic. According to the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) 2002 Pet Owner Survey, about half of the pet owners surveyed said they would spend any amount to save their pet's life. The following year, 73 percent of pet owners said they would go into debt to extend their pet's life, (published in the AAHA 2003 Pet Owner Survey).

While costs of veterinary services vary region by region, pet owners are spending more annually on such services than they have in the past. Between 1994 and 2003, aggregate U.S. household expenditures on veterinary services rose 76 percent, from \$4.8 billion to \$8.5 billion, according to "Pet Insurance in North America" (a November 2005 Packaged Facts study).

“This latest survey of our policyholders and pet owners everywhere underscores what we have known for a long time — that the human-animal bond is stronger than ever,” said Dr. Carol McConnell, director of veterinary education and services for VPI. “It is increasingly more common for pet owners to view their pet as a family member. As such, pet owners are willing to do whatever it takes to keep them happy and healthy for as long as possible. Cost of veterinary services is becoming less of an issue for them, especially when they have the financial assistance of pet health insurance.”

Researchers Restore Memory Lost in Mice with Alzheimer's

Newswise — Researchers at Columbia University Medical Center have successfully restored normal memory and synaptic function in mice suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The study was published today on the website of the journal *Cell*.

Scientists at Columbia's Taub Institute for Research on Alzheimer's Disease and the Aging Brain have identified an enzyme that is required for normal cognition but that is impaired in a mouse model of Alzheimer's. They discovered that mice regained the ability to form new memories when the enzyme's function was elevated. The research suggests that boosting the function of this enzyme, known as ubiquitin C-terminal hydrolase L1 (Uch-L1), may provide a promising strategy for battling Alzheimer's disease, and perhaps reversing its effects.

In the new study, the Columbia researchers discovered the Uch-L1 enzyme that is part of a molecular network controlling a memory molecule called CREB, which is inhibited by amyloid beta proteins in people with Alzheimer's. By increasing this enzyme level in mice that had Alzheimer's they were able to improve the animals' ability to create new memories.

The researchers tested the memory of the mice by putting them in a cage where they were exposed to a mild stimulus when they touched the cage floor. Mice with normal memory remain still the second time they're placed in the cage, as they recognize the place where they were initially exposed to the stimulus. But mice with Alzheimer's-like changes do not remember the place, and continue moving within the cage. When the Alzheimer's mice were treated with the enzyme, they acted like normal mice, and remained still.

“While this discovery is very promising, its proven effectiveness is limited to animal models and it will take some time before it could lead to therapies in humans,” said Dr. Shelanski. “We continue to work towards that crucial goal.” The work was supported by the National Institutes of Neurological Disease and Stroke and the Alzheimer's Center Program of the National Institute of Aging.

Eden, NC Considers Regulating Pit Bulls

Police Chief Gary Benthin wrote an initial draft for an ordinance to regulate pit bulls based on the Denver Colorado ban. According to news articles, the draft would require owners to bring their pit bull to police headquarters, where an animal control officer would create a file for the animal, including a photo, animal name, and owner's name, address, race, sex, date of birth and place of employment, as well as a \$50 registration fee. Owners would have to be at least 21. The proposed ordinance gives pit bull owners 60 days to comply, or their dogs will be impounded. The ordinance is in the hands of City Attorney, Thomas Medlin and is scheduled to go to City Council in October. A two-thirds vote is required for the ordinance to become law and a public hearing is not required.

NCRAOA opposes Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) which focuses on a particular breed of dog and not on aggressive canine behavior or on irresponsible owners. BSL is not a practical or sensible approach to regulation of dogs. BSL has been found unconstitutional in some cases and overturned in some areas due to the cost of enforcement.

The Humane Society of the United States and Doris Day Animal League Announce Merger

The merger was announced on September 1, 2006, expanding again the size, strength and expertise of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) – already a giant in the animal rights world worth close to \$120 million.

The HSUS press release states the merger “will result in increased public policy activity and coordination on animal welfare issues and further streamline operations among national animal advocacy groups.” Sara Amundson, DDAL legislative director, is slated to be executive director of the Humane Society Legislative Fund.

HSUS and DDAL have worked together in the past on several issues such as ending greyhound racing, opposing use of animals in testing, and on laws to regulate breeding and sales of dogs and cats.

Surprisingly, some people still believe that HSUS helps animals by operating and/or supporting animal shelters when in reality that is not the case. According to HSUS 2004 financials, 20.6% of their direct donation income of \$78.5 million is spent on management and fundraising. The largest expenditure, 65.6% or \$51.5 million is in a broad category labeled program services. Program services encompasses public education and publications, wildlife sheltering, regional office cruelty investigations, and litigation. Under program services expenses include salaries accounting for \$9 million and benefits, taxes \$2.4 million.

Working through the 45-page statement, finally is a narrative on the activities comprising program services. Public education funds of \$34.5 million are spent on their media department, magazine, and the animal channel, while twenty-eight thousand dollars is spent in direct grants. Interestingly, the statement gives credit to HSUS for rescue/rehabilitation of the collies in a tractor trailer crossing the US/Canadian border that were taken into custody by officials in Montana. Most who followed that tragic story will remember it as the Montana Collies or by the name Camp Collie where the dogs were housed during treatment and the long trial process.

The goals of HSUS are definable by reading their position statements which can be accessed from their website: http://www.hsus.org/about_us/policy_statements/statement_on_companion.html

- [The HSUS] supports the enactment and enforcement of animal control ordinances designed to regulate, deter, and reduce companion animal breeding,
- The HSUS opposes the sale of dogs, cats, and other animals through pet stores and other commercial operations
- The HSUS opposes rodeos as they are commonly organized
- The HSUS opposes the use of captive wild animals as performers in circuses, film and television, and commercials
- The HSUS opposes the hunting of any living creature for fun, trophy, or sport because of the animal trauma, suffering, and death that result.
- The HSUS promotes eating with conscience and embracing the Three Rs—reducing the consumption of meat and other animal-based foods; refining the diet by eating products only from animals who have been raised, transported, and slaughtered in a system of humane, sustainable agriculture that does not abuse the animals; and replacing meat and other animal-based foods in the diet with plant-based foods.

The press release on the merger quotes HSUS CEO Wayne Pacelle as saying, “Our members often wonder why groups and individuals with a common purpose do not join together, and we are heeding their call to do just that.”

Although DDAL is small in comparison (2005 Form 990 lists \$3.5 million income), the merger adds a well known face, experienced staff, and legislative connections for the use of HSUS management.

How similar are the goals and views of HSUS and DDAL?

HSUS and DDAL worked jointly on federal legislation to regulate dog and cat breeding by lobbying for Senator Rick Santorum’s Puppy Protection (PPA) Act in 2001. The PPA had 3 main points: mandating how often breeding could be done; writing engineering standards for veterinary care, housing facilities, socialization, and training; and a license revocation clause. This extreme legislation failed twice in the Senate.

Not to be deterred, the bill was re-introduced in 2005 as the Pet Animal Welfare Statue (aka PAWS) labeled the Puppy Mill bill to gain sympathy support. This radical and controversial legislation succeeded only in dividing the dog world in heated arguments, and eventually dividing support even among the sponsors when the idea of having USDA outsource the inspection process was publicized.

DDAL’s aim through the initial anti-breeder legislation was to mandate licensing for every person in the US that even bred a single litter of dogs and cats. Their passion is so intense to regulate (thereby diminishing or eliminating breeding) that they filed suit against USDA (DDAL vs Venemen, Anne) claiming the intent of the Animal Welfare Act was to regulate retail sellers as well as commercial dealers. USDA prevailed in this litigation.

DDAL’s mission statements can be obtained from their website. The first is the development of national, state and local legislation that will minimize the inhumane treatment of animals.

Also stated as a DDAL mission is to network with other animal protection groups to promote common goals. The PPA and PAWS are examples of this networking, as is working against use of animals in medical research and against use of animals for entertainment.

DDAL is a joint sponsor with HSUS, the Animal Protection Institute, and others for this month’s Taking Action for Animals Conference. Keynote presenter at the conference is controversial ethicist, Peter Singer, founder of The Great Ape Project, who is well known for his statements and beliefs on animal equality.

“Surely there will be some nonhuman animals whose lives, by any standards, are more valuable than the lives of some humans.” -- Peter Singer, godfather of the animal rights movement, Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for Our Treatment of Animals, 2nd edition, 1990.

Another example of networking with animal rights/protection groups is DDAL’s partnering with the Chimp Collaboratory, founded in 2000 with a grant from the Glaser Foundation. Quoting from the Chimp Collaboratory website, Glaser Foundation Director Martin Collier states, “The chimpanzee is an especially compelling yet imperiled species. Because of our genetic similarity and unique relationship to chimpanzees, they can lead the way in breaking down barriers that separate us from them, human from non-human animals.”



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