

Based on my experience as a veterinarian, I will show you what I consider to be the most important factors when you are choosing a company and plan for your pet.

The Complete Guide To Understanding Pet Health Insurance - How To Select The Right Company and Plan For Your Pet

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/3601.html?s=pdf>

The Complete Guide To Understanding Pet Health Insurance

**How to Select the Right Company and
Plan for Your Pet**

**by
Dr. Doug Kenney**

Copyright © 2008 by Dr. Doug Kenney

Cover design by Sarah Kenney

All rights reserved.

No part of this formatted work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the expressed, written permission of the author.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
SO, HOW DOES IT WORK?.....	5
KNOW WHAT IS AND IS NOT COVERED	12
SAMPLE INVOICES AND REIMBURSEMENTS.....	18
HOW TO CHOOSE WHICH PET INSURANCE COMPANY AND PLAN IS BEST FOR YOU	38
BEWARE OF MANAGED CARE.....	68
APPENDIX	72

The Complete Guide To Understanding Pet Health Insurance

It is important to consider how a company pays benefits. This could affect how much reimbursement you get back from the company. Below is a table that summarizes how each company pays their benefits at this time:

	A	B	C
Pets Best	*		
ASPCA			*
Petshealth			*
AKC			*
Petfirst	*		
Embrace	*		
PetPlan	*		
VPI		*	
PetCare	*		
Vsurance			*
Trupanion	*		
PurinaCare	*		

A – pays according to whatever veterinarian charges—this is the best scenario

B – pays according to a benefit schedule

C – pays according to a fee schedule that is considered reasonable and customary for your region of the country. Since AKC and Vsurance didn't respond to my request for reimbursement information based on the claims I submitted, I am relying on what their website says and e-mails or conversations I've had with their representatives. If you are considering purchasing a policy from them, ask them if they are more like A or C (how strictly they adhere to a fee schedule when figuring reimbursement benefits).

In reality, probably every company uses a guide like the Veterinary Fee Reference Guide that is published by AAHA (American Animal Hospital Association) every two years. The

difference is that some companies go strictly by this guide for every item on a veterinarian's invoice while other companies go by this guide loosely—that is, they only refer to it when a fee appears grossly inappropriate. This is important because even though a guide may tell you what the *usual* charge for a procedure is in a specific geographic area, *actual* costs involved in delivering care may vary from one practice to another even in the same city. So, if a company doesn't take this into consideration, or uses an outdated version of whatever fee schedule they use, its reimbursements may be lower than a company that recognizes these variations between individual practices.

For example, the time and expertise it takes to repair a fractured bone can depend on whether the break resulted in a bone that is in just 2 pieces or a bone that is in 12 pieces. Therefore, did your veterinarian repair it or was it referred to a specialist? The fee for this procedure will be drastically different depending on this and any number of other variables.

Most of the companies that don't adhere strictly to a benefit or fee schedule are the newer companies. This may be an attempt to simplify the reimbursement process so it is more understandable for veterinarians and pet owners alike. At the same time, it remains to be seen if these newer companies can stay competitive (keep their premiums affordable) while taking this new approach.

Customer Reviews and Rating the Companies

If you are like me, before you buy almost anything of significance, you look at as many customer reviews as you can. Here you will read about the experiences of people who have actually purchased the product and/or dealt with the company. You will learn things by doing this that you won't learn on the company's website or even reading this book. I would

advise you to not purchase a health insurance policy for your pet without looking at some reviews. I found an excellent website to do this:

petinsurancereview.com

While reading these reviews, keep in mind that some of the negative experiences people have had (and some admit it) is because they didn't do their research before purchasing a policy. Although I am writing this book in an effort to give you a good, basic understanding of pet health insurance, that doesn't mean you shouldn't do your own research and ask questions prior to purchasing a policy for your pet. Existing companies may tweak their policies or premiums, and new companies will likely startup in the future. You can already see by reading this book how each company has their own unique twist on how to fashion their policies.

I have listed below all the companies with a link to their website, some additional details about their plans that answered questions that I had, and a link to reviews for each company. You may want to briefly peruse my comments on each company before actually visiting their website and then refer back to them as needed when you visit the website. The first thing you should do when you visit a company's website is obtain a quote for your pet(s). How to do this is usually prominently displayed on the home page. This will let you know if your pet can be covered by that company and what plans the pet is eligible for. For example, the company may not be licensed to offer policies in your state or because of your pet's age or previous medical history, he or she may not be eligible for coverage by that company or may be eligible for only certain policies. This way, you won't waste your time reading all the details about plans for which your pet isn't eligible for coverage. Print out and save the quotes for the plans for which your pet is eligible. Read the details about

the plans on the company's website and also what I have written in this book. Finally read the reviews of other policyholders and write down your impressions about what you read.

After doing this for each company, you should be able to narrow down your choices of companies and plans. I have provided some tables at the end of this chapter to help you summarize your findings and finally select a policy for your pet.

Embrace

The company doesn't offer Wellness benefits. Their policies are customizable so they give you a choice of annual maximums, deductibles and co-pays. Use their quote calculator to try different combinations and see what effect each has on the premium.

You have the option of including coverage for chronic conditions. Benefits are limited to 25% of the annual maximum in succeeding years after the initial diagnosis. I would highly recommend getting this option if you can afford to add it.

They have a dental and prescription drug option. The dental option covers treatment of diseased (e.g. abscessed or broken) teeth. It does not cover routine prophylactic teeth cleaning. The prescription drug option covers any prescription medication that you take home or your veterinarian writes a prescription for treatment of your pet.

The company will write accident/illness policies for purebred dogs under 7 years old and mixed breeds under 9 years old. They cover purebred cats for both accident and illness under

8 years old and mixed breed cats under 10 years old. Accident-only policies are available for pets over these ages. If you are getting a quote online and your pet is over these ages, you will get a warning message saying that your pet is eligible for an accident-only policy. The accident-only policy has a \$5000 annual maximum, a \$100 annual deductible, and a 10% co-pay. It does have continuing care coverage, but no dental or prescription drug coverage.

You will also have to answer a couple of questions about your pet's medical history. If your pet has been diagnosed with any of these 4 major illnesses (Cancer, Cushing's Disease, Diabetes, and Hyperthyroidism), he or she will be eligible for an accident-only policy. When you check the box next to one of these diseases, your quote will automatically convert to an accident-only quote.

If your pet hasn't been diagnosed with any of these 4 diseases, but has been treated for other accidents or illnesses, you will be requested to write in a dialog box the symptoms, diagnosis and date of treatment. In fact, the company will encourage you to submit a copy of your pet's medical records as soon as possible in the sign up process so that when you submit a claim, the turn-around time for reimbursement will be as short as possible. They will usually require a copy of the medical records when you file your first claim if you haven't already done so.

Embrace also covers hereditary and congenital conditions. Discounts are available for multiple pets or microchipped pets.

[Reviews](#)

Pets Best

	Basic	Pets First	Pets Premier
Annual Maximum	None	None	None
Lifetime Maximum	\$42,500	\$100,000	\$100,000
Per-Incident Maximum	\$2,500	\$7,000	\$14,000
Per-Incident Deductible	\$100	\$75	\$300
Co-pay	20%	20%	20%

The company says that the Pets First policy is the favorite among policyholders.

Wellness option is \$20 per month extra. A defined benefit schedule for wellness care is viewable online. There is a time restriction on when you can get and be reimbursed for wellness care. It is limited to 50% of the total annual wellness benefit per 6 months of the policy term. The total potential benefit is \$440 per year, so you could only be reimbursed up to \$220 for each half of the policy term. If you got \$100 of wellness care the first six months, you would still be able to use the balance (\$340) the second six months.

They have limited coverage of some hereditary conditions (see website) and they don't cover congenital conditions. They do furnish a list of hereditary conditions that they don't cover and this list is relatively short compared to other companies that don't cover hereditary conditions.

They do cover chronic conditions up to the per-incident maximum. It does not renew up to the full per-incident maximum in succeeding years after the diagnosis. For example, if you had the Pets First policy and your pet was diagnosed with diabetes this year and you spent \$2000 this

The Complete Guide To Understanding Pet Health Insurance

year – in succeeding years, benefits would be limited to \$5000 total. After this was used up, no more benefits would be allowed for treatment of the diabetes.

The company doesn't have any age limits on issuing a policy. Once enrolled premiums will increase slightly every year as your pet ages.

[Reviews](#)

[Petfirst](#)

	Preferred Plus	Preferred	Basic
Annual Maximum	\$13,000	\$10,500	\$7,000
Per-Incident Maximum	\$3,500	\$2,500	\$1,500
Per-Incident Deductible	\$50	\$50	\$50
Co-Pay	10%	10%	10%

With each plan they have a Core Coverage (no wellness benefits) premium and a Comprehensive Coverage (including wellness benefits) premium. The wellness benefits with the Basic plan is up to \$100 annually. The wellness benefits with the Preferred and Preferred Plus plans is up to \$220 annually. They have a defined benefit schedule for wellness procedures that you can view online.

If you have multiple pets, compare the discounts offered by this company to all the others. It is my perception that they offer a bigger discount for multiple pets – called Family Plan.

Petfirst doesn't cover hereditary conditions or chronic conditions.

A pet must be less than 10 years old to be enrolled. Once a pet is enrolled, premiums remain the same until they turn 10 years old; the premiums increase at this time and remain the same the rest of the pet's life.

[Reviews](#)

[ASPCA](#) and [PetsHealth](#)

These companies are affiliated and the same limits and premiums apply to either company, but the plan names are different for each company.

	Safety	Primary Advantage	Premier	Sterling	
Annual Maximum	\$8000	\$8,000	\$11,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
Per-Incident Maximum	\$2500	\$1,500	\$3,500	\$5,000	\$2,500
Annual Deductible	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
Co-pay	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Includes Wellness	No	No	Yes*	Yes**	Yes***

The Safety plan is an accident-only plan. All dogs and cats are eligible, regardless of age, breed, or health.

*Includes wellness exam, basic vaccines, fecal and heartworm testing, spaying and neutering.

**Also includes other vaccines such as Lymes, Bordetella, Feline Leukemia testing and vaccine, FIP vaccine, flea and heartworm preventatives, and annual dental cleaning.

The Complete Guide To Understanding Pet Health Insurance

***Covers same wellness features as (*) plus coverage for chronic conditions. *This is the only policy that covers chronic conditions.* Notice that the per-incident maximum decreased. I'm not sure why, but possibly in order to limit reimbursement for chronic conditions.

Wellness benefits are paid subject to deductible and co-pay just like an illness rather than according to a benefit schedule. See pages 18-22 or visit their website for a comparison to a company that pays according to a benefit schedule.

Neither of these companies covers hereditary conditions.

Premiums stay level until 9 years old when they start to rise.

They will enroll dogs less than 12 years old and cat less than 13 years old. If you enroll a pet over these ages, he or she will be eligible for an accident-only policy.

[Reviews](#)

Based on my experience as a veterinarian, I will show you what I consider to be the most important factors when you are choosing a company and plan for your pet.

The Complete Guide To Understanding Pet Health Insurance - How To Select The Right Company and Plan For Your Pet

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/3601.html?s=pdf>