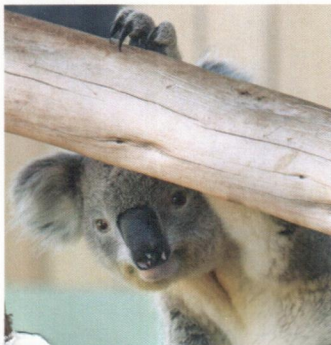


Seaforth Howler

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Welcome to the Winter edition of the Howler. The cold weather has finally arrived. In this issue our receptionist, Maria, discusses insurance, I talk about cruciate ruptures, one of our clients gives us an update on 'Mischief', plus there are a few other bits and pieces.

Navigating the Insurance Minefield

Having worked in a Vet practice over the last few years I have learnt many things, but one item that has been particularly interesting is that of Pet Insurance. My conclusion? It really is something that all pet owners should have or at least seriously consider.

Your visits to the Vet Hospital are usually routine (for that annual health check and vaccination, flea and tick control and the odd treat), something that you can budget for. But what happens in an emergency or when your pet develops a chronic illness? It's those unplanned events that can really upset the finances and send the bank account into a tailspin.

What can you do? Well, as I see it, you have a couple of options, open a bank account for your pet and set up monthly direct credits into it, take out Pet Insurance or hope that you will never be put in the situation that your pet will need any emergency treatment.

Pet Insurance in Australia has been around for a while now and yet out of the estimated 37.1 million pets that we own (53% of that amount being dogs or cats), less than 5% of us actually have Pet Insurance.

The Pet industry is one of the largest growing Industries in Australia, with contributions of \$4.7 billion per year to our economy and the employment of over 44,000 people. The annual spend on Veterinary services is estimated to be \$1.1 billion p.a., with the average claim being between \$200 - \$2,600.

(source: TNS, ABS, and BIS Sharpnel estimates 2007)

There are many companies that provide Pet Insurance (39 Private health Insurance Brands in Australia alone), some specialising in Pets only and other General Insurance Companies adding Pets to their existing plans (Pet Insurance is General Insurance – Domestic Pets, under Corporate Law, are deemed to be property). As the Pet Industry evolves, so to do the inclusions/exclusions in Insurance policies, so here are some things to keep in mind whilst navigating the minefield that is Pet Insurance:

Alternative Therapy: Covers things like Acupuncture, Homeopathy or Complementary medicine. Conditions will apply, so check carefully.

Benefit limit per year: How much you can claim on your policy in one year: this varies from \$10,000 to \$20,000.

Payment of Vet Bills: How much your policy will pay out on your vet bills: this can be from 75% to 100%. Conditions will apply, so check carefully.

Excess payment: How much you will have to pay first before your policy takes over: this will depend on which level of cover you take out, but can be from \$0, \$100 - \$500. Your premiums will reflect how much excess you will be required to pay.

Tick Paralysis: How much your Insurance Company will pay for Tick treatment