

Pet Owners Say They're Satisfied with Vet Visits

Survey finds a pet owner's satisfaction can depend on clear communication.

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About 92 percent of pet owners who took their pets to a veterinarian in the past three months were very satisfied with their visit and would recommend their veterinarian, according to findings from BNRResearch PetPoll 2008, a nationwide telephone survey of pet owners that was released in December covering a range of topics. The client satisfaction portion surveyed 438 pet owners.

However, continued satisfaction rates depend upon effective client education and communication, the poll revealed. Pet owners who have an "excellent" understanding of their pets' treatment plans are significantly more likely to follow the plan "all of the time" (86 percent) compared to those who have a "good" understanding (65 percent). Non-compliance increases the probability that the recommended treatment will not work, which also results in a less than satisfied client, according to BNRResearch.

Also, with household budgets getting tighter due to the economy, BNRResearch said it expects more scrutiny and questions related to the cost of veterinary services. One-third of clients rated their animal hospitals' explanation of fees and charges less than "excellent." If pet owners do not understand the value of the services they are receiving, hospitals are at risk of facing both unsatisfied and lost clients, according to the company.

PetPoll 2008 found that involving a veterinary nurse or technician, in addition to a veterinarian, during the visit significantly improved a client's understanding of their pet's healthcare needs and treatment plan.

Another component of the poll evaluated the demand for pet insurance. About 3 percent of the 980 pet owners surveyed had pet insurance. However, nearly all of those pet insurance customers are satisfied with their plans and they are willing to recommend them to others. Policy holders even noted that pet insurance has increased their use of veterinary products and services such as medications, diagnostic tests, and routine exams.

The major obstacles hindering the sale of more pet insurance policies are related to cost, according to the poll. Other reasons included the confusion regarding what is available and what the various plans consist of.