

The cost of veterinary care explained



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There is no NHS for animals

The question of veterinary fees can be a concern for many pet owners and unfortunately there is no National Health Service (NHS) for pets. A veterinary practice has to run like a business. Staff salaries, the cost of equipment, medicines, and the overheads of running the premises and vehicles make up the bulk of the fee you pay. Veterinary practices also have to add VAT on the charges.

A good practice will make considerable ongoing investment in their staff education, training, publications and new technology—sometimes in the form of costly equipment. Veterinary medicine advances in the same way as human medicine. The range of techniques and treatments now available can save and restore to health animals that, not long ago, could only have been put to sleep. However, this type of treatment is expensive.

Practices must give you an estimate of costs before they begin treatment, and veterinary surgeons should discuss different treatment options with you before starting expensive procedures. Ask for an estimate beforehand, but remember that in some cases it may be difficult for your veterinary surgeon to predict the full nature and extent of treatment before they have carried out the first tests.

Similarly, unexpected complications can arise because every animal is unique and can sometimes react differently to procedures and treatment.

Veterinary fees

Many people ask why there are no standard fees within the veterinary profession. As every practice is different, none of them will have the same overheads for all the reasons we have given above. The area of the country you live in will also have an effect. You can compare prices among practices and you are free to choose the practice where the fees suit your pocket and the range of services suits your needs.

Building up a relationship with a practice helps to make sure that your pet is cared for by veterinary surgeons who are fully aware of your pet's medical history.

If there is a problem

If you are unhappy with the way either you or your pet has been treated, your first step should always be to discuss your concerns honestly with your vet.

Write to, or phone, your vet as soon as you can. Many problems arise because of misunderstanding or lack of communication, and can often be easily dealt with at this first point of contact. If you are still unhappy, ask to speak to the senior partner.

About the BVA

The BVA is the national representative body for the UK veterinary profession. We support our members to fulfil their roles for the benefit of animals and the public.

This is one of a series of leaflets for animal owners produced by the BVA, you can find more at www.bva.co.uk/public