



Pet Insurance Explained

Choosing the right health insurance for your pet can seem very daunting when you start browsing through comparison websites, but it is important you choose a policy wisely to ensure the very best treatment is provided throughout your pet's life.

You are more likely to claim on your pet insurance than on your home insurance so at Penbode Vets we strongly recommend insuring your pet for illness and injury in order to provide you with peace of mind that the best treatment can be given if the unthinkable were to happen.

Types of pet insurance:

1. Lifetime cover

A lifetime insurance policy will cover for a condition throughout the life of your pet. There will still be a policy limit, paying out a set maximum either per condition, or across all conditions that a pet may have in a year but this amount will reset every year to ensure cover for the life of your pet. This is the most comprehensive cover, and the type that we recommend.

2. Maximum benefit

A maximum benefit policy will have a set limit per condition but will not renew each year so once that set amount is reached, that condition will no longer be covered and you would have to fund any treatment for the rest of your pet's life. The limit for these policies can vary greatly between insurance companies- so do your research.

3. Time-limited

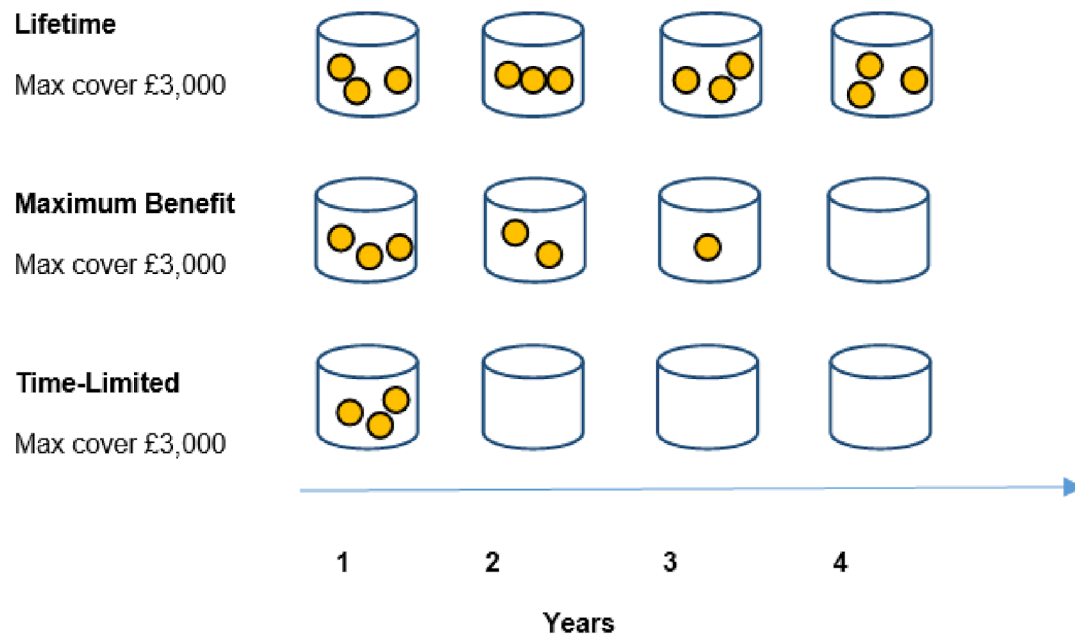
A time limited policy will again have a set limit in pounds that the insurance company will pay out per condition but it will also have a time limit, typically 12 months. So even if the cash limit wasn't reached after a set period of time the condition will still be excluded from further claims. These policies are also known as annual policies. These tend to be one of the cheapest, so look quite inviting, but take care, if your pet is diagnosed with a condition that may reoccur this policy won't cover it after a set period.

4. Accident only cover

What it says on the tin. Will cover for accidents up to a set limit, for example a broken leg, but not for illness, for example a skin condition. Please be careful with these policies, as most pet insurance claims are for illnesses.

Confused? Here is an example:

Archie the Doberman has a heart condition, and his medication costs £1,000 per year and your policy limit covers up to £3,000 worth of treatment per condition. The illustration below describes how much cover the different types of policy provide with the diagrams representing pots of gold coins. With lifetime cover your pot will refill every year, with maximum benefit, your pot will eventually empty and with time-limited your pot will empty after a year even if you didn't reach your limit in the first year of claiming.



Remember that with advances in veterinary medicine, we are now able to do more to help your pets, this does however come at an increased cost.

The above example is not an exaggeration, we are now able to keep our pets alive and healthy longer than we ever could before and some bills for ongoing medicine for a large dog can exceed £100 per month. Another example is the care of a cat following a road traffic accident. The bill, which could include hospitalisation and initial patient stabilization, pain relief, nursing care, x-rays and a complicated fracture repair may total over £4,000.

Our pets really do become part of the family and without an NHS for pets we do need to plan ahead and ensure we have something in place should our furry friends fall ill.

Please also bear in mind:

Pre-existing conditions

Be very careful if you decide you want to switch to another pet insurance provider. Very few policies will cover pre-existing conditions, which means if you have made a claim or not and decide to switch, your new provider will exclude that condition. A lot of insurance companies will not allow you to take out a new policy if your pet is over a certain age, usually 8 years old (which is middle-aged for some cats!)

Excess

As with most insurance there will be an excess to pay to your vet before claiming back any money from an insurance company. Some insurance companies may also ask you to cover your excess plus a set percentage of your vet bill. Remember that if you make a claim, most insurance companies will increase your premium the following year so think about whether it is worth claiming for a small bill.

Extras

Look out for any extras that may be beneficial to you such as covering the cost of kennelling your pet should you go into hospital, providing a reward if your pet is lost or stolen or for prescription food, supplements or physical/behavioural therapies. **It is also very important to ensure your dog has third party liability cover in the event that they cause damage to other people or belongings.**

Dental treatment

Many insurance companies will only pay for dental treatment if it is a result of an accident. Some may pay for the first dental procedure but not subsequent treatments. Read the policy wording carefully.

Preventative care

Pet insurance will not pay for flea and worming treatments, vaccinations or for elective procedures. At Penbode Vets we have our **Pet Health Plan** that will allow you to spread the cost of preventative care and provide discounts on procedures. Please see our leaflet or website for more details.

Making a claim

If you feel you need to make a claim you will need to obtain a claim form from your insurance provider and complete the first section which contains your personal details, details of your pet and when you first noticed your pet was unwell. It is usual policy to ask you to settle your bill with us and claim the money back from your insurer. We may be able to do a direct claim from your insurer in some circumstances. Once we have your insurance form, we will complete the rest of the form and send it to your insurance company along with a copy of your invoice and pet's clinical history. Please remember that your pet insurance policy is an agreement between yourself and the insurance company, whilst we do complete and send claim forms we are not able to speak to your insurance company directly about your policy, we will however be happy to speak to you if you have any concerns regarding a claim.