

Pet insurance jargon: What does it mean?

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ANNUAL LIMITS: Maximum amount of money you can be reimbursed every year. Some pet insurance policies have them; others don't.

BENEFIT SCHEDULE: A rundown on the amount of reimbursement you'll get for specific conditions or treatments. Some pet insurance companies reimburse you according to a set benefit schedule instead of covering a percentage of the actual vet bill.

CO-PAY: Percentage of the vet bill you pay out-of-pocket. If you have a 90 percent reimbursement level, your co-pay is 10 percent of the vet bill.

CONGENITAL CONDITIONS: Health conditions your pet is born with. They can be hereditary or passed down genetically. They can also result from abnormal development before birth. Not all pet insurance plans cover congenital conditions. Not all congenital conditions are immediately apparent and may show signs some time after birth.

DEDUCTIBLE: Amount of money you pay out-of-pocket before your pet insurance coverage kicks in.

EXCLUSIONS: List of conditions or limitations on your coverage. Read them carefully, as they vary widely from policy to policy.

HEREDITARY CONDITIONS: Disorders or diseases your pet inherits genetically, often referred to as breed-specific conditions since they tend to affect certain breeds of dogs and cats. Not all pet insurance plans cover hereditary conditions.

INCIDENTS: "Incident" refers to the specific condition for which your pet is being treated. "Per incident" and "per condition" mean the same thing.

LIFETIME LIMITS: Maximum amount of money you can be reimbursed over the lifetime of your pet insurance policy.

REIMBURSEMENT LEVEL: Percentage of the vet bill the pet insurance company reimburses you after you pay your deductible. The reimbursement level determines your co-pay. If you have a 70 percent reimbursement level, your co-pay is 30 percent of the vet bill.

RIDER: Also called "endorsements," riders are add-ons to an insurance policy that provide additional coverage at an additional cost. Different companies may offer different riders, such as a prescription medication rider, complimentary care rider, or breeding rider for pregnancy care.

PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS: Health issues that your pet has already been diagnosed with or shown signs of before your pet insurance plan becomes active. Pre-existing conditions are not covered by any pet insurance plan.

WAITING PERIOD: Set amount of time you're required to wait after enrollment before your pet insurance policy becomes active. Pet insurance policies may have different waiting times for different conditions and coverage options. The waiting period for injuries and accidents may be as short as a day or two while other conditions may have a waiting period of several months.