

Dr. Ruth MacPete, DVM

Ruth has more than 15 years of experience in the veterinary industry as a companion animal veterinarian in private practice. Along with being a writer and media personality, she is also a founding member of IDEXX's Pet Health Network team.

For more from [Dr. Ruth MacPete](#), find her on [Facebook](#) or at www.drruthpetvet.com!

Advances in veterinary medicine have led to newer and better treatments. Unfortunately, veterinary care can be costly and inaccessible to many pet parents. How can you provide the best care for your pets without breaking the bank?

The answer is to plan ahead. Unless you have the means and discipline to set aside a savings account for pet emergencies, pet insurance is a great way to plan for unforeseen accidents and illnesses. It's ironic that people insure their cars, homes, and jewelry but few pet parents insure their beloved pets.

As a veterinarian, I frequently witness the hardships pet parents encounter when their beloved pets become ill. Not only do they face the stress of dealing with their pet's illness, pet parents have the added stress of dealing with the cost of their pet's care. Many people are forced to make decisions based on the cost of the medical care. If you've had a pet long enough, you realize that, unfortunately, accidents happen, and I don't just mean the kind you have to clean up from the floor. Our adorable pets have a knack for finding trouble wherever they go. They [swallow things](#), get into poisons, run away from home, or [get into a fights](#). Even under the watchful care of their pet parents, accidents happen and it is our responsibility as pet parents to anticipate and prepare for the unexpected. Pet insurance is an easy way to plan for those unforeseen events.

There are currently many different pet insurance companies in the US. Pet insurance works by reimbursing pet parents for covered medical expenses. Unlike HMO's for people, these companies allow you to choose any veterinarian. You are responsible for paying your bill and then submitting a claim form. The

deductible, reimbursement amount, and coverage depends upon the company and specific policy you choose. Some plans offer basic coverage which covers only accidents, while others provide more comprehensive coverage which covers medical illness such as kidney disease, bladder infections, and even cancer. There are additional riders that provide additional coverage, and even wellness care plans to cover routine care. Monthly premiums can be as low as \$10 per month for basic coverage or up to \$50-75 per month for more comprehensive plans. There are many options to choose from so do your homework before choosing a plan. Fortunately, you can go to a company's website to find out more and get an online quote. Don't forget to ask your veterinarian which companies and plans they prefer. Your veterinarian will likely have worked with various companies and can give you their recommendation based on your pet's particular needs. If you choose to insure your pet, I recommend obtaining coverage soon as possible. Many pet insurance premiums take into account your pet's age and become more expensive and harder to obtain the older they get. Also, young animals tend to be more accident prone and may need the coverage provided by insurance sooner than you think.

If you are opposed to the idea of paying monthly premiums to insure your pets, I recommend starting a pet savings account. Set aside as much as you can afford and commit to making monthly contributions until you reach the amount of coverage you wish to provide. This pet savings account will act as your pet's insurance plan and should only be used for pet emergencies. In order for this approach to work, you need to be very self-disciplined and put money away regularly. However, the account may not have accumulated enough money if it has to be used too soon. Despite these drawbacks, having a pet savings account is a viable option to pet insurance.

Regardless of whether you buy pet insurance or start a pet savings account, as a responsible pet parent, you need to prepare for the unexpected. By taking these steps today, you can ensure that if an accident happens or your pet becomes ill, you can focus your attention on their immediate health concerns and not worry about how you are going to pay for it.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.