

Contact: Donna Bowater | Marchmont Communications
donna@marchmontcomms.com | +44 7929 212 534

Contact: Heidi Bell | Pegasus
heidi.bell@thisispegasus.co.uk | +44 (0)1273 712000

UNDER EMBARGO TO 00:01 CET, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2020

Veterinarians fear for pets' health after one in four owners admit to missing appointments during pandemic

Rising numbers of veterinary practices are offering telemedicine and digital consultations to encourage pet owners to keep up with routine animal healthcare despite restrictions

Thursday, November 5, 2020, BRUSSELS – Veterinarians have warned of a resurgence of preventable diseases among domestic animals after one in four pet owners said they had delayed or missed appointments because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

More than one in 10 cats and dogs had missed routine treatment or care, such as primary vaccines, as a result, according to a poll of more than 3,200 owners across four countries.

The survey, commissioned by the global animal health association HealthforAnimals in partnership with leading animal health marketing and communications consultancy [Pegasus](#), revealed safety fears around the risk of Covid-19 outside personal “social bubbles” were the primary driver despite a growing number of veterinarians offering remote consultations.

“These survey results reveal yet more worrying, secondary impacts of the pandemic, with pet owners reluctant to visit a veterinarian and animal health suffering as a result,” said **Dr Simon Doherty**, Senior Lecturer in Animal Health & Welfare, Queen’s University Belfast, and former President, British Veterinary Association.

“The reality is that veterinarians and veterinary services have been recognised as essential throughout the pandemic because animal health is a core element of public health. If pets are not receiving routine healthcare including vaccination, we could see an increase in preventable diseases and other health issues.”

Almost half (47 per cent) of pet owners surveyed said their veterinarian offered digital or remote appointments, an increase from 20 per cent before the pandemic. Just one per cent of pet owners said their veterinarian had not adopted special precautions in response to Covid-19, with social distancing requirements being the most reported in-person change.

“The veterinary industry has seen rapid technological transformation during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is a positive, but animal care providers, businesses and pet owners are learning to adjust,” said **Luke Hopkins**, of Pegasus, an Ashfield company, part of UDG Healthcare.

“From ensuring pet owners are aware of new veterinary services or practice opening hours, to educating on the importance of preventative health, clear communication is more important than ever in helping preserve animal health and wellbeing during this pandemic.”

Of the pet owners who used veterinary telemedicine during the pandemic, three quarters were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the service, with more than a third reporting it reduces the waiting time to speak to a veterinarian. More than one in five said digital or remote consultations meant veterinarians could dedicate more time to the appointment. More than 60 per cent agreed, to some extent, that they would be more likely to contact their veterinarian if they could do so virtually.

“Veterinary care is innovating as rapidly as human medicine, allowing more and more veterinarians to offer remote consultations and continue to deliver vital animal health services, even during a pandemic,” said **Carel du Marchie Sarvaas**, executive director of HealthforAnimals.

“Pet owners need not compromise on the health of their dogs and cats. Regular check-ups with a veterinarian are the cornerstone of good pet health.”

As well as common illnesses, around a third (32 per cent) of pet owners said they were concerned or very concerned about their animal catching Covid-19 despite only a handful of pets worldwide falling ill with the disease, all of which were instances of human-to-animal transfer.

“For many people, pets have provided much needed respite and comfort during the pandemic and its lockdowns. But owners also have a responsibility to make sure the pandemic does not negatively impact animals and their health,” said **Dr. Marie-José Enders-Slegers**, President, International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations.

“It is especially important that anyone who has adopted an animal during the pandemic seeks and follows veterinary advice to give young animals the best possible start in life and continues doing so after the pandemic.”

Ends

For more information, contact:

Donna Bowater
Marchmont Communications
donna@marchmontcomms.com
+44 7929 212 534

Heidi Bell
Pegasus
Heidi.Bell@thisispegasus.co.uk
+44 (0)1273 712000

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the survey

The survey was conducted by Censuswide between September 28 and October 9 2020. Participants from four countries took part, including Brazil (1,015), the US (1,010) France (625), and the UK (608). The pet owners were divided evenly (50:50) between dog and cat owners.

About Pegasus, part of Ashfield Healthcare Communications

Ashfield Healthcare Communications, part of UDG Healthcare plc, provides global solutions for clients, adding value through unique insights and tailored, scientifically rigorous, multichannel, healthcare communications offerings. Its mission is to improve lives by helping healthcare professionals and patients get the medicines, knowledge, and support they need. Ashfield Healthcare Communications' multichannel and specialist agencies include ACUMED, Ashfield Digital & Creative, Ashfield Healthcare Communications K.K., BlueMomentum, Cambridge BioMarketing, Canale Communications, CircleScience, Cirrus Communications, Clinical Bridges, CodonMedical, Create NYC, FireKite, Galliard, Gardiner-Caldwell Communications, GeoMed, iMed Comms, Incisive Health, Interphase Consult, Infusion, MicroMass Communications, Nyxeon, Pegasus, Physicians World Europe, QXV Comms, Scientific Connexions, Seren Communications, StemScientific, Watermeadow Medical, and Zoetic Science.

www.thisispegasus.co.uk

www.ashfieldhealthcarecommunications.com

About HealthforAnimals

HealthforAnimals is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation representing companies and industry associations from developed and developing countries. The animal health industry provides value to society by protecting animals and as a consequence, humans, from diseases. Animal health products help keep pets and food-producing animals healthy. The public health benefits include safer and more secure food supplies, more efficient production for increased food supply, improved sustainability, and prevention of the transmission of zoonotic diseases.

<https://healthforanimals.org/>