2020 Ontario Pet Owners Report
## Contents

Introduction .............................................................................................................................................. 5
Survey Design ............................................................................................................................................... 5
Demographics .............................................................................................................................................. 6
   Age of Respondents .............................................................................................................................. 6
   Gender of Respondents ......................................................................................................................... 7
   Marital Status of Respondents .............................................................................................................. 7
   Number of Dependent Children .......................................................................................................... 8
   Area of Residence ............................................................................................................................... 8
   Annual Household Income .................................................................................................................. 9
Attitudes toward Pet Ownership .............................................................................................................. 10
   Dog Ownership .................................................................................................................................... 10
   Source of Dog(s) .................................................................................................................................. 11
   Cat Ownership .................................................................................................................................... 12
   Source of Cat(s) .................................................................................................................................... 13
   Pet Ownership by Species .................................................................................................................... 14
   Other Animal Ownership ..................................................................................................................... 15
   Consideration of Pet(s) ......................................................................................................................... 16
   Years of Pet Ownership ...................................................................................................................... 16
COVID-19 Pandemic Related Questions .................................................................................................... 17
   Pet Acquisition During Pandemic ......................................................................................................... 17
   Reason for Pet Acquisition During Pandemic ....................................................................................... 17
   Employment Situation During Pandemic .............................................................................................. 18
   Use of Government Subsidies and Programs ....................................................................................... 18
   Veterinary Visits During Pandemic ...................................................................................................... 19
   Reasons for Veterinary Visits During Pandemic ................................................................................... 20
   Use of Telemedicine During Pandemic ............................................................................................... 21
   Ability of Telemedicine to Resolve Issue ............................................................................................ 21
Attitudes toward Veterinary Medicine ..................................................................................................... 22
   Most Important Factors in Choosing a Veterinarian ............................................................................... 22
Most Important Factors in Choosing a Veterinarian among Respondents Who Visited the Veterinarian Several Times in the Last Year ................................................................. 25
Years Going to Same Veterinarian/Veterinary Hospital ............................................................ 28
Reason for Selection of Current Veterinarian among Respondents Who Were New Clients to their Veterinary Hospital ........................................................................ 29
Reason for Selection of Current Veterinarian among all Respondents ..................................... 30
Method of Recommendation ....................................................................................................... 32
Frequency of Veterinary Visits .................................................................................................... 33
Reason(s) for Not Visiting the Veterinarian in the Last Year ..................................................... 34
Reason(s) for Visiting the Veterinarian in the Last Year ............................................................. 35
Most Important Discussions Topics with Veterinarian ......................................................... 37
Importance of Various Medical Procedures .............................................................................. 39
Importance of Seeing the Same Veterinarian ........................................................................... 42
Recommendations to Improve the Veterinary Experience ..................................................... 43
Sentiments on Last Veterinary Visit .......................................................................................... 45
Preferred Method of Contact to Book an Appointment ............................................................. 48
Current Method of Contact to Book an Appointment ................................................................. 49
Attitudes toward the Cost of Veterinary Medicine ................................................................. 50
Total Amount Spent at Veterinary Hospital in Last Year ....................................................... 50
Amount Willing to Spend on a Veterinary Emergency ............................................................ 51
Method of Paying for an Unforeseen Veterinary Expense .................................................... 52
Sentiments on Final Veterinary Bill .......................................................................................... 53
Sentiments on Costs of Veterinary Products and Services ....................................................... 54
Attitudes on Internet, Social Media, and Veterinary Telehealth ............................................ 56
Interest in Online Appointment Booking .................................................................................. 56
Connection with Veterinary Hospital’s Social Media Presence ............................................. 57
Willingness to Use an Online Web Store ................................................................................... 58
First Thing in Emergency ......................................................................................................... 60
Attitudes towards Wellness Plans ............................................................................................. 61
Amount Willing to Pay for Wellness Plan .................................................................................. 61
Current Wellness Plan Price

Satisfaction with Current Wellness Plan

General Purchasing Habits

Sources of Pet Medication Utilized in Past Year

Sentiments on Cost of Drugs for Sick Pet(s) by Source of Pet Medication

Sentiments on Cost of Flea, Tick, and Heartworm Medication by Source of Pet Medication

Purchase of Flea, Tick, and Heartworm Medication

Reason for Not Purchasing Flea, Tick, and Heartworm Medication

Source of Pet Food Utilized in the Past Year

Sentiments on Cost of Pet Food by Source of Pet Food

Primary Source of Pet Food

Sentiments on Cost of Pet Food by Primary Source of Pet Food

Conclusion
**Introduction**

Each year, OVMA surveys Ontario pet owners to gauge various topics of interest to the veterinary profession. Respondents are asked about a myriad of subjects, ranging from demographics to their attitudes on animals and veterinarians. The OVMA’s 2020 Ontario Pet Owner Survey was designed to identify trends in the province’s pet owning population.

**Survey Design**

The OVMA’s 2020 Ontario Pet Owners Survey was distributed to 11,390 random pet owning households from across the province. Of those, 1,075 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 9.4 per cent. Information in the survey is generally accurate to +/- 2.6 per cent, 19 times out of 20.
Demographics
Questions in this section pertain to the demographics of the respondent, including age, gender, marital status, and household income.

Age of Respondents
Survey respondents were asked, “What is your age?” Although there were a wide range of responses, a relatively normal distribution was seen, with 56 years old as the most common response.

Fifty-seven per cent of all respondents were between the ages of 45 and 65; another 24 per cent were younger than 45.

Figure 1. Age of respondents
Gender of Respondents
Survey respondents were asked, “What is your gender?” Similar to previous years, females represented the vast majority of respondents, at 84 per cent.

Figure 2. What is your gender?

Marital Status of Respondents
Survey respondents were asked, “How would you describe your marital status?” Half of respondents, at 50 per cent, indicated they were currently married. The next most common response was living with a significant other, with 16 per cent.

Figure 3. How would you describe your current marital status?
**Number of Dependent Children**
Survey respondents were asked, “How many dependent children do you have living with you (less than 18 years of age)?” Most respondents indicated they did not have any dependent children in their household, with 76 per cent selecting this answer. Twelve per cent had one child in the household, and an additional nine per cent had two children.

**Figure 4.** How many dependent children do you have living with you?

**Area of Residence**
Survey respondents were asked, “How would you describe the area where you live?” Forty-one per cent indicated they lived in a suburban area, while 32 per cent resided in an urban area.

**Figure 5.** How would you describe the area where you live?
Annual Household Income
Survey respondents were asked, “What is your total combined annual household income?”

Thirty-one per cent indicated their household earned between $50,001 and $100,000 per year. Another seventeen per cent had an annual household income of $25,001 to $50,000.

Twenty-six per cent of respondents preferred not to disclose their annual household income.

Figure 6. What is your total combined annual household income?
Attitudes toward Pet Ownership

Dog Ownership
Survey respondents were asked, “How many dogs do you own?” The largest group of respondents (47 per cent) indicated they owned one dog, while 34 per cent did not own a dog. Nineteen per cent of respondents owned two or more dogs.

![Bar chart showing dog ownership distribution](chart.png)

**Figure 7.** How many dogs do you own?
Source of Dog(s)

Survey respondents were asked, “Where did you obtain your current dog(s)?” Breeders were the most common source of dogs, with 40 per cent of respondents selecting this option. Animal shelter or rescue was the next most frequently indicated source, with 25 per cent selecting this response. Note that the total percentage sums to over 100 per cent, as respondents were able to select all applicable sources, assuming they had multiple dogs.

Figure 8. Where did you obtain your current dog(s)?
Cat Ownership

Survey respondents were asked, “How many cats do you own?” Forty-two per cent of respondents indicated they did not own a cat. Thirty per cent owned one cat, while 21 per cent had two. Seven per cent of respondents had three or more cats.

Figure 9. How many cats do you own?
Source of Cat(s)
Survey respondents were asked, “Where did you obtain your current cat(s)?” The largest group of respondents (46 per cent) indicated they had obtained their cat from an animal shelter or rescue. Family members and friends (25 per cent), and stray cats (20 per cent) were also common sources of cats. Note that the total percentage sums to over 100 per cent, as respondents were able to select all applicable sources, assuming they had multiple cats.

Figure 10. Where did you obtain your current cat(s)?
Pet Ownership by Species
Pet ownership was broken down by respondents who own dog(s) only, cat(s) only, and both cat(s) and dog(s). Forty-one per cent of respondents indicated they owned only dog(s), while 33 per cent owned only cat(s). Twenty-six per cent owned both a cat(s) and a dog(s).

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 11.** Proportion of respondents who own dog(s) only, cat(s) only, and both cat(s) and dog(s)
Other Animal Ownership

Survey respondents were asked, “How many other pets do you have which are not a cat or a dog?” These other pets included reptiles, birds, pocket pets, fish, etc. Most respondents (83 per cent) indicated they did not own any other pets. Eight per cent owned one other pet, while three per cent owned two. Six per cent of respondents indicated they owned three or more other animals.

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

**Figure 12.** How many other pets do you have that are not a cat or a dog?
Consideration of Pet(s)
Survey respondents were asked, “What do you consider your pet(s) to be?” Most respondents (78 per cent) indicated they felt their pet was a member of the family. Fourteen per cent considered their pet their child, while eight per cent thought of them as a best friend.

Figure 13. What do you consider your pet(s) to be?

Years of Pet Ownership
Survey respondents were asked, “How many years have you been a pet owner?” Most respondents had been long time pet owners, with 73 per cent indicating over fifteen years of pet ownership.

Figure 14. How many years have you been a pet owner?
COVID-19 Pandemic Related Questions
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Ontario Pet Owners Survey contained several new questions specifically related to this event and its impact on respondents.

Pet Acquisition During Pandemic
Survey respondents were asked “Did you get a new pet after March 15th this year?” This date was selected as it corresponds with approximately when pandemic related lockdowns began in Ontario. Only five per cent of respondents indicated they had acquired a new pet during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 15. Did you get a new pet after March 15th this year?

Reason for Pet Acquisition During Pandemic
The five per cent of respondents who indicated they had acquired a new pet after March 15, 2020, were then asked, “Why did you get a new pet at this time?” The most common response, with 70 per cent, was that they had already planned on getting a pet before the pandemic hit.

Figure 16. Why did you get a new pet at this time?
Employment Situation During Pandemic
Survey respondents were asked “During the pandemic, please select the response that best describes your work situation.” The largest group, at 30 per cent, indicated they were retired. An additional 25 per cent were working as usual, while 18 per cent were working from home. Thirteen per cent of respondents indicated they had been laid off.

![Bar chart showing work situation during pandemic](image)

**Figure 17.** Which best describes your work situation during the pandemic?

Use of Government Subsidies and Programs
Survey respondents were asked “Did you receive/make use of any of the government subsidies or programs available during the pandemic (e.g. Canadian Emergency Response Benefit, Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy, Canadian Emergency Business Account Loan, Mortgage deferral)?” The majority of respondents, with 79 per cent, indicated they had not utilized any government subsidies or programs.

![Bar chart showing use of government subsidies](image)

**Figure 18.** Did you receive/make use of any of the government subsidies or programs during the pandemic?
Veterinary Visits During Pandemic

Survey respondents were asked “Did you visit your veterinary clinic after March 15th this year?” There was a relatively even split, with 44 per cent indicating they had visited the veterinarian during the pandemic.

Figure 19. Did you visit your veterinary clinic after March 15th this year?
Reasons for Veterinary Visits During Pandemic

The 44 per cent of respondents who indicated they had visited the veterinarian after March 15th were then asked, “Why did you visit your veterinary clinic?” The most indicated response, with 44 per cent, was to pick up medication(s), followed by regular check-up at 30 per cent. Of the 13 per cent who indicated an “other” response, some of answers specified included elective surgeries, diagnostic testing, and euthanasia.

**Figure 20. Why did you visit your veterinary clinic?**
Use of Telemedicine During Pandemic
Survey respondents were asked “During the pandemic, did your pet have an issue where your veterinarian had to assess and diagnose over a phone call, video call or email remotely (without them physically touching your pet)?” Only seven per cent of respondents indicated they had used telemedicine with their veterinarian over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 21. During the pandemic, did your pet have an issue where your veterinarian had to assess and diagnose over a phone call, video call, or email remotely (without them physically touching your pet)?”

Ability of Telemedicine to Resolve Issue
The seven per cent of respondents who indicated they had utilized telemedicine during the pandemic were then asked, “Was the issue resolved?” Three-quarters of pet owners who connected with their veterinarian through telemedicine were able to resolve the issue without bringing their animal in for an examination.

Figure 22. Was the issue resolved?
Attitudes toward Veterinary Medicine

Most Important Factors in Choosing a Veterinarian
Survey respondents were asked, “What are the three most important factors when choosing a veterinarian or veterinary hospital?”

Interest in the pet’s well-being remained in top spot as the most important factor, with 62 per cent of respondents selecting this as important. Reasonably priced services fell slightly in importance, with 55 per cent indicating this as important.

Excellent medical knowledge climbed in 2020, to 43 per cent of respondents selecting it as an important factor in choosing a veterinarian.
Figure 23. What are the three most important factors when choosing a veterinarian or vet hospital?
Figure 24. Top five most selected important factors when choosing a veterinarian
Most Important Factors in Choosing a Veterinarian among Respondents Who Visited the Veterinarian Several Times in the Last Year

Among survey respondents who indicated they had visited the veterinarian several times in the last year (34 per cent of all respondents), reasonably priced services are a less important factor in choosing a veterinarian.

While it remains in the top three factors, price was cited as important to only 44 per cent of this cohort.

Interest in the pet’s well-being and excellent medical knowledge remained the number one and two most important factors, with 68 and 52 per cent of respondents selecting these, respectively.
Figure 25. What are the three most important factors when choosing a veterinarian or vet hospital? (among respondents who visited the veterinarian several times in the last year)
Figure 26. Top five most selected as important factors when choosing a veterinarian (among respondents who visited the veterinarian several times in the last year)
Years Going to Same Veterinarian/Veterinary Hospital

Survey respondents were asked, “How long have you been going to the same veterinarian/veterinary hospital?”

Most respondents were long-time clients of their veterinary hospitals, with 57 per cent indicating they have been going to the same veterinarian for over five years. Twenty-five per cent were newer clients, having only been with their current veterinarian for two years or less.

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents by the duration of their visit to the same veterinarian/veterinary hospital from 2017 to 2020.]

**Figure 27.** How long have you been going to the same veterinarian/veterinary hospital?
Reason for Selection of Current Veterinarian among Respondents Who Were New Clients to their Veterinary Hospital

Among survey respondents who indicated they were a newer client to their veterinary hospital (been going to the same veterinarian for two years or less, 25 per cent of all respondents), a plurality, at 40 per cent, indicated they had selected their veterinarian based on recommendation. The next most common reason cited was location, at 14 per cent.

To facilitate reading of the figure, only the 2020 percentage label has been included.

**Figure 28.** How did you select your current veterinarian (among respondents who were new clients to their veterinary hospital within the past two years)?
Reason for Selection of Current Veterinarian among all Respondents

Survey respondents were asked, “How did you select your current veterinarian?”

As in previous years, recommendation from a friend, relative or acquaintance was the most cited reason, with 39 per cent indicating this was why they selected their current veterinarian. Another 20 per cent had simply kept the same veterinarian they had used for their previous pets.

Seven per cent of respondents had an “other” reason for their selection of a veterinarian. When asked to specify what the reason was, the explanations varied widely, including being personal friends/acquaintances with a veterinarian or a staff member of the hospital, or having been recommended to the veterinary hospital from a rescue agency/humane society.

Price remained a very infrequent reason for selecting a veterinarian, with only two per cent of respondents indicating they had called around for the lowest price and based their veterinary decision on this factor.

To facilitate reading of the figure, only the 2020 percentage label has been included.
Figure 29. How did you select your current veterinarian?
Method of Recommendation

The 40 per cent of respondents who indicated they had selected their current veterinarian based on a recommendation were asked, “How did your friend/relative/acquaintance recommend your current veterinarian?”

The most common method of recommendation was an in-person conversation, with 84 per cent of respondents indicating this response. Phone was the next most cited method, at five per cent.

Another four per cent indicated an “other” method through which a recommendation was conveyed to them. When asked to specify the method, responses were extremely varied, including through work gatherings.

Figure 30. How did your friend/relative/acquaintance recommend your current veterinarian?
**Frequency of Veterinary Visits**

Survey respondents were asked, “How often do you take your pet(s) to the veterinarian?”

Thirty-four per cent indicated they had been to the veterinarian several times in the past year; an additional 46 per cent had been once in the past year.

Only 20 per cent stated they had not been to the veterinarian within the past twelve months.

![Figure 31. How often do you take your pet(s) to the veterinarian?](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Several Times In Past Year</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once In Past Year</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Been Approx. 2 Years</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Been Several Years</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 31.** How often do you take your pet(s) to the veterinarian?
Reason(s) for Not Visiting the Veterinarian in the Last Year

The 20 per cent of respondents who had not taken their pet(s) to the veterinarian at least once within the last year were asked, “If you have not been to the veterinarian in the last year, why not?” The following figures are presented as a percentage of total respondents to the survey.

With 13 per cent of total respondents, the most cited reason for not going to the veterinarian was that the pet owner felt their pet was healthy and thus a veterinary visit was not necessary.

Price was the impetus in skipping veterinary visits for only six per cent of total respondents.

**Figure 32.** If you have not been to the veterinarian in the last year, why not?
Reason(s) for Visiting the Veterinarian in the Last Year

The 80 per cent of survey respondents who had been to the veterinarian at least once in the past year were asked, “For what reason(s) did you visit the veterinarian in the last year?” The following figures are presented as a percentage of only the respondents who had been to the veterinarian at least one time within the last year.

The most cited reasons for taking a pet to the veterinarian were vaccinations and annual examinations, at 71 per cent and 70 per cent.

The next most common reasons for visiting the veterinarian were for heartworm and tick medications, at 26 per cent each, followed by flea medication at 25 per cent.

Eleven per cent of respondents had an “other” reason for visiting the veterinarian in the past year, which varied widely, including non-elective surgeries, behavioural consultations, nail trims, and anal gland expressions.

Please note the total percentage sums to over 100 per cent, as respondents were able to select all applicable reasons for visiting the veterinarian, for any of their pets. To facilitate reading of the figure, only the 2020 percentage label has been included.
**Figure 33.** For what reason(s) did you visit the vet in the last year?
Most Important Discussions Topics with Veterinarian

The 80 per cent of survey respondents who had gone to the veterinarian in the last year were asked, “During an annual physical exam, what three things do want your veterinarian to discuss with you about your pet(s)?” The following figures are presented as a percentage of only the respondents who had been to the veterinarian at least once within the last year.

The most selected topic respondents wanted their veterinarian to discuss with them was vaccine information, with 63 per cent indicating that this was in their top three most important discussion topics.

Age-related changes, diet and nutrition, and dental and oral health were the next topics respondents most wanted to discuss with their veterinarian during an annual physical examination.
Figure 34. During an annual physical exam, what three things do you want your veterinarian to discuss with you about your pet(s)?
Importance of Various Medical Procedures

Survey respondents were asked, “How important are the following medical procedures to the health of your pet(s)?” Figure 36 presents the percentage of respondents who indicated a procedure was “very important”.

The procedure most widely regarded as important by respondents was the spaying/neutering of their pet(s), with 87 per cent indicating that this was either very or somewhat important.

Annual checkups and vaccinations were the next most important procedures, with 83 and 81 per cent of respondents, respectively, citing each of them as very or somewhat important.

Regular dental cleanings were the least important procedure, with 61 per cent of respondents indicating they felt this to be very or somewhat important.
Figure 35. Importance of various medical procedures to pet(s) health.
Figure 36. Percentage of respondents indicating that a medical procedure is “very important” to the health of their pet(s).
Importance of Seeing the Same Veterinarian

Survey respondents were asked, “How important is it for you to see the same veterinarian every visit?”

Most respondents (75 per cent) indicated it was important (either very important or somewhat important) for them to see the same veterinarian each time they visit with their pet(s).

**Figure 37.** How important is it for you to see the same veterinarian every visit?
Recommendations to Improve the Veterinary Experience

Survey respondents were asked, “What else could your veterinarian and/or clinic do to improve you and your pet’s experience at the veterinarian?”

Sixty-three per cent of respondents indicated they were happy with their veterinarian and had no suggestions to improve their veterinary experience.

The next most common responses were for the veterinarian to offer more payment options, and to review costs before treatment, with 16 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively. A new response added last year was longer hours, which four per cent of respondents selected.

Six per cent of respondents had an “other” suggestion. When asked to specify what their suggestion would be, some of the responses given included a decrease in fees for veterinary services and products, and less perceived selling of diagnostics and treatments.

Please note the sum of the total percentage is over 100 per cent, as respondents were able to select all applicable recommendations for improving their experience at the veterinarian.
Figure 38 What else could your veterinarian and/or clinic do to improve you and your pet’s experience at the veterinarian?
**Sentiments on Last Veterinary Visit**

Survey respondents were provided with a variety of statements on various aspects of their most recent visit to the veterinarian and asked to rank their level of agreement or disagreement with each one. Results are presented as total rankings for the 2020 Pet Owner Survey, followed by the percentage of respondents who “Strongly agree” with each statement.

Many statements were met with a very positive response. Statements reflecting the friendliness and care of veterinarians and staff, attentive listening, and clear explanations were all strongly agreed to or agreed to by most respondents.
Figure 39. Agreement with various statements on last veterinary visit from 2020 Pet Owner Survey.
Figure 40. Percentage of respondents who “Strongly Agree” with each statement.
Preferred Method of Contact to Book an Appointment

Survey respondents were asked, “What is the best way for your veterinarian to contact you to book an appointment?”

With 32 per cent of respondents, calling a cell phone was the most popular method of contact to book an appointment. An email was the next most popular method, with 25 per cent.

Three per cent of respondents preferred to be pre-booked for their next appointment at the time of their last appointment. Five per cent did not want their veterinarian to contact them.

Figure 41. What is the best way for your veterinarian to contact you to book an appointment?
Current Method of Contact to Book an Appointment

Survey respondents were asked, “How does your veterinarian currently contact you?”

After many years as the dominant method of contact from veterinarians, postcards slipped down the rankings, to fourth place. A call through cell phone was the most indicated method of contact, with 27 per cent of respondents selecting this answer. Email was the next most selected response, with 25 per cent.

Fifteen per cent of respondents indicated their veterinarian does not contact them.

Four per cent of respondents indicated some “other” method of contact. When asked to specify the method, the most common response was that the pet owner actively contacts the veterinarian, rather than waiting to be contacted.

![Figure 42. How does your veterinarian currently contact you?](image-url)
Attitudes toward the Cost of Veterinary Medicine

Total Amount Spent at Veterinary Hospital in Last Year

The 80 per cent of survey respondents who had been to the veterinarian in the last year were asked, “Over the last year, how much did you spend at the veterinarian for your pet(s) health?” The following figures are presented as a percentage of only the respondents who had been to the veterinarian at least once within the last year.

The largest group of respondents (28 per cent) indicated they had spent between $251 and $500 at their veterinary hospital in the last year. The next most common amount spent was greater than $1,000, with 23 per cent indicating this amount.

Figure 43. Over the last year, how much did you spend at the veterinarian for your pet(s) health?
Amount Willing to Spend on a Veterinary Emergency

Survey respondents were asked, “How much would you be prepared to pay for a medical emergency involving your pet(s)?” A plurality of respondents, at 31 per cent, indicated they would be willing to spend between $500 and $1,000. The number of respondents willing to spend over $4,000 in an emergency situation increased slightly, to 11 per cent.

**Figure 44.** How much would you be prepared to pay for a medical emergency involving your pet(s)?
Method of Paying for an Unforeseen Veterinary Expense

Survey respondents were asked, “If you were faced with an unforeseen veterinary bill that exceeded your family budget, how would you make up the difference?”

The most common response was the use of a credit card, with 44 per cent selecting this option.

Arranging a payment plan with the veterinarian was the next most selected method, with 27 per cent of respondents choosing this option.

Five per cent of respondents had an “Other” response; when asked to specify, a common response was that they would euthanize the pet if unable to bear the veterinary expense.

**Figure 45.** If you were faced with an unforeseen veterinary bill that exceeded your family budget, how would you make up the difference?
Sentiments on Final Veterinary Bill

Survey respondents were asked, “When you go to pay your veterinary bill at the end of the visit, is the total usually...”

Forty-nine per cent of respondents felt that their veterinary bill was higher than expected, while another 46 per cent indicated it was exactly as they had expected.

Only five per cent of respondents said their final bill was lower than they had expected it to be.

Figure 46. When you go to pay your veterinary bill at the end of your visit, is the total usually...
**Sentiments on Costs of Veterinary Products and Services**

Survey respondents were asked, “How would you rate the following veterinary products and services?”

Results are presented as total rankings for the 2020 Pet Owner Survey, followed by the percentage of respondents who felt a product or service was “Expensive but fair” and “Too expensive”.

Veterinary services continued to be widely perceived as expensive but fair, with 66 per cent of respondents selecting this response.

![Figure 47. Sentiments on the cost of various veterinary products and services.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Too Expensive</th>
<th>Expensive But Fair</th>
<th>Inexpensive</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pet Food</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Services</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs For Sick Pet</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flea, Tick, Heartworm Medication</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 48. Percentage of respondents indicating that a product or service is “Expensive but fair”.

Figure 49. Percentage of respondents indicating that a product or service is “Too expensive”.

55
Attitudes on Internet, Social Media, and Veterinary Telehealth

Interest in Online Appointment Booking

Survey respondents were asked, “Would you like to be able to book an appointment online with your veterinarian?”

Forty-three per cent said they would like to have this option, while 31 per cent indicated they would not. An additional 26 per cent indicated that they already have this option available through their veterinary hospital.

Figure 50. Would you like to be able to book an appointment online with your veterinarian?
Connection with Veterinary Hospital’s Social Media Presence

Survey respondents were asked, “Please indicate which of the following social media pages you use to follow/like your veterinary clinic.”

Facebook was the social media platform on which most clients followed their veterinary clinic, with 25 per cent indicating this response. However, many clients either did not follow their veterinary clinic on any platform (35 per cent), were not aware of their veterinary clinic’s social media presence (25 per cent), or did not personally use social media (22 per cent).

Please note that the sum of the total is over 100 per cent, as respondents were able to select all applicable responses and social media platforms that they use to connect with their veterinary hospital.

**Figure 51.** Social media platforms used by respondents to connect with their veterinary hospital
Willingness to Use an Online Web Store

Survey respondents were asked, “How likely/unlikely are you to purchase the following items through a secure (password protected) online web store offered by your veterinarian?”

Pet owners were most interested in an online web store to purchase medication, with 38 per cent indicating they would be likely to utilize this service.

Figure 52. How likely are you to purchase medication through a secure online web store provided by your veterinarian?
**Figure 53.** How likely are you to purchase food through a secure online web store provided by your veterinarian?

**Figure 54.** How likely are you to purchase pet accessories through a secure online web store provided by your veterinarian?
First Thing in Emergency
Survey respondents were asked, “What is the first thing you would do if you experienced a medical emergency with your pet and your regular veterinary hospital was closed?”

The majority of respondents, at 55 per cent, indicated that they would go immediately to their nearest emergency veterinary hospital.

The next most common response was that they would call their veterinarian, who is available for after-hours emergencies, with 27 per cent selecting this response.

Four per cent indicated some “other” response. When asked to specify, responses included going to their veterinary hospital which is open 24 hours a day, calling another veterinary hospital, or going to a specific (not necessarily the nearest) emergency veterinary hospital.

**Figure 55.** What is the first thing you would do if you experienced a medical emergency with your pet and your regular veterinary hospital was closed?
Attitudes towards Wellness Plans

Amount Willing to Pay for Wellness Plan
Survey respondents were asked, “How much would you expect to pay for a comprehensive health-care package for your pet that included the following: Comprehensive annual physical exam, routinely recommended vaccines, early screening for serious illness (annual blood test), and unlimited free office visits for the year.”

Two years ago, a new response of “Don’t know” was added to this question.

The largest group of respondents (33 per cent) indicated that they were not interested in this type of package. The next most common response (27 per cent) was that respondents did not know how much they would be willing to pay for a Wellness Plan.

Four per cent indicated some “other” response, while an additional three per cent already had a package similar to the one described.
Figure 56. How much would you be willing to pay for a comprehensive health-care package for your pet?
Current Wellness Plan Price

The three per cent of respondents who indicated already having a Wellness Plan were asked, “How much are you currently paying for your healthcare/wellness plan for your pet?”

The largest group, with 33 per cent, indicated that they were currently paying over $50 per month for their pet’s Wellness Plan.

An additional 17 per cent indicated an “other” amount. When asked to specify, most indicated that they had multiple pets and thus paid different amounts for each pet, or had paid for the entire Wellness Plan upfront, rather than breaking the payments down into equal monthly remittances.

**Figure 57.** How much are you currently paying for your healthcare/wellness plan for your pet?
Satisfaction with Current Wellness Plan
The three per cent of respondents who indicated already having a Wellness Plan were asked, “Are you happy with your current healthcare/wellness plan for your pet?”

The majority of respondents, at 88 per cent, indicated that they were happy with their current Wellness Plan.

**Figure 58.** Are you happy with your current healthcare/wellness plan?
General Purchasing Habits

Sources of Pet Medication Utilized in Past Year
Survey respondents were asked, “Over the past year, which of the following places have you used to purchase medications for your pet(s)?”

Most pet owners purchased pet medication from their veterinary hospital, with 65 per cent indicating this response.

The next most common response was that the pet owner did not require medication and thus did not purchase any, representing 27 per cent of respondents.

Human pharmacies trailed the veterinary hospital by a wide margin, and saw slight declines in usage this year, while pet stores saw a slight increase.

Please note the total percentage sums to over 100 per cent, as respondents were able to select all applicable sources utilized in the past year.
Figure 59. Over the past year, which of the following places have you used to purchase medications for your pet(s)?
Sentiments on Cost of Drugs for Sick Pet(s) by Source of Pet Medication

The perception of the cost of drugs for sick pets is stratified by the source of pet medication. Figures are presented as a percentage of respondents citing each source of pet medications. Results are presented as total rankings, followed by the percentage of respondents who felt that drugs for sick pets were “Expensive but fair” depending on the source of medication. The proportion of respondents using each source of medication is given in brackets after the source name.

Those respondents who purchased their medications from the veterinary hospital were the most likely to quantify drugs for their sick pet as expensive but fair, with 60 per cent indicating this response.

![Bar chart showing sentiments on cost of drugs for sick pet by source of medication.](image)

**Figure 60.** Sentiments on cost of drugs for sick pet by source of pet medication.
Figure 61. Proportion of respondents who felt that drugs for sick pet(s) were “Expensive but fair” by source of pet medication.
Sentiments on Cost of Flea, Tick, and Heartworm Medication by Source of Pet Medication

The perception of the cost of flea, tick, and heartworm medication is stratified by the source of pet medication. Figures are presented as a percentage of respondents citing each source of pet medications. Results are presented as total rankings, followed by the percentage of respondents who felt that flea and heartworm medications were “Expensive but fair” depending on the source of medication. The proportion of respondents using each source of medication is given in brackets after the source name.

As was the case with drugs for sick pets, those respondents who purchased their medications from the veterinary hospital were most likely to quantify flea, tick, and heartworm medications as expensive but fair, with 52 per cent indicating this response.

![Sentiments on cost of flea, tick, and heartworm medication by source of pet medication](image)

**Figure 62.** Sentiments on cost of flea, tick, and heartworm medication by source of pet medication.
Figure 63. Proportion of respondents who felt that flea, tick, and heartworm medication was “Expensive but fair” by source of pet medication.
Purchase of Flea, Tick, and Heartworm Medication

Survey respondents were asked “Did you pick up flea/tick/heartworm medication this year?” The largest group of respondents, at 48 per cent, indicated that they had not yet picked up medication for their pet. Another 29 per cent purchased flea, tick, and heartworm medication and picked it up through a curbside/contactless pickup method.

Figure 64. Did you pick up flea/tick/heartworm medication this year?

Reason for Not Purchasing Flea, Tick, and Heartworm Medication

The 48 per cent of respondents who had not yet picked up flea, tick, and heartworm medication this year were then asked, “What is your reason for not purchasing flea/tick/heartworm medication?” Forty per cent of this group indicated they do not use these products on their pet, while another 31 per cent provided an “other” response. When asked to specify, some common other reasons were that their pet was an indoor cat, or that they planned on picking some up in the near future.

Figure 65. Did you pick up flea/tick/heartworm medication this year?
Source of Pet Food Utilized in the Past Year

Survey respondents were asked, “Over the past year, which of the following places have you used to purchase food for your pet(s)?”

The most common response was a pet food store (Pet-Valu, Ren’s Pet Depot, etc.), with 68 per cent indicating they had purchased food from this source within the past year.

Forty-two per cent of respondents had purchased their pet food from grocery stores (Loblaws, Zehrs, etc.) in the past year, while an additional 30 per cent had purchased from big box/department stores (Wal-Mart, Costco, etc.).

Twenty-two per cent of respondents had utilized their veterinary hospital as a source of pet food within the past year.

Please note the sum of the total percentage is over 100 per cent, as respondents were able to select all applicable sources utilized in the past year.
Figure 66. Over the past year, which of the following places have you used to purchase food for your pet(s)?
Sentiments on Cost of Pet Food by Source of Pet Food

The perception of the cost of pet food is stratified by the source of pet food. Figures are presented as a percentage of respondents citing each source of pet food. Results are presented as total rankings, followed by the percentage of respondents who felt that pet food was “Expensive but fair” depending on the source of food. The proportion of respondents using each source of pet food is given in brackets after the source name.

Those respondents purchasing their pet food from a veterinary hospital were the most likely to perceive pet food as expensive but fair, with 62 per cent indicating this sentiment.

**Figure 67.** Sentiments on cost of pet food by source of pet food.
Figure 68. Proportion of respondents who felt that pet food was “Expensive but fair” by source of pet food.
Primary Source of Pet Food
Survey respondents were asked, “Where do you buy food for your pet(s) the majority of the time?”

This is distinct from the earlier question on pet food, as that asked for all sources utilized in the past year and allowed for multiple selections. This question asked for the primary source of pet food and allowed only one response to be selected.

The largest group of respondents, at 46 per cent, indicated they purchased the majority of their pet food from pet food stores.

Twelve per cent utilized their veterinary hospital as the primary source of their pet food purchases.

Figure 69. Where do you buy food for your pet(s) the majority of the time?
Sentiments on Cost of Pet Food by Primary Source of Pet Food

The perception of the cost of pet food is stratified by the primary source of pet food. Figures are presented as a percentage of respondents citing each source of pet food. Results are presented as total rankings. The proportion of respondents using each source of pet food for the majority of their purchases is given in brackets after the source name.

Similar to other findings, those respondents who utilized the veterinary hospital for the majority of their pet food purchases were the most likely to perceive the food as expensive but fair, with 60 per cent indicating this sentiment.

Figure 70. Sentiments on the cost of pet food by primary source of pet food.
Conclusion
Overall, the OVMA’s 2020 Ontario Pet Owners Survey was a successful investigation into the attitudes and habits of pet owners in the province. The 9.4 per cent response rate, consistent with previous years, is high for an unsolicited electronic survey. The resulting data is considered sufficiently accurate to base policy decisions upon. The data is also robust enough to offer detailed cross-sectional analysis.

One of the primary objectives of the Ontario Pet Owners Survey is to gather information pertaining to attitudes towards veterinarians and the care received by pet owners and their animals. Over the past five years, there is little evidence to suggest a change in the public perception of veterinarians. Overall, respondents continued to feel that their veterinarians were skilled, courteous, friendly, and genuinely cared for the comfort and the well-being of their pets.

Price continues to be a consideration for pet owners yet is far from the most important metric by which they judge their veterinarians. Many pet owners are spending ever higher amounts at their veterinary hospital and are not basing their decisions principally on pricing.

Veterinary medicine has once again retained its status as “expensive but fair” in the eyes of the majority of pet owning respondents.

Finally, the 2020 Ontario Pet Owners Survey provided valuable insight into the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on pet owners and their actions.

If you have any questions regarding the OVMA’s 2020 Ontario Pet Owners Survey, please contact Dr. Chris Doherty at cdoherty@ovma.org or 1.800.670.1702 ext. 229.