

# Should you buy pet insurance?

Given the rising cost of purchase, grooming and medical care for pets, it may be time to cover the risks.

by Riju Mehta

Last year, Bengaluru-based Meenakshi Kohli spent nearly ₹30,000 on the surgery of her Labrador, who had ingested a plastic bottle, resulting in gastro-intestinal blockage. It was then that she decided to buy a ₹60,000 cover from Vetina Pawtect at ₹3,924 a year.

This care and concern for pets, especially dogs, marks the successful transition of Indians from pet owners 10 years ago, to pet parents now. With higher disposable incomes, more and more people are keeping and spending on pets: dogs as pets numbered 214 lakh in 2019, while there were 18 lakh pet cats, as per Statista. Little wonder then that India is the fastest growing pet care market in the world, according to Petext India '21. It is expected to grow at 14% a year to reach \$490 million (₹3,618 crore) by 2022.

This may also be the reason that pet insurance, a thriving industry abroad, is beginning to take off in India. "There has always been insurance for cattle and livestock, but with people spending ₹70,000-80,000 a year on dogs, insurance for these pets is now picking up," says Tarun Mathur, CBO, General Insurance and Co-founder, Policybazaar.

## What is covered?

While insurers like New India Assurance, United India Insurance and Oriental Insurance have been selling cattle insurance for years, new players have joined the race. Vetina Healthcare, in collaboration with Digit Insurance, launched Pawtect medical cover in 2018, while Bajaj Allianz General Insurance started offering insurance for dogs in August 2020. Though the public sector insurers offer only protection against death, the private players are covering both death and disease.

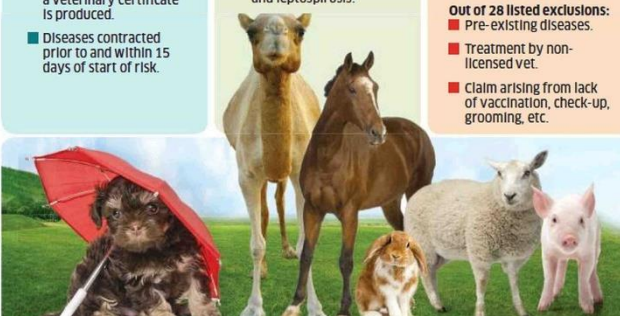
"Since 85% of Indian pet market is dominated by dogs, we decided to start with covers for dogs," says T.A. Ramalingam, Chief Technical Officer, Bajaj Allianz. "We offer two primary covers for surgeries and hospitalisation, while there are six optional covers or riders, including OPD, terminal diseases care, lost or stolen dogs, and third-party liability," he adds. Pawtect does not cover stolen or lost dogs and has no OPD cover. Oriental, besides death due to accident or disease, also covers entry fees for show dogs, and worldwide transit, and its coverage is similar to that of New India Assurance.

## What is the cost?

Bajaj Allianz has capped the cover size for surgery at ₹50,000, for hospitalisation at ₹10,000, while its third-party liability cover has two options: ₹5 lakh and ₹10 lakh. Pawtect, on the other hand, has fixed covers of ₹40,000, ₹60,000, ₹1 lakh and ₹1.5 lakh

Pet covers on offer

Bajaj Allianz	New India Assurance	Oriental Insurance	Vetina Pawtect
<p><b>Animals covered</b> <b>Dogs</b></p> <p><b>Covers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Surgeries</li> <li>■ Hospitalisation</li> <li>■ Mortality</li> <li>■ Terminal diseases</li> <li>■ Long term care</li> <li>■ OPD</li> <li>■ Theft/lost/straying</li> <li>■ Third-party liability</li> </ul> <p><b>Age limit</b> <b>Entry age</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 3 months - 4 years (giant breeds)</li> <li>■ 3 months - 7 years (small, medium, large breeds)</li> </ul> <p><b>Exit age</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 10 years (small, medium, large)</li> <li>■ 6 years (giant)</li> </ul> <p><b>Premium</b> <b>₹315 onwards</b></p> <p><b>General exclusions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Diseases for which preventive medicines/vaccine not been taken.</li> <li>■ Medication or treatment not recommended by a veterinarian.</li> <li>■ Accidents, disease prior to start of risk.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Animals covered</b> <b>Dogs</b></p> <p><b>Covers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Death</li> <li>■ Lost or stolen dogs</li> <li>■ Third-party liability</li> <li>■ Worldwide transit clause</li> <li>■ Loss of value</li> </ul> <p><b>Age limit</b> 8 weeks to 8 years</p> <p><b>Premium</b> <b>5%</b> of sum insured</p> <p><b>General exclusions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Death due to diseases like distemper, rabies, viral hepatitis, leptospirosis, viral enteritis. Covered only if dogs are vaccinated and a veterinary certificate is produced.</li> <li>■ Diseases contracted prior to and within 15 days of start of risk.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Animals covered</b> <b>Dog, rabbit, duck, horse, sheep, goat, pig, camel, etc</b></p> <p><b>Covers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Death</li> <li>■ Lost or stolen dogs</li> <li>■ Loss of show entry fee</li> <li>■ Third-party liability</li> <li>■ World wide transit clause</li> </ul> <p><b>Age limit</b> 8 weeks to 8 years</p> <p><b>Premium</b> <b>6%</b> flat on sum insured</p> <p><b>General exclusions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Partial and permanent disability of any nature.</li> <li>■ Rabies, canine distemper and leptospirosis.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Animals covered</b> <b>Dogs</b></p> <p><b>Covers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Major illness</li> <li>■ Accidental Injuries</li> <li>■ Third-party liability</li> <li>■ Major soft tissue surgeries</li> <li>■ Death</li> </ul> <p><b>Age limit</b> 8 weeks to 8 years</p> <p><b>Sum Insured</b> <b>₹40,000 - ₹1.5 lakh</b></p> <p><b>Premium</b> <b>₹1,724-17,980</b> (For Lhasa Apso from 8 weeks to 8 years). Premium will vary depending on age, breed &amp; plan.</p> <p><b>General exclusions</b> <b>Out of 28 listed exclusions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pre-existing diseases.</li> <li>■ Treatment by non-licensed vet.</li> <li>■ Claim arising from lack of vaccination, check-up, grooming, etc.</li> </ul>



and one can choose from Red, Yellow and Blue Ribbon plans. The premium is determined by the breed, age, size and even gender (higher for females) of the dog. For New India, it is fixed at 5% of the sum insured, and for Oriental at 6% of the cover. You can get quotes from these insurers at [www.bajajallianz.com/pet-dog-insurance.html](http://www.bajajallianz.com/pet-dog-insurance.html) and [www.pawtectindia.com/](http://www.pawtectindia.com/), and can download application form for New India Assurance at [www.newindia.co.in/portal/product/knowMore/RURAL/DG](http://www.newindia.co.in/portal/product/knowMore/RURAL/DG).

All insurers typically require some form of identification at the time of applying for the cover and can vary from colour

photo and nose print to photo of microchip or RFID tag.

## Exclusions & limitations

Insurers typically have a waiting period of 15-30 days before the cover starts, and the age limit for the pet is 8 weeks to 8 years, other than Bajaj Allianz, whose entry and exit ages vary from 3 months to 10 years.

There is also a co-pay or deductible imposed by all insurers: 10% for surgery and hospitalisation in case of Bajaj Allianz; 20% of the dog's market value or sum insured, for Oriental and New India Assurance. In case of Pawtect, if the pet

is less than eight years old, ₹1,000 or 5% of payable amount (whichever is higher) will be deducted. If it is over eight years old, 75% of admissible amount will be paid and 50% if the pet is over 10 years. Pre-existing diseases are also not covered by insurers, as are specific illnesses like distemper and rabies, which result in death of the pet.

So, should you buy a cover for your pet? "It is definitely advisable as people are spending more and more on pets these days. They not only cost more, but the medical costs are also rising, with an average surgery easily costing ₹20-30,000," says Mathur.