

Why does Veterinary Treatment Cost What it Does?

You've heard the joke.."I must own part of this clinic with what I've spent over the years!" "I should have shares in this place!"

We often hear these statements and we are asked at Cheshire Pet, why vet treatment costs so much. Clients are often confused by their accounts so we'd like to explain the reasons behind vet fees. We believe we provide the very best care for your beloved pet and we'd like to explain why....

The veterinary profession basically provides a private health service for animals as there is no NHS provision for our pets.

In the case of Cheshire Pet and other veterinary clinics, the cost of our veterinary treatment reflects the facilities we offer. Here are some of the costs of running an equipping our practice:

Our haematology machine which means we can provide immediate valuable information on the health of your pet cost us £17,000. Also our lab equipment, which enables us to process blood tests in the clinic without being sent to an external laboratory providing a quick results, cost about £42,000. This doesn't include sundries which we order on a weekly basis in order to run all the machines.

We have just had to replace our old xray machine with a brand new digitally-ready machine and this cost £20,000. We hope to use the new machine digitally next year when this will cost considerably more. This also doesn't include all the sundries we use daily to use the machine and general inspections and training for its use.

Our monthly account for our prescription drugs every month is on average between £20,000-25,000.

Our endoscope equipment, which we have recently upgraded, cost £23,000 and this enables us to endoscope animals. Endoscopy diagnoses everything from thoracic tumours to blocked blades of grass!

Our Tonometer Pen (a ophthalmic instrument to check pets' intraocular pressure - a signs of things like glaucoma) cost £2100.

Our hydrotherapy unit – a water walker treadmill providing physiotherapy and hydrotherapy for orthopaedic problems – cost over £21,000. It is an expensive machine to run but we feel provides an invaluable service for orthopaedic and obese patients.

At Cheshire Pet we have 4 fully qualified nurses which is rather unusual within a veterinary practice. Often vet clinics are staffed by nurses but often these can be 'practice nurses' meaning they haven't passed any nurse qualifications and therefore cannot be guaranteed to be a specific level of capability recognised at national level. Cheshire Pet prides itself on having 4 fully qualified nurses which gives the vets here great confidence in their ability. If any problems arise during an anaesthetic procedure or recovery phase, the vets have the back-up that all our nurses know exactly what emergency procedures to follow. If the vets are in theatre and your pet is involved in an emergency all our nurses are fully qualified in triage nursing to assess and treat your pet until the vet is freed up from theatre.

Our computer system - which is extremely invaluable in helping us provide the efficient service we do, costs over £22,000 every time we upgrade and obviously this comes with a monthly backup fee and frequent software upgrades.

These are only some of the costs that veterinary clinics have to pay for but hopefully goes some way to explain why vet fees cost what they cost. At Cheshire Pet we undertake 99% of procedures at our clinic because we have invested in the equipment – just a fraction of which have been mentioned above. We do have to occasionally refer pets for MRI scans and although we would love to have a scanner on site this would cost over £140,000 so this is not something we are considering at present.

We do appreciate that people often have this image of a vet or nurse living in a mansion, driving his/her fleet of cars with their children all at private school but this isn't always the case. As with all professions, much investment (both financially and professionally) is needed to provide this service and we hope you feel we provide you with a service that is knowledgeable, friendly and authoritative. (And have you seen some of the old bangers our staff drive?!)

Despite some thoughts to the contrary(!) the veterinary profession is a vocation, and our vets and nurses entered it because of their love of animals. Like all of you, vets and nurses want what is best for your pet. At Cheshire Pet we never put an animal to sleep if it is healthy – despite whether clients can afford their vet's fees or not. We simply would not entertain the idea. In the past couple of years we have rehomed between 15-10 cats and the occasional dog. Obviously the first port of call is to rehome the stray animal (either handed into us by clients / strangers or the RSPCA) to one of the Cheshire Pet team as we all seem to be gluttons for punishment but if this isn't possible we always treat the animal in order to rehome it when it is healthy enough. Only earlier this year a cat that we named Daisy was handed into us after being hit by a train. Edward amputated her leg & tail and debrided & stitched a huge wound on her side. This treatment and after care would've cost over £1000 but there was no way we weren't going to give her a chance of survival. As some of you already know, we had our very own practice cat Hermione, who was handed into us in 2004. She lived and was treated here for any illnesses for 3 years until Jessica fell in love with her so much she couldn't bear to be parted from her, even at the weekends. So she went to live in Northwich. Other examples of treating stray animals for free include; Flo (a lurcher pup with a very old wound on her groin) who now lives with Becky; Ned the 4 week old kitten, the only survivor from his 4 litter mates, who was flea infested, dehydrated and malnourished but is now living happily in Goostrey. Ron was handed into us with a fractured pelvis and broken tail, but Uncle Edward fixed this and he was rehomed to a friend of Jessica's where he is living out his old age in comfort.

So we hope you understand why, in general, vet's fees are what they are and that this has given you an insight into how our practice is run. Because we have no NHS we are a private health scheme for your pet – isn't it a good job we're a nation of animal lovers!