

An Easier Way

How the right preventive plan can transform a pet's health and veterinary clinic's bottom line.



For Florida-based Riverview Veterinary Hospital, having clients covered with preventive essentials like vaccines and a year's worth of heartworm, flea and tick prevention is critical. "Especially living in Florida, we have a high risk for fleas and ticks, heartworm and intestinal parasites," said Patricia Davis, Practice Manager. "We're a vector for all those parasites."

A few years ago, Riverview rolled out a pet wellness program in the hopes of alleviating some of the more preventable pet health issues that clients were experiencing. Unfortunately, the logistics behind the previous wellness plan program created headaches for both clients and team members. There were problems with processing payments, too many options that were confusing to pet owners, and too many add-ons that clients didn't want.

"We had some initial concerns with our previous pet care plan and were in the process of attempting to update it," said Michaela Frasier, Inventory Manager and Head of Reception for Riverview. "However, that process ended up being too difficult, so we started reaching out to other prevention plans to see how the process would work and how it would be to set it up."

Through TVC, Riverview chose MWI's Easy Care Program, which provides a tailored approach to adding preventive care plans to your practice without adding the burden of plan administration, payment processing, and marketing. Indeed, from set-up to training and implementation, Frasier and Davis both said the Easy Care Program has alleviated headaches in more ways than one. In the following article, Riverview shared some of the ways the MWI's Easy Care Program is benefitting how the practice delivers care.

Smooth sign-ups For starters, the sign-up process for MWI's Easy Care Program is simple, Davis said. Riverview's front staff has printout forms available for clients. The printouts are arranged by feline and canine, junior and senior age ranges. There is a QR code on the form, so clients can scan it and sign themselves up as they're waiting for their pets to have their bloodwork done or weight taken.

"Any questions they have, they can ask us right then and there," Davis said. For older pet owners who aren't comfortable signing up online, Riverview staff can do it for them while they are in the office. "We made it very easy for clients," she said. "It's pretty self-explanatory. So far, we haven't had any issues with staff or client compliance. Everybody's been super happy with it."

Manageable payments. Davis said Riverview team members have been elated to offer a plan without clients having to take out their credit card or start a credit line for it. Clients can pay for the plan throughout the year in more manageable monthly installments. For instance, one client who recently visited said initially she couldn't afford the annual prevention check-up and would come back in the fall.

However, the Riverview team explained how the prevention program could divvy up payments on a monthly basis. After hearing that, the client signed up on the spot. "So instead of missing a few months of heartworm prevention' or purchasing an over-the-counter product that doesn't really cover heartworms' or going online to try to purchase



something, she was able to come in the office and get everything done in one day," said Michaela.

Ability to add-on. With MWI's Easy Care Program, clients have access to added-on services such

as dental or spay-and-neuter for an additional cost. "But they're not tied to those services," Davis said. "They don't have to have it. They don't feel like they're wasting their money and paying for things they're not using."

KEY DIFFERENTIATORS

MWI Easy Care Program administrative support

No other preventive care plan program offers an administrative burden lift quite like the MWI Easy Care Program does in the areas of A/R, pet participation tracking capabilities and most of all, DVM compensation tracking and reporting capabilities.

Power of administrative support: On average 90 percent of pet parents renew their preventive care plans after year 1 which speaks to the efficacy of the guidance and support in plan design and pricing.

MWI Easy Care Program marketing support

MWI's Easy Care Program truly differentiates itself with digital marketing tools that allow the hospital/clinic to send the right marketing message to the right client at the right time

Power of marketing support: The latest 6 practices that have enrolled in the MWI Easy Care Program have seen an average of 46 percent of pet owners enroll in the practice's preventive care plan directly from these targeted emails.

Inventory keeps flowing. From a revenue standpoint, the MWI Easy Care Program keeps Riverview's inventory flowing, so they're not stocking preventives for a long period of time. Riverview has also found they're able to vaccinate pets appropriately because of the preventive plan.

In the past, some clients would come in and just get a rabies vaccine but decline other needed vaccines because they couldn't afford them. Now with the MWI Easy Care Program, they're able to get a rabies and a distemper leptos as part of the services covered "at a fair cost," Davis said.

No salesmanship. Best of all to Riverview team members, the MWI Easy Care Program sells itself. Riverview's previous wellness plan gave the technicians

anxiety because it made them feel like they were selling something. The first thing Riverview's leadership team said to staff when they started the MWI Easy Care Program was there would be no pressure and no stress. "We're not trying to upsell something; we're trying to offer something," Davis said. "If a client doesn't want it, that's completely OK for them to say no."

Davis said the shift in mindset was helpful because it also came off to clients that the new program wasn't something they were trying to be sold so a staff member could get a bonus. "Our staff could now easily go in and tell them: 'This is our new pet plan. It's able to help with your annual prevention and yearly services, and it breaks down into a budget-friendly cost.' Being able to explain to them the normal

day to day preventive care that's covered simplified things."

A leg up on the competition.

The preventive plan helps veterinary clinics compete against big box retailers, Frasier said. Rather than clients having to do the extra work of getting a written prescription and sending it to a competitor, "we're able to just get everything done in one day for them and there's no extra work on their end," she said. "So we definitely have a leg up. We're seeing less written prescriptions being sent to outside pharmacies and filling them here in-house with our stock."

Improved outcomes. Not only do the plans include lower costs, but veterinary clinics are able to diagnose issues earlier. Bloodwork can be an expense

Pet owner priorities

According to a recent Packaged Facts survey, pet owners had 11 priorities when it comes to veterinary services.

It's especially important to me that my vet...	Cat owners	Dog owners
...focuses on preventive care	49%	50%
...be personally available for my pet's emergencies	39%	40%
...make it easy for me to get prescriptions* filled wherever I want	37%	40%
...be lower cost	36%	35%
...help provide payment options	31%	30%
...advises me on pet foods to buy	30%	27%
...provide wellness plans to manage costs	25%	24%
...provide customized services	24%	24%
...provide online options for purchasing medications*	22%	26%
...participate in pet welfare/rescue causes	21%	20%
...provide guidance on getting a new cat/dog	20%	16%

*Flea/tick/heartworm

Source: Packaged Facts August-September 2021 Survey of Pet Owners

people aren't willing to approve because of the cost. But with bloodwork part of the yearly checkup, Riverview has caught a lot of early problems, especially in junior pets, such as kidney failure, UTIs, and parasites. "This helps the doctors be able to do their job and build a better relationship with not just the patient, but the client themselves to have a good faith in our hospital," Davis said.

Make it easy for your clients

Looking at economic trends, it's important for veterinary clinics to offer services that resonate with today's consumers. MWI Technology & Solutions Strategist Zachary Melton said with Millennials becoming the predominant buyer in the marketplace, subscription-based services are more and more popular. "Think Netflix, Hulu, BarkBox," Melton said. "I pay X amount of dollars, and I get something every month. People are used to that now and want it."

Consumers also want convenience with how they pay. With the median average weekly income in America around \$984, and the average cost of a pet wellness visit near \$415, you're looking at almost half a person's paycheck for one wellness visit in the traditional model. Compare that \$415 price tag to a more bite-sized \$34 a month cost. "You're lowering that barrier of access to health care," Melton said, "and you're allowing them to say 'yes' to more recommendations, which makes it easier for them to do business with you."

You're also keeping more of your business that would otherwise drift



toward big box and online retailers. "How many scripts are veterinary clinics giving out to competitors?" Melton asked. "With this plan, you've built the parasiticides in, and you've made it easier for the owner to stay compliant all year by only having to spend \$34 a month. Ultimately, you're bringing back in revenue that has been walking out the back door. You can reinvest that revenue back in your hospital, your staff, or whatever you want to do."

Indeed, when Melton is talking about MWI's Easy Care Program with practice owners, his big sticking point is, make it easier for clients to do business with you. "They're choosing you right now for a reason," he said. "You've built trust and rapport. They like you and they like your bedside manner, but they're going to these other places because those other places are more convenient. So, do anything that you can to make it easier

for your pet owners to say 'yes' to you, and to say 'yes' to your recommendations.

"If you can do that, you're going to win clients, strengthen that bond and you're going to help yourself out in the process," he said. "When it comes down to it, make it easier for them to say yes and they will stick around longer." ■

Preventive care plans meet 6 of 11 pet owner priorities

- ▶ Preventive Care
- ▶ Lower Cost
- ▶ Payment Options
- ▶ Wellness Plan
- ▶ Customized Services
- ▶ Access to Flea/Tick/HW at Competitive Price Point