

PART 2

You are going to read an article about keeping pets. For questions 8-15, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

The yearly report of the Blue Cross - the charity that runs animal hospitals - reported a 9% increase in the number of animals it treated at its four centres. Many pet owners cannot afford their vets' bills and are now going to the charity. One of the main reasons for the increase in bills is a new European Community law which has doubled the cost of veterinary medicines.

Vets' costs are going up, and like all small businesses they have to keep up with the times - if an animal has to have an expensive treatment then people have to pay for it. The problem is that the government pays for people's treatment in Britain, and so nobody realises what the true cost of medicine is. A spokesperson for the British Veterinary Association thinks that prices are not too high but the increasing number of people taking their animal to charities is more a reflection of unemployment and poverty than the prices charged by vets.

Although the Blue Cross is geared to help unemployed people and their pets, it is unlikely to turn away any sick or injured animal. Last year an animal was treated every two minutes and each centre carried out about 500 operations every month.

But there are ways to cut back on vets' bills. When buying a pet, people should think about the size of the animal. Medicine is given to animals according to their weight, so the bigger the dog, the more medicine it needs and the more expensive the treatment. The Blue Cross discourages buying exotic pets such as snakes and strange birds, as they require expert knowledge and the cost of keeping them goes up immediately. They suggest that small dogs or cats or animals such as guinea pigs and mice are much cheaper to care for.

Insuring pets against sickness or accidents is becoming a fast growing business in an effort to cope with soaring vet bills. It can cost as little as £65 a year for a dog and £49 for a cat. People insure their cars and the contents of their houses, so why not insure something as valuable as a pet? But certain animals - such as pit bull terriers - are classed as dangerous dogs by the government, and are not covered by insurance.

The Blue Cross estimates that 10% of pets in Britain are insured, and there has been a steady increase in the last three years, but they say that people need to be made more aware of the advantages. They can even cover the cost of an animal causing a traffic accident, for example. But sometimes it is not until some pet owners are confronted with the possibility of a bill for thousands of pounds that they realise the value of insurance.

8 Why has the cost of animal medicine risen so much?

- A The European Community has passed a new law.
- B Vets are running small businesses.
- C The price of chemicals has risen.
- D Vets want to make bigger profits.

9 Why don't people know what medical treatment costs?

- A They never need it.
- B Vets never tell them.
- C Animal treatment is very specialised.
- D The government pays for their treatment.

10 What do vets think the real reason for going to the Blue Cross is?

- A There are more Blue Cross clinics.
- B People are poor and out of work.
- C The treatment is quicker.
- D They do a lot of operations.

11 What can increase the price of medical treatment?

- A animals with unusual diseases
- B the cost of new technology
- C the lack of insurance
- D larger and heavier animals

12 What does the Blue Cross suggest you should not do?

- A buy big dogs
- B buy expensive medicines
- C buy unusual animals
- D keep guinea pigs and mice

13 What does "they" (line 17) refer to?

- A large pets
- B exotic pets
- C vets
- D Blue Cross clinics

14 What should pet owners be doing?

- A insuring their animals
- B taking better care of their pets
- C trying to prevent accidents
- D giving animals cheaper medicine

15 When do some people become aware of the benefits of insurance?

- A when the animal is injured
- B when they are faced with a huge bill
- C when the animal is sick
- D when they ask the insurance company