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Pets Provide Better Human Health and Wellness and Reduce Healthcare Costs

As the North American Pet Health Insurance Association celebrates National Pet Health Insurance Month, the association shares the positive impact of pets on human healthcare.

(Pittsburgh, PA) September 14, 2009: The North American Pet Health Insurance Association (NAPHIA) has raised awareness of the value of pets, and pet health insurance, by designating September as National Pet Health Insurance Month.

Pet health insurance provides a financial safety net for pet owners, and often gives them the ability to provide a higher level of care to their ill or injured pets. Every day, pet health insurance spares pet owners the excruciating decision to limit veterinary care for beloved pets, or even to euthanize them, due to economic limitations.

As pet owners consider health insurance for their pets, they might think of it in the context of their own health. Research shows that humans with a puppy, kitten, dog, or cat in their home enjoy a measurable improvement in health, and in fact spend less on their own healthcare.

Documented studies on human health suggest that pet ownership bestows the following benefits:

- Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease
- Higher survival rates from heart attacks
- Significantly lower use of general practitioner services
- Reduced risk of asthma and allergic rhinitis in children exposed to pet allergens during the first year of their life
- Better physical and psychological well-being for seniors

According to the research by the Delta Society and others, there is not a significant social or economic difference between people who do or do not have a pet that adequately explains the differences in health outcome, leading to the conclusion that pet ownership itself is the primary cause of the positive benefits.

The Delta Society is a human services organization dedicated to improving people's health and well-being. The mission of Delta Society is to help lead the world in advancing human health and well-being through positive interactions with animals.

“At a time in which our society is looking for treatment alternatives to complement western medicine, research is consistently demonstrating that pets can have a profound impact on people’s physical and

emotional health. Delta Society has focused on this single concept since 1977. We are excited to see more healthcare professionals and other leaders embracing the fact that pets can be a cost-effective approach to improving people's health while enriching their lives," stated Lawrence Norvell, President and CEO of Delta Society.

According to NAPHIA Executive Director Loran Hickton, "As the human healthcare debate continues, some have asked, 'why provide pet insurance when so many humans do not have health coverage?' First, we know that the uncertainty of the current economy makes pet insurance critically important for the financial well-being of all pet owners. Many pet owners simply don't have the disposable income to cover emergencies or even routine pet health care, and each day, pets face economic euthanasia. In addition to financial benefits, now more than ever it is essential to share the human health benefits of pet ownership. Our pets are part of our families; they make a difference and contribute to better health and lower human healthcare costs. To people without pets this may be hard to understand, but most pet owners corroborate the research that indicates having a pet improves life and a sense of wellness and health!"

During September, NAPHIA is sponsoring a nationwide contest to select pet health insurance customers' favorite veterinary practices from over 20,000 across North America. Pet owners are posting pictures of their pets, along with a story, at the NAPHIA website. The contest highlights the care and recovery of pets for whom pet health insurance helped to provide needed care. There are prizes for the pet owner, an educational grant provided to the veterinary care provider, and a donation to the pet shelter or rescue group of the winner's choice. The National Pet Health Insurance Month contest page is http://www.naphia.org/pet_health_month.htm

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About pets in the United States

Research shows that pets are truly regarded as members of the American family. About 60% of U.S. households have at least one dog, cat, bird, or other companion animal. Many have more than one. There are more than 72 million pet dogs in the U.S. and nearly 82 million pet cats. Projected 2009 pet expenditures for North America are over \$45 billion, of which \$25 billion will be spent on veterinary related care.

About The North American Pet Health Insurance Association

Founded in 2007, the North American Pet Health Insurance Association is committed to educating and promoting the values and benefits of pet health insurance to North American pet owners, the general public, and the veterinary industry. September is National Pet Health Insurance Month. Pet parents can enter their stories, pictures and favorite veterinary practices for special prizes and an educational grant for the veterinary care provider. To learn more, visit our website at <http://www.naphia.org>

About Delta Society

Delta Society was founded in 1977 by a human psychologist and veterinarians who observed in their own practices that pets had a positive effect on their human patients. They started the organization to fund some of the first credible research proving that animals have a profound impact on people's health by lowering their blood pressure, reducing stress and anxiety levels, stimulating the release of endorphins which make people feel good, and so much more. Today, Delta Society is an international non-profit organization focused on building awareness and empowering people to interact with companion, therapy, and service animals as a way to improve their own health and well-being, as well as the health of others in their community. To learn more, visit their website at <http://www.deltasociety.org>.

References - American Veterinary Medical Association, *The Delta Society, Healthy Reasons to Have a Pet, Compiled List of Some Research Findings The Animal/Human Bond: A Prescription for Good Health*. Carson, Lynn. *American Journal of Health Education*, 2006 Nov-Dec; 37(6): 361-365. *Pet ownership and human health: a brief review of evidence and issues June McNicholas, psychologist¹, Andrew Gilbey, lecturer², Ann Rennie, general practitioner³, Sam Ahmedzai, professor of palliative medicine⁴, Jo-Ann Dono, director³, Elizabeth Ormerod, veterinary surgeon³ 1 Croit Cullach, Durnamuck, Dundonnell, Ross-shire, 2 Massey University, New Zealand, 3 Society for Companion Animal Studies, Blue Cross, Burford, Oxon, 4 Royal Hallamshire Hospital, University of Sheffield *The Human-Animal Bond: Health Implications Across the Lifespan*. Horowitz, Sala. *Alternative & Complementary Therapies*, 2008 Oct; 14(5): 251-256.