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Vet-AI and Jooi reveal new research insights on telemedicine and changing pet owner expectations regarding accessing veterinary care

70% of pet owners believe pets deserve access to the same online treatment options that people benefit from

Vet-AI and Jooi Pet Care have released new insights into the effectiveness and safety of remote prescribing collected from tens of thousands of consults during the pandemic, as well as exclusive pet parent research which lifts the lid on owner expectations and needs.

During the pandemic while able to prescribe remotely, Vet-AI and Jooi has used its telemedicine service to collect data from 38,449 remote veterinary consultations to gather evidence to understand more about where remote care can be effective and also, where it can't. The data shows that with the right protocols and auditing in place remote veterinary care can be safe and effective.

The insights were first shared in a live webinar called The Great British Data Show last week hosted by The Veterinary Virtual Care Association (VVCA) in the USA. VVCA is a global, non-profit association dedicated to developing best practices for delivering virtual care for animals, defining quality standards and protocols for practicing virtual care, sharing experiences among practice teams, engaging with virtual care providers and advocating for policies in support of quality virtual care.

Robert Dawson, MRCVS, veterinarian and co-founder of Vet-AI (Jooi Pet Care) says: "As a tech company Vet-AI was already well equipped to collect and record presenting, symptom and differential diagnoses, as well as the outcomes for every single consultation. This has enabled us to gather a solid data set to help us understand the role telemedicine can play in the future of the veterinary profession."

Consulting Data results

- Just over 80% of the consults being seen were manageable by a variety of remote means
- Around a third of consultations (29%) required follow-up with the remote team
- 1 in 4 were recommended some form of product – not always prescription medication
- 12% were deemed as not needing veterinary care
- Just over 3% were offered in-home lab tests
- 17.6% were deemed to need non-urgent in-person veterinary care, and only 4% were deemed emergencies

- Of the 25% that required medication, it was roughly 50/50 prescription versus non-prescription products (which equated to 5,405 prescription medications being provided)

The most common categories presenting, were dermatology, gastrointestinal and clients seeking preventative care.

- Over 80% of cases prescribed for were dermatological, parasites and non-specific, musculoskeletal and ophthalmic; usually quite low risk cases
- A third of medications dispensed were parasiticides and around 30% were some form of antimicrobial with topical antimicrobials twice as high oral antibiotics (9%)
- Antimicrobials were prescribed in only 4.2% of all remote consultations, significantly lower than the documented incidence in general practice

For every patient treated remotely with a prescription medication, they had follow-up consultations booked in and in two thirds of cases, the follow ups were completed. The majority of cases were deemed as completely resolved (acute conditions, 47%) or the expected response to treatment was being seen (chronic conditions, 42.5%). Roughly 5% of cases resolved partially with remote prescription but were referred into a local practice for further in-person work up. 4% were referred into bricks and mortar practice as the medications prescribed remotely failed to resolve the symptoms at all.

There were a small number of adverse events (1. 2% of all cases, 44 incidents). Every single one was followed up and reported to the VMD. All reactions were deemed mild. In all cases of adverse effects, it was found that medication was used appropriately, given at the correct dose and that a physical exam would have been unlikely to change the outcome.

Pet Parent research

As well as gathering consulting data, Vet-AI and Jooi Pet Care commissioned a survey of 1,843 British cat and dog owners online conducted by YouGov* to understand more about pet owner needs and expectations with regards to veterinary care. This research found that 7 in 10 (70%) agreed that just as people can get medical assessments online and prescriptions delivered to their door, the same services should be available for pets too.

Further reinforcing a shift in pet owner expectations when it comes to vet care, 8 in 10 (82%) cat and dog owners believe online veterinary services and support should be available to those who wish to use them with 61% stating they would use an online consultation service for a diagnosis with a qualified vet and 58% would be more likely to use an online vet service than a physical vet surgery if it meant they didn't have to leave home.

Robert Dawson continues: "Video consultations and responsible remote prescribing by experienced vets can offer pet owners a safe and quality alternative to visiting a veterinary practice, opening up services to owners who were previously excluded or who find it difficult to access vet care. The YouGov poll found 74% of cat and dog owners said online care can complement the services offered in a physical vet practice, and that they would be more likely

to use an online service over visiting a vet surgery if it were cheaper (75%), quicker than waiting for a physical appointment (74%), or available 24/7 with no extra cost (80%).”

Sadly, just over a quarter of British dog and cat owners that had not taken their pet to the vets, despite believing their pet might need care in the past two years (26%), said that the worry of cost had stopped them.

The accessibility of vet care is an issue that has been exacerbated by COVID-19, with a huge surge in demand and acquisition of pets, combined with the economic consequences of multiple lockdowns and the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. The professional online vet advice provided by Jooi Pet Care has seen a staggering 900% increase in demand.¹

In the YouGov survey, as well as affordability concerns, reduced stress on pets, home delivery of prescriptions and overall convenience were listed by owners as some of *the* key benefits they see with online veterinary services for their pets when they fall ill, or they need general pet wellbeing advice for their four-legged pals.

Leading veterinary dermatologist and Jooi co-founder, Sarah Warren, said: “It’s not surprising that the findings from the YouGov research are showing that pet owners are looking for more choice and affordability now. Even with lockdowns now starting to ease, various forms of restrictions will still be in place for the foreseeable future and, coupled with the continued economic impacts of the pandemic, it means more owners than ever are facing financial hardship, and will need help accessing quality veterinary care. It is certainly a very big worry that some people are looking to search engines to diagnose their pets.

“Online veterinary services have provided an essential lifeline during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to do so today. Managing less urgent cases with remote consultations, provides an affordable and convenient way for pet parents who would otherwise struggle to access high quality veterinary care.

“It is clear that across the vet industry as whole, we all need to work together to understand where technology can enhance existing services to improve access and reduce care costs to deliver the very best people and pet outcomes.”

The ownership of pets has also been a mental wellbeing lifeline to many owners during the pandemic to combat social loneliness as clearly is illustrated in the high number of people acquiring pets since the pandemic began; research by the Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA)* shows that 3.2 million households in the UK acquired a pet since the start of the pandemic**. The YouGov poll found that owning a pet dog or cat has become more important to just over half of those surveyed (53%) during the COVID-19 pandemic with 75% stating they are important in helping combat loneliness and 66% saying that an important reason for owning a pet is that it gives them a sense of purpose.

¹ Jooi, 29 March 2020 - 9 November 2020

During the first lockdown alone, Jooi Pet Care wrote out over 3,000 prescription medications for pets and can effectively treat over 80% of conditions using technology, with most being routine or preventive appointments with an extremely low level of risk.

Sarah adds: "I think it's fair to say that the world has changed significantly over the past year and these findings show that pet owners are seeking new ways to access care for their pets; not dissimilar to how people can easily access care both on and offline for themselves through a range of digital and physical medical services from the NHS, pharmacies and doctors."

Commenting on the research presented by Vet-AI, Ali McIntyre, Executive Director of the VVCA says: "The evidence shared by Vet-AI is ground-breaking. Using a telemedicine service to collect data to gather such significant and robust volumes of insight on remote prescribing and telemedicine, is transformational. It demonstrates true evidence-based results that will help deliver better veterinary care for the future. The results speak for themselves in terms of the hugely positive impacts and outcomes achieved for pets and their owners.

"The same high standards of veterinary care are similar across the UK, Canada and the US. Using data and leveraging AI to take veterinary care to a whole new level, is incredibly exciting for the veterinary profession as a whole. We are delighted that the VVCA and Vet-AI are now working together with additional stakeholders on a data collection strategy across the US and beyond, to understand more about where remote care can be effective and also where it can't.

"Vet-AI's evidence is clearly showing that remote veterinary care can be safe and effective, but it also demonstrates that the benefits extend to pets, pet parents and the wellbeing of the profession too."

The VVCA webinar was attended by delegates from the USA, Canada, UK, India and across Europe and the full recording can be viewed here: [\(52\) Great British Data Show | Veterinary Telemedicine Across the Pond - YouTube](#)

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

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*All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 4199 adults, of which 1,843 were dog and/ or cat owners. Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st - 3rd December 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

**[PFMA releases latest Pet Population Data | PFMA News](#)

About Jooi

Jooi Pet Care is an app from Research and Development company Vet-AI which launched spring 2019 to tackle the rising costs of a vet care for pets by offering pet owners remote consultations with real vets and nurses, via their smartphones.

Designed to make pet care accessible and affordable for everyone, Jooi is an artificial intelligence app set to revolutionise the UK and global vet market. Built by a team of experts with cutting edge, bespoke technology, Jooi allows pet parents to diagnose and receive recommended treatment for pets from the comfort of their home.

Founded in 2017 by entrepreneurs; tech expert Paul Hallett and experienced vets Robert Dawson and Sarah Warren, Jooi brings med-tech to the homes of pet parents.

Dedicated to digitalising animal health industries, Paul set out to secure funding, approaching one of the largest animal health companies in the UK and met his business partner, Robert Dawson. Jooi officially launched in 2019, followed by their partnership with Animal Friends Insurance that launched in 2020 which significantly catapulted their growth.

The founders spent eighteen months researching and understanding, what pet owners' needs are and what technology is currently available for pet diagnosis. The more research they did, the more exciting their idea became.

Co-founders Paul, Sarah, and Robert are investors in people, building a team of industry experts including vets, PhD level data scientists and technology programmers. The team consists of OBE award-winning entrepreneur Jonathan Sands as chairman alongside senior data scientist Trevor Hardcastle, a renowned computational physicist, frequent presenter at international conferences with 16 published papers to his name.

The firm has partnered with several leading animal welfare organisations including Animal Friends Insurance, PDSA and Zoetis.

The firm which launched in the UK in 2019 has achieved over 135,000 registered pets to date.

The young firm is set on continually developing its AI technology to automate diagnosis, improve healthcare and enhance how both vets and pets live.

Visit <https://www.joipetcare.com/> for more information.