



## ***Vet2Pet and Colorado State University Release Pet Owner's Perceptions and Use of Veterinary Mobile Applications Study***

**Durango, CO, February 27, 2017-** Vet2Pet partnered with a Colorado State University professor, Dr. Lori Kogan, to survey pet owners on their views and experiences with using a mobile app for veterinary contact and services.

Mobile apps – it seems like they are everywhere, and can do nearly everything. Mobile apps are software applications designed to run on smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices. They are typically available through app stores. As of June 2016, there were 2.2 million apps available at Google Play store and two billion apps available in Apple's App Store, the two leading app stores in the world (1).

We have apps to listen to music, play games, shop, and stay in contact with friends and family. Given the ubiquitous presence of mobile apps in our lives, we feel it is important to know how pet owners feel about using a mobile app to connect with their veterinary care provider.

The anonymous survey was distributed through Amazon Mechanical Turk, a crowdsourcing online labor market that coordinates the supply and the demand of cognitive tasks. The survey was made available between 10/5/16- 10/23/16. Data from 610 respondents who met the inclusion criteria (i.e., live in the US, have at least one dog and/or one cat, and have a regular veterinarian they had seen in the last 12 months) were included for analysis.

Our sample consisted of mostly women (73% females and 27% males) between 18 and 40 years old (63%). The respondents tended to be college educated (38% had a 4 year degree and 18% had graduate degree).

Here are some highlights of what we found.

Pet owners and mobile app usage: No big surprise - pet owners like their apps!

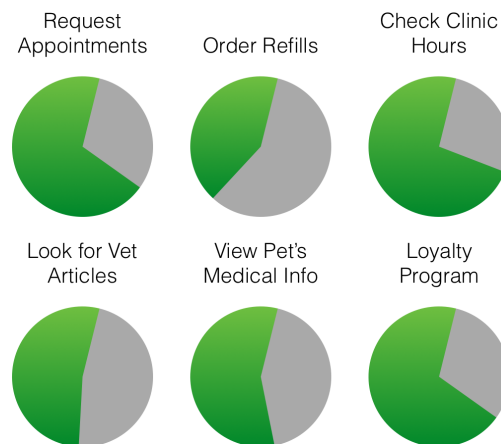
86% of pet owners are comfortable with most apps

74% of pet owners use at least one app daily

As you might expect, pet owners lucky enough to have vets with mobile apps enjoy many of the features offered.

Here is a glance of the percent of owners who use their veterinary mobile app to do the following:

- Make appointments 69%
- Order medication 42%
- Check clinic hours 73%
- Look for vet articles 53%
- Look at their pet's medical record 57%
- Use their vet's loyalty program (if offered) 69%



Clients not only use the app for these tasks, they overwhelmingly prefer using an app over the phone.

	Like app better than phone	Like app equal to phone	Like app less than phone	Don't use/Don't know
<b>Make appointments</b>	78 (50.3%)	53 (34.2%)	19 (12.3%)	5 (3.2%)
<b>Order medication</b>	62 (40.0%)	47 (30.3%)	20 (12.9%)	26 (16.8%)
<b>Order pet food</b>	52 (33.5%)	36 (23.2%)	22 (14.2%)	45 (29.0%)
<b>Checking clinic hours</b>	104 (67.1%)	34 (21.9%)	9 (5.8%)	8 (5.2%)
<b>Looking for vet info</b>	89 (57.4%)	35 (22.6%)	10 (6.5%)	21 (13.5%)
<b>Accessing pet medical record</b>	85 (54.8%)	42 (27.1%)	8 (5.2%)	20 (12.9%)

We are in a new era. Pet owners are increasingly informed, having access to enormous amounts of information, yet the internet does not replace the trust they place with their veterinarian. And, like all of us, pet owners are increasingly stretched; they don't have time to wait. This desire for speediness helps explain the recent addition of Google maps to show users actual wait times in stores in real time. This is just one more example of how apps are providing solutions to current challenges. Now, more than ever, pet owners are looking for efficient and creative solutions to help them care for their pets.

The veterinary clinics that can deliver on these needs, and cater to owners' desires to feel special, build loyalty. Client loyalty is influenced by several factors. It is about owners' actual experience at the veterinary practice. It is about personalization and how easy the practice is to do business with. A veterinary mobile app can positively impact all these areas. If we look at the early privately-owned, small veterinary practices, those vets were experts at developing and nurturing the human-animal-veterinary bond. True, the medicine wasn't as good, the equipment not as advanced, but client loyalty was exceptional. Now, unfortunately, that is often not the case. We have evolved to have very sophisticated services but loyalty is suffering and clients are leaving. Here are some reasons:

- 1) We have lost the personal touch. As our practices have grown into multi-doctor centers servicing thousands of clients, it has become a challenge to "get to know" our clients and be good listeners. This is a critical part, though, of cultivating the owner/vet relationship where bonding occurs. It's not an app, it's not a pre-visit form, it's not an automated email with merge words. It's actually the connection - the feeling that someone is listening and cares.
- 2) It is becoming increasingly difficult to justify our costs and show value to the pet owner. This is especially true with the amount of comprehensive information available on the Internet. In order to "sell our product" to the pet owner, we are going to have to deliver what they value. It's not a blood machine that can give results in 12 minutes, it's not a digital X-ray, or a brand new ultrasound machine (not that we don't love these things), but the main value proposition to our clients is that we care. This is something Dr. Google can't provide.
- 3) Veterinary practices are known for a lot of things but being efficient is not one of them. Yet, efficiency is a key factor in loyalty and client experience. Most people don't enjoy waiting for you to count 180 thyroid pills and get all the paperwork together. They are overbooked and stressed - and carving out an extra 10 minutes from their schedule is no small feat. Look at Starbucks - one of the most successful maneuvers they did was creating the ability to pre-order and prepay for your coffee. It still takes 10 minutes to prepare your coffee, but you no longer care because you aren't standing in line waiting.

Results of this study support our hunch; pet owners want us to be more efficient and they want to be rewarded for being loyal. They want us to use modern technology to make their lives easier. By offering time-saving methods to improve efficiencies in the hospital through the leverage of new technology, we can devote more time to listening and engaging with our clients.

Bottom line:

It is critical we keep our eye on the ball. The goal is not to **automate** the client interaction, it's to free up workload so we can focus on **the veterinary-client-patient bond**. When we build loyal relationships with our clients, they don't want to leave just because someone is offering a cheaper vaccine down the road. And when we make mistakes (because we will), they are forgiving and understanding - because that's what you do when you are loyal.

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