

# The vets will see you now

LET THE FUR FLY! ANSWERS TO YOUR HAIREST PET QUESTIONS.

## Q. Healthy choice

Is it worthwhile to buy pet insurance for my new puppy? If so, what should I look for in coverage?

T. S., via Facebook

A. It's your choice whether you want to roll the dice, but many pros recommend coverage. Plans start at roughly \$40 a month, but a weeklong hospital bill for an extreme injury or illness could run you \$20,000, veterinarian Nancy Kay points out. Ask your vet to recommend carriers. The percentage of costs each plan will pay varies, and most plans have a deductible or put a cap on certain conditions. Look for a plan that lets you visit any vet and covers any conditions your breed is predisposed to. (Dachshunds, for example, commonly have back problems; German shepherds are prone to hip dysplasia.) To compare plans, go to [petinsurancereview.com](http://petinsurancereview.com).

## Q. Pill standstill It's nearly impossible to get my dog to take his heart-worm medicine. Any ideas?

P. L., via Facebook

A. Some harmless hoodwinking may be in order, says trainer Mikkel Becker. Her go-to move is the "three-treat trick": Wrap the pill in a slice of cheese, then cover it with xylitol-free peanut butter (most mainstream brands are), or insert it

into a hollow snack, like Greenies Pill Pockets (\$10, [greenies.com](http://greenies.com)). In quick succession, give your dog one of his usual treats, then the disguised pill, then another of his usual treats. Most dogs won't notice (or taste) the hidden pill. If yours still rejects it, though, ask your vet about switching to a monthly topical ointment or twice-yearly injections, says veterinarian Karen Faunt. They can be pricier, but they're equally effective at protecting your dog's ticker. "Plus," says Faunt, "there's the added bonus of saving your sanity."

## Q. Caged and confused

We've had two male gerbils in the same cage for a few years without incident. But the other day they were fighting, so I separated them. Can I get them back together?

M. B., via Facebook

A. Gerbils generally play well with others, but just as with any roommates-in-close-quarters situation, squabbles can happen. They're often triggered by a small thing—say, possessiveness over food or a new toy—which can be resolved with a cooling-off period. One way to do it: Keep the gerbils in separate cages for a week; then, when you're home and able to observe, bring them together for short periods—one hour to start, gradually increasing to full-time over the next few weeks. If there's still friction, it's a good idea to schedule a vet exam, as many common ailments can cause behavioral changes. Clean bill of health but the gerbils still can't "keep it clean"? You may need to split them up for good.

### THE PET EXPERTS

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