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New UVSA Research on Pet Owner Behavior During COVID Affirms the Increase in Human Animal Bond and the Rise of the Empowered Pet Owner Millennial

Abingdon, MD (May 25, 2021) The United Veterinary Services Association (UVSA) recently unveiled commissioned research on the impact of COVID- 19 on pet owner behaviors and attitudes related to veterinarians as a result of the pandemic and quarantine rules and restrictions. Pet owners reported a stronger human-animal bond (HAB) and increased pampering behavior over the past year, with statistically significant increases from [work-from-home \(WFH\) pet owners and Millennials](#), respectively. This growth led to significant increases in owner-pet play, grooming (e.g., washing, dental care), vet-centric support, and vet hospital purchase behavior, led by high-earning urban Millennial males. Owners expect these pandemic-induced behaviors will likely persist post-COVID.

The research was conducted by APG | O'Hara Research and Analytics in March 2021 of a representative [sample](#) of 2009 primary and shared decision-making cat and dog pet owners in the United States. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with six (6) general practice veterinarians and nine (9) pet owners in April 2021 to further illuminate the findings. The research was funded by the UVSA and sponsor members Elanco, Covetrus, Midmark, Animalytix, Virbac, Vetoquinol, MWI Animal Health, Patterson Veterinary, Clipper Distributing Co. and USVet Veterinary Products.

The research shows that Millennials have emerged as the [most-engaged](#) group of pet owners in the US. Not only are they the largest group of pet owners, but Millennials also engage in more daily activities, groom their pets more, purchase more, and make use of more ancillary services than any other generation. They also engage with more digital services; general and vet-centric telemedicine, online chats with retailers, and online information from their vets are accessed at 2x the rate of other generations. Additionally, Millennials say that offering these types of [digital services](#) will play a greater role in how they choose and retain veterinary services moving forward.

The study also explored how the [veterinarian-client relationship](#) has evolved over the past year as a result of COVID safety protocols. While veterinarians and pet owners talked about lack of service availability generally, the pains of new patient flows and lack of face-to-face communication, client purchasing at hospitals was greater than ever this past year, again being driven by high-earning Millennial males. However, these Millennials have introduced a more-nuanced view of their desired relationship with the vet. Whereas trust in vets and their perceived credibility remain very high, Millennials as a group exhibit very high personal agency: they want to research and treat their pet's needs where applicable, which allows for greater perceived efficiency, cost savings, and convenience. This personal agency is much higher than any other generation, and working with veterinarians who support their want to DIY is becoming a key point in veterinary differentiation.



Many pandemic pets were purchased during the COVID quarantine. These [new pet owners](#) state that the purchase was motivated by activity and loneliness reasons, again led mostly by high-earning urban Millennial males. Additionally, there were many first-time pet owners introduced during the past year, with high-earning urban Millennial males driving this trend. While fears of high pet relinquishment pervade our industry, this study did not uncover any alarming trends. [First-time pet owners are only 2% higher](#) than total market in their stated intention to relinquish their pets (at 8% serious consideration).

[Overall](#), this study revealed the incredible resilience of the animal health industry during an unprecedented time of change and growth which lends much confidence in this industry to, not just survive natural disasters, but thrive by focusing on core service needs to support owners and their pets. [LINK to Infographic Putting it all together.](#)

For more information about the research, contact UVSA Executive Director at jking@mvp-amc.com or 443-640-1040x105.

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About UVSA -The United Veterinary Services Association (UVSA) is a national trade association comprised of distributors, manufacturers and suppliers of animal care products in the veterinary channel. UVSA's mission is to enhance animal care by supporting those who serve the veterinary channel. UVSA fulfills its mission by designing programs and services that will help distributors, manufacturers and suppliers remain relevant and innovative in the veterinary supply chain through a three-pronged approach focusing on 1) promotion of supply chain optimization; 2) providing a voice for the industry that includes collaboration with allied industry associations related to compliance and regulatory issues of concern to the animal health supply channel; and 3) providing Industry Insights through research on emerging markets, customer needs, wholesaler and supply chain benchmarks and consumer expectations. More information about UVSA can be found at www.uvsa.net.

About APG | O'Hara Research and Analytics - Dr. Kerry O'Hara is the President of APG | O'Hara. She has proven expertise exploring the key sectors in the companion animal landscape: pet owners, veterinarians, vet hospitals, benefits decision-makers – using their voices and behaviors as guideposts. She has nearly 30 years of applied thought leadership, consumer insights and analytics experience creating content and strategies leading Fortune 100 businesses like Nationwide, HP, Disney, and Microsoft. This expertise requires a keen ability to understand the complexities of organizations and B2B/B2C landscapes to conceptualize and effectively design insights-driven strategies grounded in a fact base.