The Doctor is Ready to See You Now: Embracing Telehealth for Ohio's Pets and Pet Owners

By Zeke Zekoff, DVM, President and Founder of United Pet Fund

In a world where convenience is key, veterinary care should be no exception. Telehealth, long a staple in human healthcare, can transform veterinary care, offering Ohio pet owners timely, effective solutions without leaving their homes. Whether you live in a bustling city or a rural town, veterinary telehealth has the potential to improve access to care, save time, and reduce costs.

Convenient, Accessible Care for Pet Owners

Imagine it's late at night, and your dog suddenly starts vomiting. Panic sets in, but your regular vet is closed and the nearest clinic is miles away. This is where veterinary telehealth shines. With a few clicks, you can connect to a licensed veterinarian for immediate guidance. Instead of waiting hours for an emergency appointment or traveling long distances, you can assess the situation from the comfort of home, saving both time and stress.

Telehealth is especially valuable for those with limited mobility, elderly pet owners, or those in rural areas. It is a tool that bridges the gap between immediate concerns and traditional in-person care, ensuring that pets receive timely attention, potentially reducing unnecessary suffering or worsening conditions.

Chronic Condition Management Made Easy

For pets with chronic conditions like diabetes or arthritis, regular monitoring is critical. Veterinary telehealth enables veterinarians to conduct follow-up consultations remotely, keeping a close eye on your pet's health. This not only saves time but also ensures consistent care, improving overall health outcomes and quality of life for your pet.

Cost-Effective Solutions for Everyone

Routine vet visits can be costly, especially when dealing with minor ailments or follow-ups. Telehealth can offer a more affordable option for routine consultations, reducing the need for in-person appointments. By leveraging telehealth, pet owners can save both time and money while still receiving high-quality care for their pets.

For those with economic constraints or busy schedules, telehealth ensures that necessary care is more accessible. No longer does a lack of transportation or a full calendar mean postponing care for your pets.

A Benefit to Ohio's Animal Shelters and Rescues

Telehealth has the potential to be a game-changer for Ohio's animal shelters and rescue organizations, especially those operating on tight budgets. By reducing the need for in-person visits, shelters can lower healthcare costs, allowing them to care for more animals. Additionally, timely telehealth consultations can prevent economic euthanasia—saving lives that might otherwise be lost due to financial constraints.

For potential adopters, telehealth helps keep shelter animals healthy and ready for their forever homes. By providing prompt medical care, shelters can increase their adoption rates, ensuring more animals find loving families.

Addressing Concerns About Telehealth

It's natural to be cautious about new technology, and some may wonder whether telehealth can match

the quality of in-person care. While not every condition can be diagnosed remotely, telehealth is designed to *complement* traditional veterinary services, *not replace them*. It provides a convenient way to offer immediate advice, triage urgent cases, and determine if an in-person visit is necessary.

With proper guidelines, regulations, and training, the risks associated with telehealth—such as misdiagnosis or data security concerns—can be mitigated. When used appropriately, telehealth is a powerful tool that enhances the veterinary care landscape, making it more responsive and accessible to all pet owners.

How You Can Support Veterinary Telehealth in Ohio
Ohioans have a unique opportunity to support the expansion of veterinary telehealth through Senate Bill 60, which aims to make telehealth services more accessible across the state. By supporting this bill, pet owners can help ensure that veterinary care is available when it's needed most, whether it's for a minor ailment or a chronic condition.

Take Action: Contact Your State Senators and Representatives
You can make a difference by contacting your Ohio State Senator and expressing your support for Senate Bill 60. Here's how to do it:

1. **Find Your Legislators**: Visit the Ohio Legislature website (www.legislature.ohio.gov) and use the district map feature to identify your State Senator and Representative.
2. **Track the Bill**: Use the same website to follow Senate Bill 60's progress and read up on its details.
3. **Reach Out**: Write, call, or email your legislators, telling them why you support expanding telehealth for veterinary care. Explain how it could benefit you as a pet owner, as well as Ohio's shelters and rescues.

Encouraging your representatives to back this bill can help modernize veterinary care, ensuring that every pet, whether from a home or a shelter, gets the care they need when they need it.

The Future of Veterinary Care
Telehealth is not here to replace traditional veterinary clinics; it's a tool to enhance them. By adopting this innovative approach, Ohio can become a leader in veterinary care, ensuring that pet owners across the state—no matter their location or circumstances—have access to timely, affordable, and effective veterinary care.

The doctor is ready to see you now. Are you ready to embrace the future of veterinary care?