



BUILDING VETERINARY CLIENT

Relationships, Loyalty, and Trust

THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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The world of veterinary medicine changes constantly. This is a big part of the reason that it continues to hold interest, charm, and excitement for each of us, every day.

But this also necessitates that we change with it, and that is not always so easy. Social media is a great example of this: It's an essential tool to find, educate, and communicate with clients, yet for many of us, it can feel like a daunting task to bring it into our practice. Frankly, it can sometimes feel that it works against us instead of for us.

We hope that this guide will help change that for you. We want to make the task of using social media in practice seem more approachable, useful, and beneficial. Our goal is to leave you with great information that allows you to make sound judgments for your practice alongside grounded tips for how to put those insights to work.

We appreciate the work you do every day, and hope that this makes life a little easier and provides another reason to make this career so exciting.

We look forward to connecting with you online.

Jolle Kirpensteijn, DVM, PhD, DACVS, DECVS

US Chief Professional Veterinary Officer,
Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc.



Social Media and Relationships

If ever there was a profession perfectly suited for social media, it's veterinary medicine. While other businesses struggle to make their services or products meaningful to consumers beyond the transactions themselves, veterinary practices foster brag-worthy relationships every day and in everything they do—from first-time visits for new pets to end-of-life care.

But it's easy to get overwhelmed by ever-changing technologies and new social media platforms. Keep reading. You do not need to polish your dance moves for TikTok. Promise.

Fundamentally, social media is about relationships. That's great news for veterinary practices.

Virtual connections through social media create a continuous emotional lifeline between veterinary practice teams and the communities they serve. Rather than only feeling those ties during

the few minutes you share an exam room with individual clients, social media puts the power of ongoing relationships in your hands.

Veterinary practices must meet clients where they are in these virtual landscapes to build trust and bonds with them outside the hospital. Some 40% of consumers say they are unlikely to become emotionally attached to a brand unless they are interacting via social media.¹

Patients and clients remain the heart of your business. Take public and meaningful ownership of these bonds and relationships. Without a strong social media presence by veterinary professionals, other influencers or self-proclaimed experts fill the void and pet lovers' heads with often-sketchy information about pet health.

Not using social media to connect with veterinary clients right now is the equivalent of running a veterinary practice entirely through snail mail decades after the whole world has begun using digital communications and tools.



Top 12 Reasons to Use Social Media to Promote Veterinary Care

Social media users number in the billions globally. Social media's real power, however, comes from the ability for veterinary practices to connect locally and accomplish many marketing goals:

1. Build retention and loyalty with current clients.
2. Target and connect with pet lovers who best match your values and demographics inside your geographic footprint.
3. Extend in-person emotional connections into the virtual world.
4. Support exam room conversations and recommendations through ongoing coaching toward optimal pet care.
5. Educate, empower, and entertain clients through a variety of visual and media tools.
6. Give clients insights into exactly how you provide high-quality, comprehensive pet care.
7. Provide transparency that builds trust.
8. Demonstrate your expertise, compassion, and personality in ways that no one else can fully duplicate.
9. Tell ongoing stories about who you are, how you work, and what's best for today's pets.
10. Invite participation that builds your online presence but also bolsters a sense of community and partnership.
11. Be visible and findable online (often Facebook business pages come up before practice websites in search engines).
12. Resonate with and attract the kinds of clients you want and need to succeed.



♥ *If ever there was a profession perfectly suited for social media, it's veterinary medicine. . . . Veterinary practices foster brag-worthy relationships every day and in everything they do—from first-time visits for new pets to end-of-life care.*

#Success Stories

Megan Brashear, RVT, VTS (ECC)

Small Animal Veterinary Nursing Manager
Purdue University

In 2012, while working for DoveLewis Animal Hospital in Portland, Oregon, Brashear starred in a YouTube video entitled "Angry Cat at the Vet: Fractious Cat Restraint." To date, the video's views top seven million, which Brashear called "insane."

Designed for veterinary team training, the video is also viewable by pet consumers. "It's a super angry cat," she explained, "but we were able to deal with him in a compassionate way."



A Closer Look at Demographics

You want to be where pet owners are. Otherwise, they venture out into the social media seas without your presence and expertise.

In considering where to focus social media efforts, it helps to look at pet spending and pet ownership across the generations. Generation X (roughly ages 40–54) and baby boomers (roughly ages 55–74) spend the most on pet products and services at \$29.5 million and \$34.4 million annually, respectively. They also still represent a large block of both dog and cat owners overall. Combined, Gen X and boomers represent 55.1% of dog owners and 57% of cat owners. In addition, boomers are the only age group to have more cats now than they did 10 years ago. However, Gen Z (teenagers up to age 24) and millennials (roughly ages 25–39) are catching up quickly with dogs and cats—representing 40.6% of dog owners and 38% of cat owners. Of note, Gen Z and millennials are now a majority (54%) of reptile owners.²

The Pew Research Center began tracking social media statistics in 2005. Back then, only 5% of American adults used social media. By early 2019, Pew data shows that usage climbed to 72% across all demographics.

Usage is much higher for younger consumers when broken down by age:

- ➔ 90%: ages 18–29
- ➔ 82%: ages 30–49
- ➔ 69%: ages 50–64
- ➔ 40%: 65+³

Despite all the chatter about how younger pet owners adore Instagram and hate Facebook, younger social media users do not eschew Facebook. Users between the ages of 18 and 29 may like Instagram better; they may enjoy its more aspirational, more inspirational, and funnier content; and they may appreciate that it's less polarized

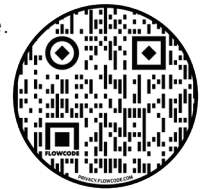
#Success Stories

Caitlin DeWilde, DVM
thesocialdvm.com

Sometimes, the social media post that's remembered most isn't necessarily the one with great stats. Sometimes, you remember it because it makes you proud. DeWilde feels that way about a post she created for the Missouri Veterinary Medical Association. The post came out in support of a veterinary practice in the state experiencing cyberbullying to the extreme. Lives were threatened. The police and even the FBI got involved. It was ugly.

"The VMA gave me carte blanche to create a post," DeWilde said. "It was the first time the state VMA had come out to support a veterinary practice and the employees to say, 'We stand behind them. They were doing the best they could.'"

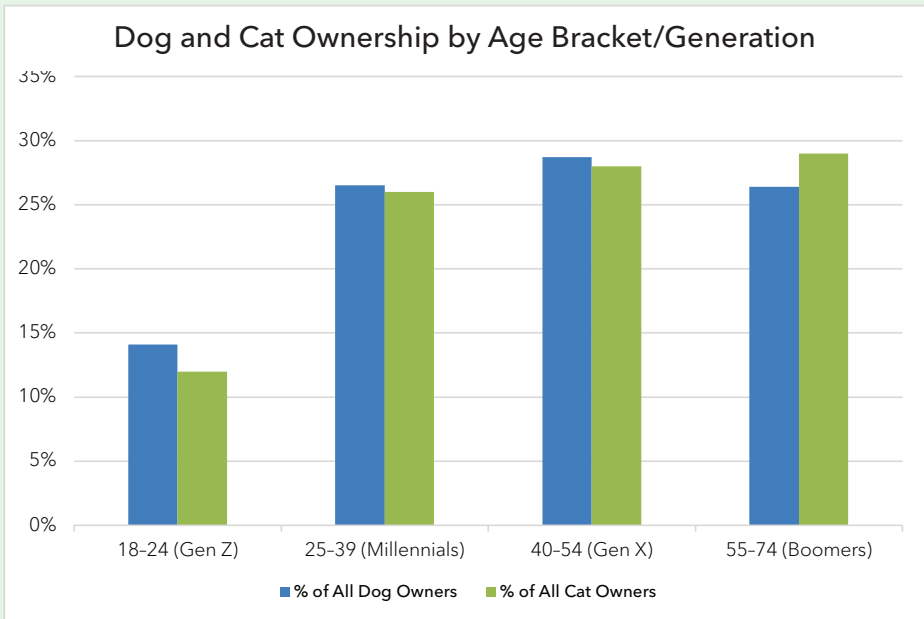
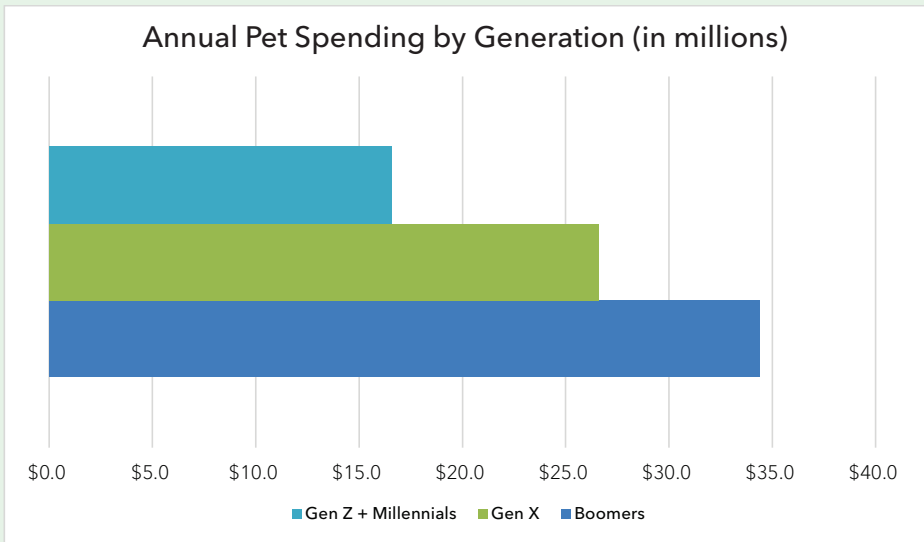
The post got shared a lot and reached over one million people. It shows a circle of veterinary professionals with their hands stacked in the center, like a sports team before a big game.



politically than Facebook or Twitter. But Pew data shows that more younger consumers use Facebook than Instagram (79% versus 67%).⁴

It's hard to predict which newer social media platforms can sustain long-term growth and truly become the next big place to be. Younger members of Gen Z who are still in their teen years, for example, do love Snapchat, but usage of that platform dropped from 27% to 24% in one year, between 2018 and 2019⁵—hinting that it may be relegated to the dusty annals of social media history along with MySpace.

And while TikTok provided a nice distraction during widespread stay-at-home orders arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, it has not yet proved its staying power or marketing usefulness. Use it if you want to, but if not, don't feel like you are missing out.

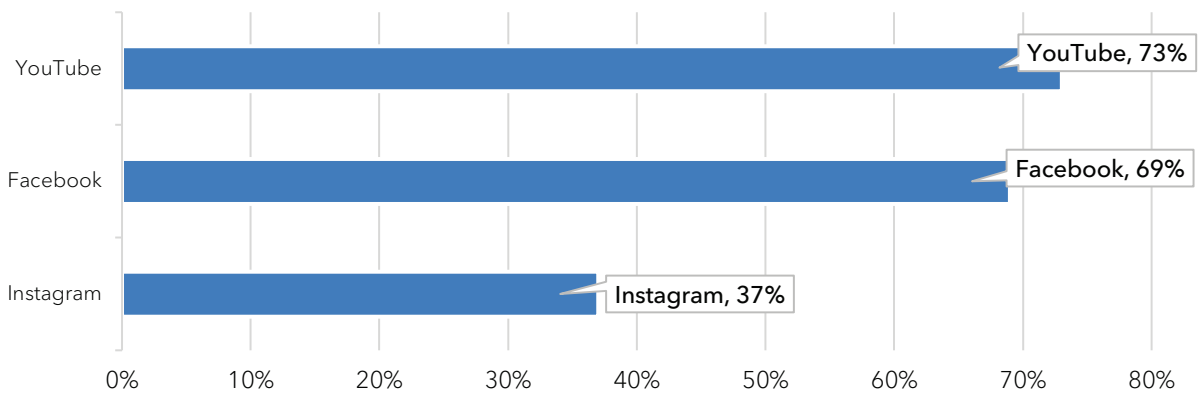


Veterinary social media insiders point almost exclusively to the use of Facebook and Instagram as the most important right now for veterinary practices. While YouTube ranks first in social media usage, it primarily functions as a one-way medium with much less opportunity for direct engagement and client participation. Think of it more as a free streaming service than a social media tool for veterinary practices. YouTube does

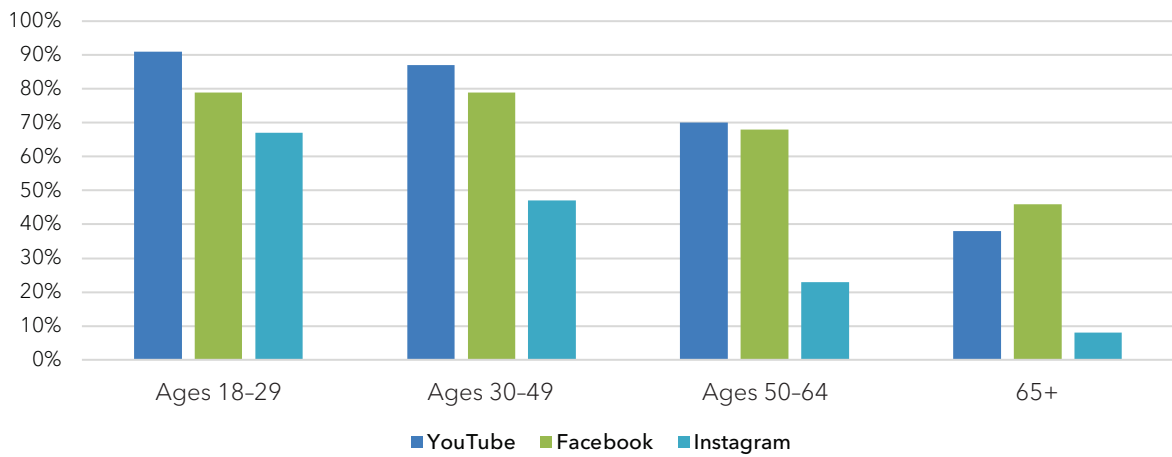
provide extra options for advanced social media powerhouses with the time, motivation, and know-how to make the most of video for entertainment or educational purposes. For most practices, however, YouTube is not a must-have.

Let's look at a few key data points from February 2019 Pew research that support veterinary practices putting their social media time, energy, and resources into Facebook and Instagram.

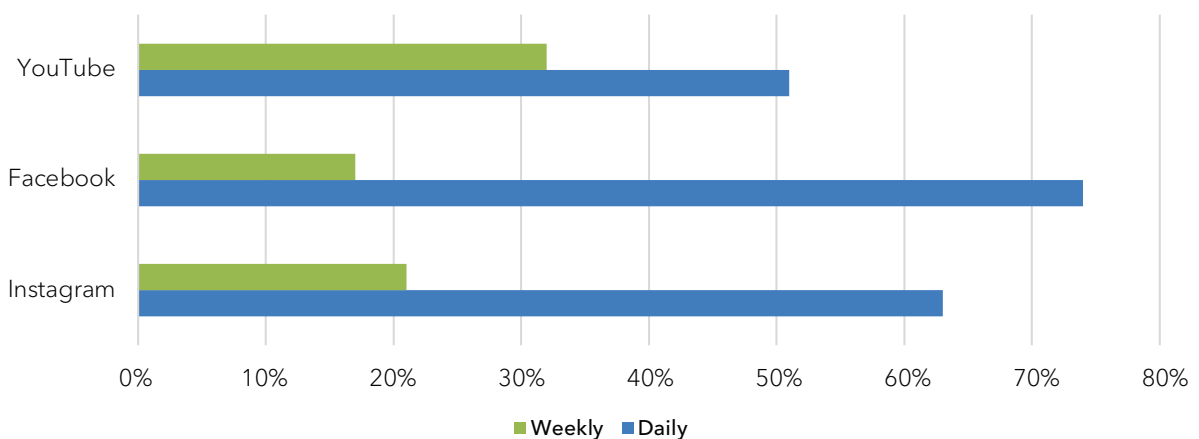
3 Most Popular Social Media Platforms Based on % of Users



Percentage of Social Media Users by Age for the Top 3 Platforms



Percentage of Users Accessing Top 3 Platforms Daily or Weekly



Conveying Authenticity and Transparency

Social media success takes root in conveying authenticity about who you are and creating transparency about how you do the essential work of caring for pets inside your companion-animal hospital. Great content showcases how you work in partnership with families for pet wellness and better patient outcomes when pets become ill or injured. It also provides the opportunity to educate and, to some extent, entertain the pet lovers in your community—and sometimes beyond.

By actively showing core elements of your personal brand and your top-notch services, you can celebrate the clients who already appreciate all you do. Those connections support client retention by providing a continuous stream of relationship-building information that bridges the time between face-to-face appointments.

Authenticity

By being genuine online, you can also help attract more people like those you want and need to succeed long term. Even if you have an exceptional hospital website, potential clients often assess your social media feeds to get a feel for whether you're a good match for their needs and personalities.

In addition, if you seem different online from how current clients know you to be in person, it may set off alarms in their hearts or make them wonder what's up.

♥ *Original content is the gold standard and should be a primary goal with social media posts. Focus on things that others cannot replicate because they're so uniquely you.*

#Success Stories

Beckie Mosser

Podcaster (*Veterinary Viewfinder, Clinician's Brief, Making Sense of Pets*)

Rather than brag about one of her own social media successes, Mosser pointed to the success of one of her podcast cohosts, Ernie Ward, DVM. He is famous for a 2012 YouTube video where he sat in a hot car on a hot day to show how dangerous it is for pets.

The video now boasts more than two million views.

"It's probably one of the all-time best veterinary social media posts," Mosser said.



That's why it's important to be real on social media and to not overly polish your videos, photos, and posts. Too much production value feels insincere, so a few rough edges feel more authentic to today's more cynical consumers.

Authenticity also comes from creating original content featuring practitioners, team members, and patients—sometimes individually, but also together.

Original content is the gold standard and should be a primary goal with social media posts. Focus on things that others cannot replicate because they're so uniquely you.

That doesn't mean you cannot sometimes use premade graphics and information from industry partners or a stock photo, but if that's all you're doing, then you're missing out on the real strength of a personalized social media experience for clients.

The veterinary profession can take hard-learned lessons about connectivity from the human healthcare market as well. Consumers bring higher and higher expectations to health-related encounters in both real-life and virtual environments. Because of extreme personalization and targeting done by retailers and entertainment

giants, people now demand relevant information and individual attention and recognition:

- ➔ Only 40% of consumers say the healthcare communications they receive feel relevant.
- ➔ 47% believe healthcare businesses are more focused on industry needs than patient needs.⁶

So, if you're only sharing prefabricated messaging from the greater veterinary profession and not adapting those messages to the needs and personalities of your hospital and clients, then families may not see you shining through. They only see talking points and feel no connection or value-added engagement.

Transparency

Today's pet lovers are far less comfortable with their pets being taken to the back for diagnostics and treatments than before. Some of it is generational, as millennials have become a larger portion of veterinary clients, but some of it is due to social media itself and the unfiltered, full-disclosure, always-on life so many people live now.

That's why transparency is increasingly important. People want to see and understand what happens when their pet is away from them and in your care. They want to know where pets go and who is watching over them.

Veterinary jobs remain way more interesting than others, so clients want to see:

- ➔ Who is involved with patient care (that they may not otherwise meet or see)
- ➔ What equipment and other tools you use
- ➔ When certain tasks get done
- ➔ Where you work in spaces not visible to the public
- ➔ Why they cannot accompany pets everywhere they go in the hospital
- ➔ How various procedures get done (as long as it isn't too graphic)



♥ *Every step in your protocols, every little thing you do behind the scenes, is a story that clients want to see, hear, and understand. Think of yourself as a news reporter and imagine giving clients a view into your world that's educational, comforting, and sometimes inspirational.*

Every step in your protocols, every little thing you do behind the scenes, is a story that clients want to see, hear, and understand. Think of yourself as a news reporter and imagine giving clients a view into your world that's educational, comforting, and sometimes inspirational.

People want to be able to visualize their pet interacting with and being cared for by your team when they cannot be with them. The more you can show about those apart times, the more comfortable and confident clients may feel about the level of care provided.

Allocating Resources for Social Media

Between creating original content, effective planning, responsiveness, and outreach, social media work to promote a veterinary hospital can easily be a part-time job for someone—15–20 hours per week. Social media insiders suggest the same compensation rates as credentialed veterinary technicians or more if they bring marketing and social media experience with proven success.

Having existing veterinary medical knowledge is a big plus if you're hiring from outside the practice. It's important that anyone doing veterinary social media understands patient care and all the unique sensitivities and details involved in veterinary medicine.

If hiring a standalone social media staffer feels too intimidating right now, consider how you can reassign work responsibilities. Try to leverage existing team members interested in taking on a social media role as an additional responsibility

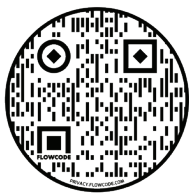
#Success Stories

Lauren Cline, DVM

Ebenezer Animal Hospital, Rock Hill, South Carolina
Queen City Animal Hospital, Charlotte, North Carolina

In 2016, local police brought a young puppy named Brody to the veterinary hospital where Cline works. He'd been shot 18 times with a BB gun. The first Facebook post about Brody's case racked up 637 comments and 976 post reactions. He became a bit of a social media star.

"The post went pretty viral nationwide," Cline said. "It was crazy. Our phones were ringing for weeks, people wanting to donate toward his care, asking about adoption, and wanting updates on his case."



that's compensated appropriately. Those with the most interest and skills aren't necessarily only the youngest folks on the practice team.

Some practices assign social media work to a single person. Others share responsibilities among a few people—divided up by skill sets (photography, video editing, or writing, for example) or those who feel more comfortable with one platform than another. Each person should be paid for their efforts. No one should be asked to do it for free in their spare time or in addition to everything they already do at the practice.

Practice leadership should budget weekly or monthly compensation for the time team members spend doing social media work so that it does not put the human resource budget over its limits.

Some practices let the social media team carve out time during the normal workday to step away from clinical or patient-care responsibilities to do social media tasks. Others feel more productive and focused doing the social media work from home instead. Either way, the time should be considered and paid for as true on-the-job hours.

Efficiencies remain key. It's easy to fall down the rabbit hole of content creation; editing photos, videos, or graphics; and the addictive continuous scroll of newsfeeds and pinging alerts. So set clear protocols for using time budgets wisely. Yes, there may be a learning curve at first, but over time, social media posts should come together a little faster.

Job Responsibilities

Social media responsibilities and job tasks include the following:

- ➔ Coordinating with fellow team members to collect good original content
 - Photos
 - Video clips
 - Brainstorming topics
- ➔ Planning a consistent editorial calendar for social media posts one month at a time

- ➔ Creating original content for posts, including graphics as needed
- ➔ Using post-scheduling tools built into social media platforms or those offered by third parties
- ➔ Monitoring and responding to comments, private messages, etc.—even if it’s simply liking every comment so that people know someone from the practice saw it. (Just this step alone, when social media engagement is high with a lot of activity from clients, could take an hour a day, or more—that, again, should be considered and compensated as work time.)

Tools for Social Media Content

Several third-party tools facilitate posting social media content across many social media channels at the same time to lessen duplicated effort within each platform. Some of the bigger names include Hootsuite, Buffer, Meet Edgar, and Planoly.

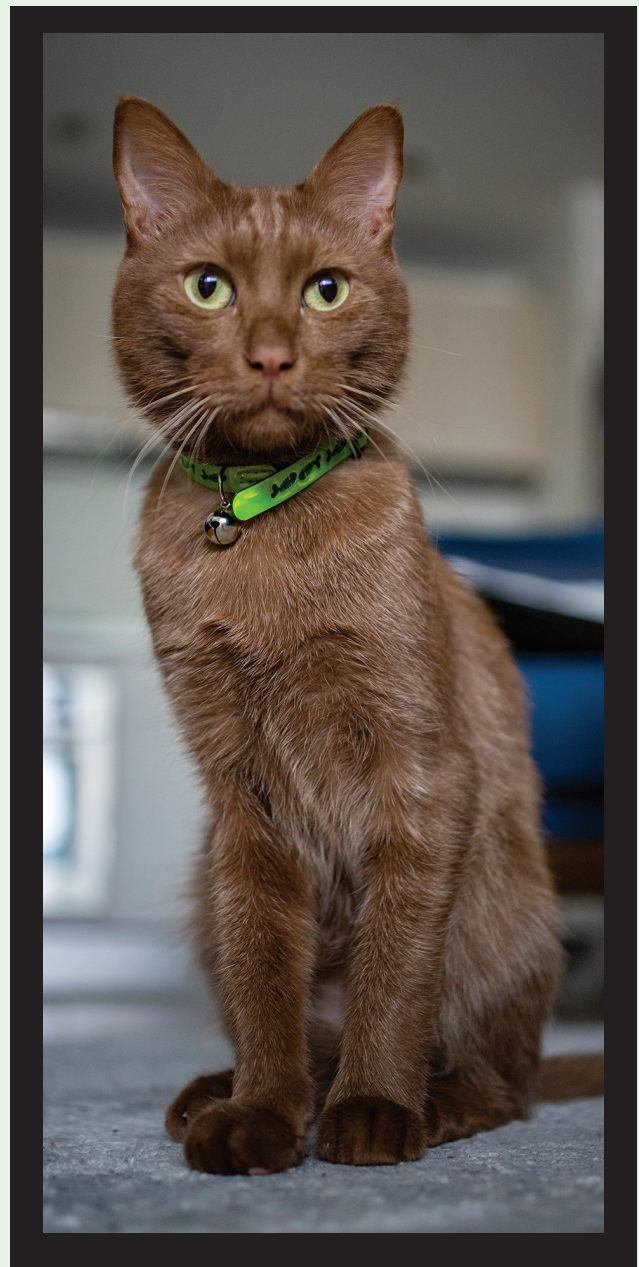
Many veterinary social media insiders, however, prefer to do all their posting and scheduling inside the platforms themselves. It simply seems easier and more reliable to them. Some also indicate that posts done through third-party tools don’t achieve the same reach or performance as posts done within the platform.

Third-party tools can also lag with integrations as new social media platforms launch. Some tools have also lost the ability to integrate with some key platforms, including Facebook.

Unless you’re already using a third-party scheduling and posting tool, for now, consider getting really good at using the built-in tools that platforms provide.

TIP: Canva offers both a free and a paid version of a robust online or app-based graphic design tool. It’s easy to use and comes with built-in templates to use and personalize for social media posts, infographics, posters, event invitations, and more.

♥ *Between creating original content, effective planning, responsiveness, and outreach, social media work to promote a veterinary hospital can easily be a part-time job for someone—15-20 hours per week.*



Best Practices for Creating Content

Let's start with the good news. You do not need to create completely different content for each social media platform you use. It's OK to share the same content across platforms. Even if people see these overlaps, that's fine. Marketing is about repeated impressions, so do not worry about creating original content exclusively for Facebook or exclusively for Instagram.

At some point, you may want to have certain types of posts unique to each platform, but that's an advanced digital strategy and certainly not required.

3 Best Practices for Social Content

The most effective posts feature all the following pieces and are scheduled to go live when clients are most active on social media:

1. Graphic element, photo, or video
2. Caption, explanation, or small story
 - A few sentences minimum, but longer is fine too if you insert paragraph breaks and other visual dividers and if the post isn't more than a scroll or two down
3. Trackable call to action
 - Comment
 - Call or text to schedule appointment
 - Learn more or link to additional content (typically on the practice's website)

Facebook allows outside links in posts. Instagram does not. Any links in Instagram must be placed in your profile.

Caption, explanation, or story and call to action. You can include links and hashtags here, too.



Today is National Pet Obesity Awareness Day. Let's discuss your pet's nutrition at our next appointment! #nationalpetobesityawareness #yourhospital

Original Content Suggestions

- ➔ Anything timely that jumps on the news cycle and reminds people you're the best source for accurate information (example: zoo tiger tests positive for COVID-19) before misinformation runs wild
- ➔ Behind-the-scenes posts featuring team members and pets, individually or together—especially emotional ones with practitioners or veterinary technicians cuddling or comforting patients
- ➔ Behind-the-scenes technologies used and in which kinds of cases they're used
- ➔ Patient case summaries or success stories that educate or demonstrate clinical heroics
- ➔ Funny posts or puns that also educate clients
- ➔ Patients with props such as letter boards, chalkboards, or clever backdrops—especially young or old pets
- ➔ Activities with local businesses or charity organizations
- ➔ Guess the breed
- ➔ Guess what this X-ray shows
- ➔ Tell us what your pet(s) means to you
- ➔ How are you celebrating (birthday, holidays, etc.)?
- ➔ Before/after treatment or grooming photos

Be sure to vary the types of posts published. Monotony crushes engagement. Yes, people love photos of puppies and kittens, but if that's all you're posting, people will tune out more and respond less.

Look for ways to use Instagram Stories to your advantage. It's a nice way to follow a pet's case throughout the day, with little progress updates.

Common Social Media Mistakes

In the rush to push social media posts live, it's easy to make mistakes that lower your impact and success:

- ➔ Jumping into social media efforts without a set of objectives specific to your practice. (Established hospitals will have different goals from start-ups, for example.)
- ➔ Forgetting to include some sort of call to action so that people can do something in response to your post.
- ➔ Leaving off your hospital name or logo.
- ➔ Posting only when you have time rather than when your clients are most active. Use native or third-party scheduling tools to schedule posts for the highest viewership times.
- ➔ Missing all the great stories all around you. A quick photo and a few sentences are often all you need.
- ➔ Only using social media for sales or promotional purposes.



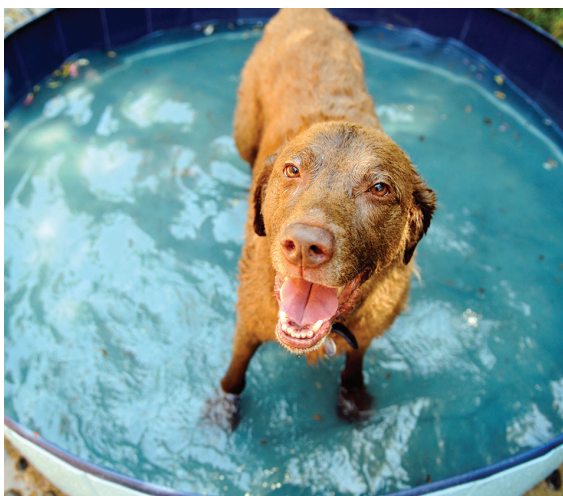
Healthy mouth, healthy pet! Gum disease is linked to serious health issues, including heart disease. Schedule a dental today!
#HealthyMouthHealthyPet

- ➔ Believing the myth that Facebook is dead to younger pet owners.
- ➔ Forcing yourself to post too often. Focus on quality over quantity when you're starting out.
- ➔ Forgetting to use geotags and hashtags, especially on Instagram, to better target a local audience. (Use #dogsofseattle rather than the broader #dogsofinstagram, for example.)
- ➔ Accidentally chumming the water with topics that tend to cause outrage, cyberbullying, bad reviews, etc.
 - Declawing cats
 - Pet food, especially raw-feeding pets
 - Certain pet vaccines or medications
 - Pet pregnancy or births
 - Debarking dogs
 - Cropping dogs' ears or tails
- ➔ Assuming the youngest team members are best at social media marketing.
- ➔ Asking team members to do social media work for free and during their off hours.

Summer is here and it's getting hot!

You can find tips for exercising your dog in hot weather on our blog.

How does your dog stay cool?



♥ *Don't forget to use geotags and hashtags*

... to better target a local audience. (Use

#dogsofseattle rather than the broader

#dogsofinstagram, for example.)

#Success Stories

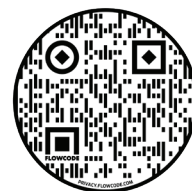
Jessica Vogelsang, DVM

Veterinarian and educator, San Diego, California, pawcurious.com

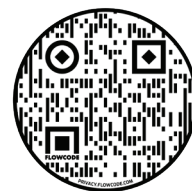
"The landscape has changed," Vogelsang said. "Five years ago, I wrote a blog post called 'No Obamacare for Dogs.'" She wrote the post in response to an all-too-common online mob situation resulting from a potential client's financial limitations and interactions with an emergency hospital. The person went to the local news about it.

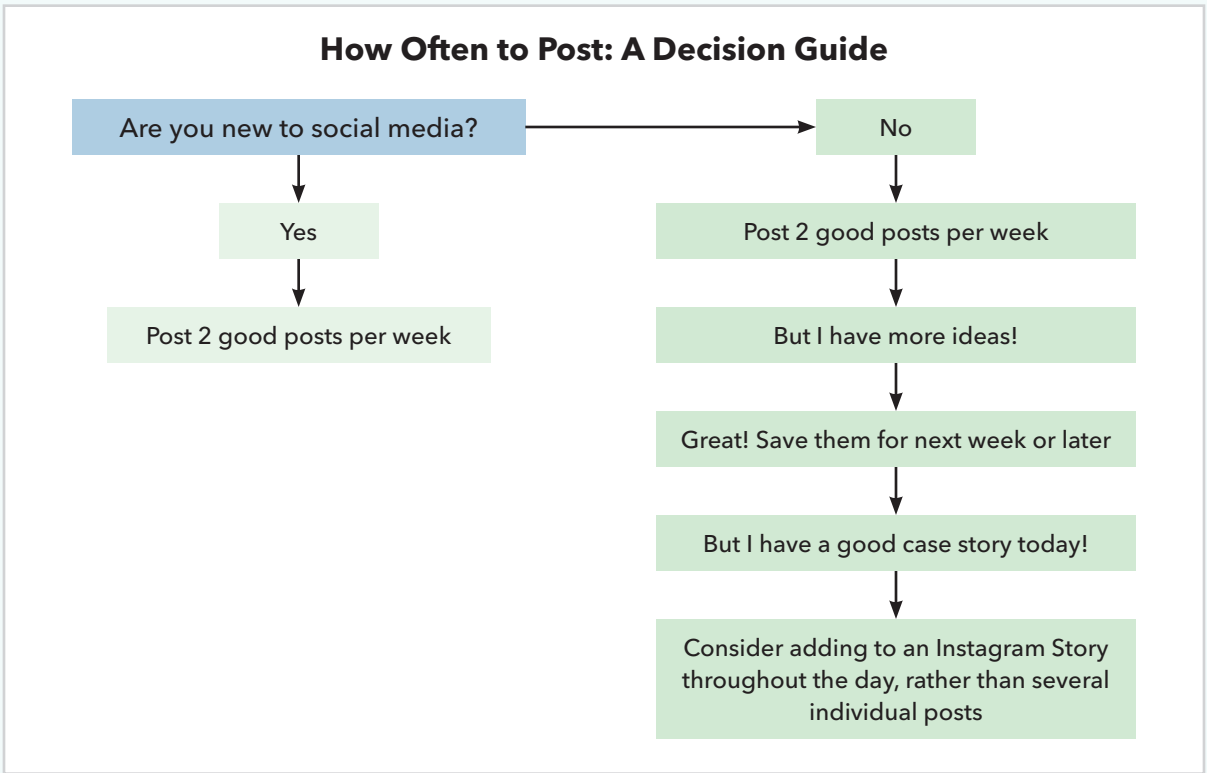
"It's an emotional topic, and I used a term people pay attention to. It was timely," Vogelsang said.

She jokes that she always knows something she posted is gaining traction when she sees complaints pouring in about how poorly written it is. (See page 15 for insights about trolls and haters.)



More recently, Vogelsang's Facebook notifications flooded with alerts that more than 700 people had shared a graphic she created after a zoo tiger tested positive for COVID-19.





To Boost or Not to Boost

“Boosting” a social media post means paying the platform so that it shows up to more people compared with the number of people the algorithm would normally allow to see the post. Boosting can help or not in certain scenarios.

For example, never boost a social media post that’s already bombing, especially if it’s something you thought was cute or funny and others didn’t.

Instead, save your boosting dollars for posts with a strong call to action that will drive business to the practice. Often the best way to track those results is to put some money behind it.

Boost-worthy posts include:

1. **A great case study** that demonstrates your high-quality care and includes pet care messaging that shows those in your local community the good work you do.
2. **A promotion**, such as a dental discount. If you post something like that and don’t boost it, Facebook’s algorithms will suppress it.

When you do boost, set your spending limit at no more than \$15–\$20 per post. Also, don’t boost all the time. Choose an important post every other month or so and see how it works before investing much more into boosting itself.

However, if you’re just starting on social media or you work in a newly opened practice, it may help to build your audience if you boost posts more often for a while—using keywords and geographic limits to target local people only.

Rather than boosting typical posts only, consider adding a true digital ad campaign budget. Consider taking at least some of the money once spent on paper Yellow Pages ads and using it for search-based Google or social media ads. That’s different from boosting and not within our scope here, but it’s something to consider if you want to take your digital strategy to a higher level. Unless you’ve hired an experienced social media professional to handle your accounts, you’ll likely need the help of an outside digital strategist who can provide the advertising content guidance and technical know-how to make sure the right people see your ads.



Fanbase Size and Trolls

There is something to be said for keeping your social media fanbase smaller, loyal, and friendly. Once you get above 5,000 fans, you're more likely to get the attention of online trolls and haters.

A whole book has been written about how to handle snotty comments, ranting reviews, and other social media drama, including cut-and-paste replies. (See Additional Resources on page 21.)

The simplest advice for now is this:

- ➔ If it's a real concern from a real client, take the conversation offline ASAP.
- ➔ If it's simply a weird or mean comment, hide the comment and move on.
- ➔ If it goes beyond one comment or escalates into threats or social media mobbing with many participants, delete the comments and ban the offenders from being able to comment on your page or posts.

In most cases, people who know and adore you will see these trolls for what they are. Sometimes,

#Success Stories

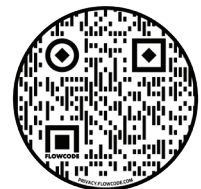
Kristi Crow, DVM

Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine
Graduate, 2020

Now working in private practice in the Chicago area

At the end of her third year of veterinary school, Crow failed a class. She'd been struggling with school and work and deaths of people close to her. She wrote about it on her blog and shared her struggles—not just about that class but also about her veterinary school experience. In a post called "Failing Forward," Crow wrote about feeling like a fraud and her hard work to regain her academic footing before she could begin clinicals.

"I didn't want people going through something similar to feel alone. I had just one person to turn to, an Instagram friend a year ahead of me in school. I felt like her story helped me get through my situation, and I wanted to do that for others. I received replies from people in other professions thanking me for sharing my story," Crow said.



they'll even take on the haters on your behalf so that you don't have to.

But the rule is, never engage with negative online behavior. While you bring logic and, often, science and proof to the situation, they bring irrationality and almost blind faith in their views. You cannot have a reasonable debate in these situations, so don't waste your time.

Even if they are local, even if they either are or might be a client, don't spend time and energy trying to win over folks who are not a good match for your services, values, and team.

#Success Stories

Eric Garcia

CEO, Simply Done Tech Solutions

Chico Hospital for Cats in Northern California uses video to demonstrate its feline-friendly focus and strategies. In a recent video, you can see the veterinary assistant gently holding the patient, using a less-is-more strategy for restraint.

"Cat owners want to know what you do to make visits less stressful on cats," Garcia said. "It's a great way to show that as well as showing the importance of giving vaccines."



Defining Success in Social Media

Social media giants frequently tweak their algorithms, including ways to look for certain types of keywords that deliberately suppress the organic reach of those posts. Organic reach essentially means the number of people who actually see one of your posts, without you having to pay money to make sure that happens. (See “To Boost or Not to Boost” on page 14 for how to increase the reach of certain types of promotional posts.)

Organic reach can be affected by the time of day you post, how many of your fans use the platform that particular day or time, and other factors controlled by the often-murky algorithms.

Post too much and the algorithms won't show even your best followers everything. Post too little and the algorithms see posts as less important and won't show them either. It's important, then, to post in a regular and predictable way to encourage engagement and keep the algorithm bots from putting hurdles in the path of your success.

As an example, both Facebook and Instagram (now owned and run by the same company) prefer video content to be native to the platform or app, rather than an external link to a video.

Key Performance Stats

Both Facebook and Instagram put basic performance stats to watch in the insights section for business pages or profiles:

- ➔ Reach (how many users saw the post in their feed)—can be sorted by fans and nonfans
- ➔ Engagement (reactions, comments, or shares)
- ➔ Growth or decline in followers or page/profile likes
- ➔ Likes and unlikes on posts
- ➔ Page views for Facebook, profile views for Instagram



Social media performance assessments start with monitoring reach and engagement stats. That tells you how well posts do inside the platform itself. The next and likely more important step is to link those efforts to real business for the practice, such as how many people scheduled an appointment based on social media efforts.

Real-Life Actions

There may be times when your reach and engagement look low, but you got 10 appointments out of it. There may also be times when a post goes somewhat viral, to use the lingo, and its only real outcome is greater awareness of your hospital without a direct correlation to revenue or other in-house metrics.

Going truly viral doesn't help if a post gets 30,000 shares from another state. Feather in your cap? Sure. But unless it results in new clients or more appointments, which is unlikely with out-of-state fans, it doesn't mean much to practice success.

To help link social media efforts to practice outcomes, you can:

- ➔ Ask all new clients if they found you via social media.
- ➔ Ask all new clients for information on their pets' Facebook or Instagram accounts (many pets have their own).
- ➔ Use specific social media promotional codes to track appointments or purchases to targeted social media promotions.

What Does Good Social Media Reach Look Like?

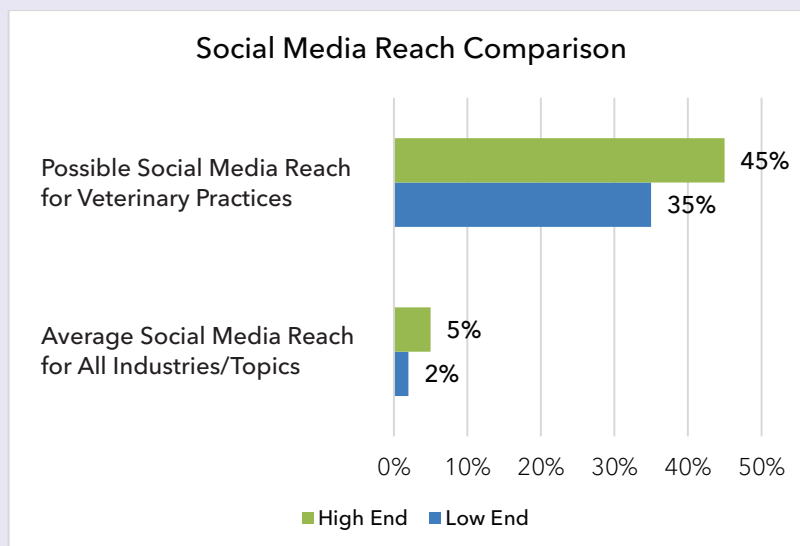
Consultants inside and outside veterinary medicine often cite acceptable social media reach as low as 2%-5% of current fan base.

Because veterinary hospitals enjoy stronger relationships with their clients and online fans and they have easy access to far more interesting content than other businesses, some veterinary social media insiders believe that it's possible to reach 35%-45% of people who like or follow you online over a period of a week or two.

With such strong reach for engaging and original social media posts about pets, which are one of the all-time top social media topics, all the other metrics should fall into line and show up strong as well.



♥ *Social media needs to be an extension of the relationships built in the real life of veterinary practices. It gives you the opportunity to share stories of your people, your work, and your patients in ways that define and expand your practice brand and community reach.*

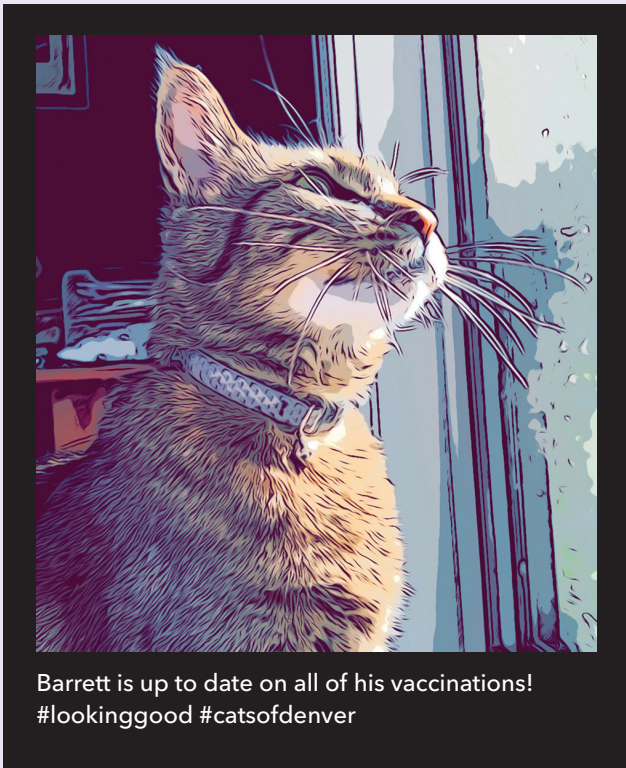


Enhancing Real-Life Relationships with Virtual Tools

Veterinary practices simply cannot ignore social media as a digital time-warp for personal use only. It is a critical business tool for brand building, marketing, client education, and client engagement and retention. Done well, social media can build on relationships with individual clients and your community at large.

Social media needs to be an extension of the relationships built in the real life of veterinary practices. It gives you the opportunity to share stories of your people, your work, and your patients in ways that define and expand your practice brand and community reach.

Pets remain a social media topic with real star power. Many pets even have their own Instagram accounts and Facebook pages.



#Success Stories

Danielle Lambert

Founder of SnoutSchool.com

Rather than a single social media post, Lambert is most proud of the success of a campaign she launched—Support Your Veterinary Girl Gang. Fans and friends even have T-shirts. Soon, Lambert will launch a Global Veterinary Girl Gang podcast.

“We’ve had so many posts do well, so it’s a repeated success,” Lambert said. “People respond to things that are about them, being positive about who they are, and who they identify as. . . . It was a cute thing to say, and it blew up so much.”

Lambert added, “My biggest successes as a content creator have been testing to see what works and repeating those.”



Baloo is a rescue from New Mexico. He just had his check-up and passed with flying colors! Now he is looking for his forever home.

Post a picture of the pet who rescued you!

#rescuedogs #Savannah #WhoRescuedWho



♥ *Pet lovers are desperate for good, accurate, educational, and fun social media content. They want to like and follow you. They really, really do. Take the lead, and the best clients will follow and strengthen their loyalty and bond to your practice team.*

Through carefully curated and original social media content as well as strong use of key hashtags and virtual connections with pet influencers and other pet-related businesses in your area, you can build a bigger and more responsive community of people who support your success, goals, and interests.

Pet lovers are desperate for good, accurate, educational, and fun social media content. They want to like and follow you. They really, really do. Take the lead, and the best clients will follow and strengthen their loyalty and bond to your practice team.

Welcome, Tiger! She is in for her first round of vaccinations and kitten well-check.

Bring your kitty in this month for 10% off your visit!



Notes

1. Edelman, "Trust Barometer Special Report, Brands and Social Media," June 18, 2018, [edelman.com/research/trust-barometer-brands-social-media](https://www.edelman.com/research/trust-barometer-brands-social-media).

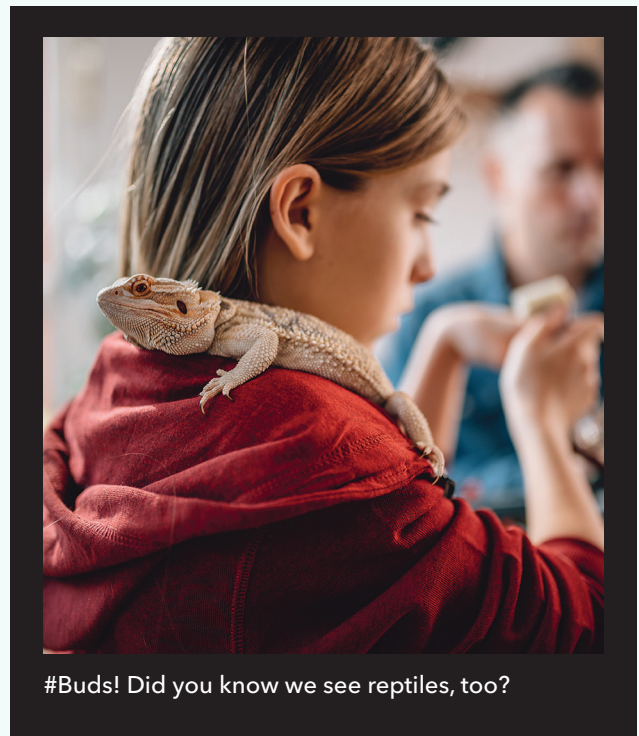
2. Packaged Facts, *Pet Population and Ownership Trends in the US: Dogs, Cats, and Other Pets*, October 2019, 59, 130, 200, 161.

3. Pew Research Center, "Social Media Fact Sheet," June 12, 2019, [pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/](https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/).

4. Pew Research Center, "Social Media Fact Sheet."

5. Pew Research Center, "Social Media Fact Sheet."

6. Salesforce, *Connected Healthcare Consumer Report, 2020*, [salesforce.com/form/conf/industries/hls/connected-healthcare-consumer-report/](https://www.salesforce.com/form/conf/industries/hls/connected-healthcare-consumer-report/).



#Buds! Did you know we see reptiles, too?



Additional Resources

Build Your Own Veterinary Brand on Instagram
[snout-school.myshopify.com/collections/courses
/products/personal-branding-guide](https://snout-school.myshopify.com/collections/courses/products/personal-branding-guide)



It's tick season. Are you doing everything you can to protect your pets? Check out our blog for tips!





Transforming Lives

Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc. is committed to making nutrition the cornerstone of veterinary medicine. Founded more than 75 years ago with an unwavering commitment to pet nutrition, Hill's mission is to help enrich and lengthen the special relationships between people and their pets. Dedicated to pioneering research and groundbreaking nutrition for dogs and cats based on a scientific understanding of their specific needs, Hill's operates based on the philosophy that all animals should be loved and cared for during their lifetimes. To learn more about Hill's, visit hillsvet.com and vet.hillstohome.com.



Established in 1933 by leaders in the veterinary profession, AAHA is best known for its accreditation of companion animal veterinary practices. To become accredited, companion animal hospitals undergo regular comprehensive evaluations by AAHA veterinary experts who evaluate the practice on approximately 900 standards of veterinary care. AAHA also develops publications and educational programs and resources designed to help companion animal hospitals thrive. Today, more than 4,000 practice teams (12-15% of all veterinary practices in the United States and Canada) are AAHA accredited. For more information about AAHA, visit aaha.org.

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