

# Veterinarians

*Dog person? Cat person? Either way, when your furry companion falls ill, it deserves superior care. We rate 138 area vets for both quality and price.*

We love our pets. We may talk to them like humans, plan vacations around them, spend many hours a week walking them, offer them more treats and toys than the kids get, clean up messes that we wouldn't go near in any other situation, sacrifice rugs and furniture to their bad habits, and negotiate gates and other obstructions to the normal human use of our homes.

It is not surprising, then, that at even the hint of a sickness or injury we worry about them. And we spend hundreds, sometimes thousands, of dollars on their medical care.

Naturally, we want to be sure that care is of the highest possible quality. And given all the other sacrifices we make for our pets, we would like not to have to put up with any more inconvenience, unpleasantness, and cost than necessary when getting that care.

This article will help you choose—and deal with—a veterinarian or veterinarians who will provide the care, service, and reasonable costs you want. We can't tell you how to measure all aspects of the technical skills of veterinarians, but there is much that you can observe on your own. Much information is provided on Table 2, beginning on page 51, on 138 Washington area veterinary practices to help you make a selection with which both you and your pet will be comfortable.

Table 2 gives information on vets' prices and gives extensive information from our survey of customers. We surveyed area consumers (primarily *CHECKBOOK* and *Consumer Reports* subscribers, but also a sampling of other consumers) and asked them to rate vets they had used "inferior," "adequate," or



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"superior" on various aspects of care and service. Table 2 shows the percent of each practice's surveyed customers who rated it "superior" on each question. (It's important to note that most ratings that weren't "superior" were at least "adequate" and that these ratings relate to raters' experiences over a period of several years in which various aspects of a veterinary practice may have changed. See page 96 for further discussion of our customer survey.)

If you have a pet, or plan soon to get one and don't yet have a veterinarian, you should select one now. You won't want to be making the choice later while attending to a seriously injured or ill pet.

You can be reasonably sure that any veterinarian you might choose is intelligent and well trained. Almost all vets have had at least four years of college and four years of veterinary school. Most also get several years of practical training working in a hospital or in another veterinarian's practice after veterinary school.

In recent years, it has been more difficult to get into veterinary school than to get into medical school. And vet school graduates must pass an exam comparable in difficulty to the exam physicians must pass in order to qualify to practice. But the fact that a vet has the necessary degrees and training doesn't mean you'll be satisfied. As in choosing your family's physician, you'll want to check several other matters before deciding that a vet is right for you and your pet.

## What They Treat

Except for a few specialists, vets in this area generally care for both dogs and cats, and many will treat small mammals (rodents, rabbits, etc.), but many don't provide care for birds and reptiles and very few care for farm animals (see codes on Table 2). You'll want to check whether a vet not only is willing but also is experienced and interested in caring for your type of pet.

## Convenience

You'll want to consider hours. Most area vets have some evening or weekend hours for routine visits. That makes life easier for you.

Since there are many vets in the area, you'll probably want to start your selection process with those that are reasonably close to your home. They'll be more accessible in an emergency and will be convenient for routine visits and for visits to your pet if it must be hospitalized.

For your convenience and your pet's comfort, you want a vet that allows you to conveniently schedule appointments and that keeps down office waiting time after you arrive—unless there's an intervening emergency. Table 2 shows how vets' practices were rated by surveyed

# Checklist

You can easily judge the convenience and quality of service provided by a vet. But that's not all you can judge. Even as a layperson, you can check out many aspects of a vet's practice critical to the clinical quality of care. These aspects include how well the vet listens and communicates with you, how thorough the vet is, and whether the vet gives adequate advice on disease prevention and on treatments you can give on your own.

Table 2, beginning on page 51, gives you the judgments of other consumers about 138 Washington area vets. There is substantial variation, with some vets rated "superior" by more than 90 percent of surveyed pet owners on many aspects of care and service while others received such favorable ratings from fewer than 60 percent on the same questions.

On average, the questions on which vets rated highest were "apparent competence/thoroughness," "maintaining pleasant office and staff," and "overall care and advice" and the questions on which they rated lowest were "helping keep pet's medical costs down" and "keeping down office waiting time."

There are big vet-to-vet price differences. For example, for spaying a six-month-old dog, charges we found at local vets ranged from \$90 to \$370. Many of the lowest priced vets rated very high on our customer survey. It is possible to save money and also get top-quality care for your pet.

There is more to keeping down costs than finding a vet with low charges. Advice on prevention and care at home for your pet can also help you keep down the pet's medical bills.

customers on "keeping down office waiting time." This was one of the areas in which vets scored lowest, but there was substantial variation from practice to practice, with a few practices getting "superior" ratings from more than 90 percent of surveyed customers and others getting such favorable ratings from fewer than 40 percent.

## Seeing You Quickly

We also asked customers to rate vets on "arranging to see you quickly." That's important to your peace of mind and to the comfort—and perhaps the survival—of your pet.

You can check on your own what provisions a vet makes for covering emergencies outside of office hours. Only a few surveyed veterinary hospitals reported they are open and staffed with a veterinarian on the premises 24 hours per day. But some vets will give you a home phone number, an answering service number, or both. Others will simply give you the number of one of the area's 24-hour facilities. When you call, some vets will come to meet you at the office, while others will talk with you and steer you to another facility or simply arrange for an answering service to steer you to another vet or facility. Ask any prospective vet exactly what kind of response you can expect in an emergency.

## Phone Advice

To save time and money, and to enable you to respond quickly to a pet's

needs, it's important to be able to get meaningful advice by phone. Table 2 gives customer survey results bearing on this point. It shows the percent of surveyed customers who rated vet practices "superior" for "giving helpful advice by phone."

## Do They Care?

The first time you visit a vet you'll get a sense of whether he or she really cares about animals. Note how gentle the vet is and how interested he or she is in learning relevant facts about your pet. Note also how your pet responds to the vet. It's generally a good sign if the vet has bulletin boards listing lost pets or pets up for adoption, has humane society brochures, or volunteers in some kind of humane work.

## Spay/Neuter Assistance Programs

Many local governments offer programs to subsidize consumers' costs for spaying or neutering a pet. Some offer two programs—one to help low-income pet owners and one for all pet owners, as an incentive to get pets fixed. To find out about such programs, call your local government's animal control division.

Also, ask about policies on visiting pets that are hospitalized. Flexibility reflects a concern about your happiness and the happiness of your pet rather than merely the convenience of clinic staff.

## Openness

To make a reliable judgment about a veterinary practice, you have to see more than the front office. Find out how open the vet is to showing you treatment rooms and the cages and runs where animals are temporarily held or boarded. Many clinics allow customers to tour the entire facility during regular office hours. If a facility doesn't allow this, push for a good explanation.

## Cleanliness

As in any human health care setting, cleanliness is essential in a veterinary practice. Be sure the waiting room and treatment rooms don't have debris from previous customers; check that treatment tables are disinfected after each animal is examined; note whether the staff's clothes and hands are clean; in general, be sure there is a sterile, hospital-like atmosphere.

## Accommodations

Since your pet may have to stay for several hours or overnight, be sure the facilities where it will be kept are bright, clean, have fresh air, and are set up so that pets are sufficiently separated from one another that they will not hurt each

other or transmit diseases. (We rated the boarding service of many veterinary hospitals that offer this service in *CHECKBOOK*, Volume 11, No. 4.)

### Advice on Prevention and Home Care

Look for a vet who will provide written materials and advice to help you avoid coming to his or her office. You need information on prevention and advice on how you can take care of your pet and diagnose problems on your own. Table 2 shows how each practice rated on this point.

### How They Communicate with You

You want a vet whom you like and with whom you communicate easily. On Table 2, the customer survey scores on “listening to you” are for a survey question that actually asked about “listening to/communicating with you.” Table 2 also shows how practices rated on “spending enough time with you,” a feature that is critical to adequate communication. But remember that communication is a highly personal matter. You might have a different opinion than our raters had about the ease of communication with a particular vet.

Good communication includes listening to you, making you feel comfortable about asking questions, explaining what is wrong with your pet, what is being done, and what you can expect. A vet should frankly admit his or her limitations and the need for outside specialist consultation. The vet should also talk openly about costs—so that there will be no financial surprises. And the vet should let you make decisions based on your finances, your devotion to your pet, and your informed understanding of the prognosis.

### Competence and Thoroughness

There is much you can judge about the competence and thoroughness of vets. Does the vet give a thorough exam and take a thorough medical history to find out about previous medical problems, previous occurrences of the current problem, what treatments have



**“He is physically able to wag his tail— given sufficient cause.”**

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worked, and other matters? If your pet is referred to a specialist, does your primary vet follow up with the specialist and keep a record of what happened? If tests are given, does the vet keep a record of the results and share them with you? Table 2 shows what other pet owners have concluded about the listed

score of \$90, for example, had prices 10 percent lower than the average. We found that most vets were quite consistent in their pricing; so a vet with a low price index score should be a very good prospect to have low prices for your pet’s needs.

Low prices are not the only way a vet can save you money, of course. You also

### Keeping Costs Down

You want a vet that charges reasonable fees. To help you compare fees, Table 2 gives scores on our price index.

To calculate these price index scores, our researchers shopped each of the vets for their prices for six different procedures, such as spaying a six-and-one-half-month-old cat and cleaning the teeth of a seven-year-old, 25-pound dog. The scores show how each vet’s prices compared to the average price for all surveyed vets. The scores are adjusted so that the average price index score is \$100. A vet with a

Table 1

### Illustrative Low, Average, and High Prices Quoted by Vets for a Few Sample Procedures<sup>1</sup>

Procedure	Low price	Average price	High price
Spaying of a 6½-month-old cat	\$85 (Four firms)	\$188	\$375 Kindness Animal Hospital
Removal of a cat’s front feet claws	\$85 Rocky Gorge Animal Hospital	\$224	\$400 Takoma Park Animal Clinic
Spaying of a six-month-old, 40-pound dog	\$90 Indian Head Animal Hospital	\$222	\$370 Kindness Animal Hospital
Lab analysis of a dog’s stool for worms	\$11 Deepwood Veterinary Clinic; Laytonsville Veterinary Practice	\$18	\$32 Burke Veterinary Clinic
Neutering of a 5½-month-old, 40-pound dog	\$80 Indian Head Animal Hospital	\$197	\$356 Seneca Hill Animal Hospital
Teeth cleaning of a seven-year-old, 25-pound dog	\$60 Glenvilah Veterinary Clinic	\$170	\$354 Seneca Hill Animal Hospital

**FOOTNOTE:**

<sup>1</sup> Some prices were rounded to the nearest whole dollar. Each firm was given additional, detailed information about what services had to be included in the price of the procedures (for example, anesthetic, pre-surgical exam, and hospitalization).

save if the vet is effective in showing you how to prevent disease and injuries and if the vet shows you how to care for your pet by yourself. Our customer survey sought to get consumer opinions on these broad aspects of cost control with a question on “helping keep pet’s medical costs down.” There is a modest correlation between scores on this question and our price index scores.

### Accreditation

Veterinary hospitals can become accredited by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) by meeting certain minimum standards: keeping adequate medical records and having complete diagnostic, pharmacy, anesthetic, surgical, nursing, dental, and emergency service facilities. Of the 138 firms in our study, 50 were AAHA accredited. Interestingly, being AAHA accredited seems not to be related to our other measures of quality. For example, on our customer survey question regarding “apparent competence/thoroughness” AAHA accredited firms, on average, scored about the same as non-accredited firms. But going to an AAHA accredited firm might cost you more: the average price index score for AAHA accredited hospitals was \$111, compared to an average of \$94 for non-accredited hospitals.

## What to Look Out For

You should evaluate your pet’s general health with a nose-to-tail inspection daily. Many health problems in animals are subtle, and easily overlooked. The following is a checklist, excerpted from a publication by the Humane Society of the United States, that lists warning signs to alert you to possible sickness. Keep in mind that this list is general to both dogs and cats, and that the best measure of your pet’s health is whether or not its appearance and behavior are normal for the specific animal.

### Eyes

#### Good signs

- Clean, clear, and bright
- Responsive to visual stimuli

#### Warning signs

- Watery
- Red

## Euthanasia and Disposition

At some point, most of us will have to make a decision as to whether or not to authorize euthanasia. While this decision is difficult, pet health care practitioners widely agree that this is frequently the right choice for a terminally ill or dying pet.

Local humane societies and animal control agencies usually offer euthanasia services and either perform cremations themselves, or can refer you to a local service or pet cemetery that does. Most veterinarians perform euthanasia procedures and will arrange for disposition.

Options for disposition include burial—either in a pet cemetery or somewhere on the owner’s property—and cremation. If you choose to have your pet buried in a cemetery,

you will have to pay for a lot and a container for the pet’s remains. If you decide on a home burial, it’s a good idea to check with local public health officials for requirements. The Humane Society recommends that you put the pet in a heavy-duty plastic bag, encase it in a secure receptacle such as a wood or metal box, and bury it at least three feet deep.

Cremation costs usually depend on the weight of the pet and whether it is a private or communal cremation. Costs can vary widely—for a private cremation, we found that prices ranged from about \$50 to \$175. Usually you can decide whether you want the crematory service to dispose of the remains or return the remains to you.

- Filmy, cloudy, or discolored
- Dry
- Inflamed/swollen
- Hypersensitive to light
- Pupils are unequal in size
- Pupils are overly dilated or overly constricted
- Third (or middle) eyelid showing
- Itchy (animal rubbing at eyes)
- Painful (animal squinting)

### Ears

#### Good signs

- Both outer ear and canal are clean, and the canal is pink in color
- Responsive to noise

#### Warning signs

- Showing discharge (waxy or other)
- Crusty or scabbed tissue
- Red, inflamed, or swollen
- Hair around ear is matted
- Flea-bitten
- Itchy (animal scratching ear or shaking head)
- Unusual smells
- Painful (animal cries or winces when ear is touched)

### Nose

#### Good signs

- Clean
- Free of discharge

#### Warning signs

- Tissue is scabbed, crusty, or cracked
- Showing discharge
- Congested or blocked

### Mouth

#### Good signs

- Free of odor
- Teeth are clean
- Gums are pink—after being pressed with finger, pink gum color returns within one to two seconds

#### Warning signs

- Animal has trouble eating or swallowing
- Unusually pale, red, or purple gums
- Dry
- Excessive salivating
- Foul odor not caused by food
- Showing discharge
- Swollen or inflamed
- Teeth are loose, pitted, broken, or tartar-covered
- Animal is pawing at or rubbing the mouth

### Breathing/Respiration

#### Good signs

- Respiration sounds clear
- Respiration rate is normal

#### Warning signs

- Breathing is irregular, rapid, shallow, or labored



# Pet Health Insurance

A handful of companies market health insurance for dogs. Before signing up for such insurance, read the policy carefully. For example, a policy offered by Veterinary Pet Insurance (VPI) for an annual premium of \$160 for a five-year-old beagle—

- Limited benefits to a specified per-procedure price schedule (for example, \$733 for treatment of a fractured leg), which might be less than some vets charge;
- Limited benefits to a maximum of \$4,500 per accident or illness;
- Included a \$50 deductible for *each* accident or illness (rather than a *per year* deductible as you find in most human health insurance policies);
- Excluded coverage of vaccinations, annual physical exams, routine teeth cleaning, treatment of congenital defects or diseases, behavioral problems, heartworm protection, prescription flea control, spaying or neutering, or other elective procedures;

- Vaccination and routine care coverage could be added, but those benefits increased the annual premium to \$250 (no deductible applied to routine care benefits);
- Delayed the effective date of coverage until 14 days after acceptance of the application and premium.

You must decide whether what you get is worth the price. Our general view of insurance is that you shouldn't get it except against expenses that would seriously disrupt your life. Buying insurance to cover non-catastrophic expenses means you pay administrative costs for an insurance company to process bills you could pay yourself. You also add to your own paperwork. And you pay premiums to cover a pool of other policyholders, some of whom may be more wasteful—more prone to using excessive care—than you are.

Another option is a prepaid health plan, offered by some veterinarians. Under these plans, you usually pay the veterinarian a set dollar amount that covers specific procedures and/or vaccinations (at a discount) throughout the year.

- Animal is sneezing, coughing, or wheezing excessively
- Breathing is through open mouth

## Skin/Hair

### Good signs

- Skin is elastic (springs back immediately after being raised between the shoulder blades)
- Coat is bright and glossy
- Skin is clean and free of oil
- Skin is free of swelling, lumps, mats, or lesions

### Warning signs

- Coat is dull, oily, or dirty
- Coat has areas of hair loss or thinning
- Hair is matted
- Skin is dry, flaky, scabby, or shows swelling, lumps, or lesions
- Skin is red or irritated
- Fleas, ticks, lice, or other parasites

## Legs/Feet

### Good signs

- Legs support weight evenly (no limping)

- Pads are clean and smooth
- Nails are healthy-looking

### Warning signs

- Animal favors one leg
- Animal has limited motion, or is weak or uncoordinated
- Joints feel tender
- Pads are cracked or hard
- Pads have matted hair between them
- Nails are long, short, or ingrown
- Legs show swelling, lumps, or lesions

## Anal/Genital

### Good signs

- Area is clean and free of discharge
- Stool is normal in appearance, color, and consistency

### Warning signs

- Increased or decreased urination or droppings
- Stool is watery or bloody
- Area around anus shows swelling or lumps
- Swollen testicles (one larger than the other)
- Foul odor

- Animal is dragging rear end on the ground
- Animal is excessively licking area

## General Appearance

### Good signs

- Animal is bright, alert, and responsive
- Animal is balanced and coordinated
- Body temperature is normal
- Animal is interested in/oriented to surroundings

### Warning signs

- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Wounds or abscesses
- Any swelling, lumps, or bumps
- Animal is losing or gaining weight
- Mammary glands are swollen or discharging fluid
- Coughing, sneezing, or wheezing
- Animal appears uncoordinated or disoriented
- Animal tilts head
- Animal repeatedly walks in circles
- Abdomen is bloated
- Abnormal body temperature
- Hyperactive or lethargic activity
- Excessive water drinking or urination

Table 2

Veterinarians <sup>1</sup>		Types of animals cared for*	Percent of surveyed customers rating firm "superior" on our survey for...										CHECKBOOK's price index score <sup>2</sup>	CHECKBOOK's top rating (✓)	
			Listening to you and (number of ratings)	Arranging to see you quickly	Giving helpful advice by phone	Keeping down office waiting time	Maintaining pleasant office and staff	Giving prevention/self-help advice	Spending enough time with you	Apparent competence/thoroughness	Helping keep pet's medical costs down	Overall care and advice		For quality	For price
														For quality	For price
<b>All-Firm Averages</b>			83%	80%	76%	64%	84%	78%	80%	86%	47%	84%	\$100		
<b>District of Columbia</b>															
Collins Animal Hospital 1808 Wisconsin Ave NW	202-659-8830	ABC DEF	90% (31)	55%	79%	48%	87%	77%	87%	84%	58%	80%	\$118		
Dupont Veterinary Clinic 2022 P St NW	202-466-2211	AB	85% (46)	84%	60%	42%	70%	64%	72%	78%	36%	74%	\$98		
Friendship Hospital For Animals 4105 Brandywine St NW	202-363-7300	AB	67% (177)	71%	57%	49%	75%	59%	57%	76%	23%	69%	\$141		
Georgetown Veterinary Hospital <sup>3</sup> 2916 M St NW	202-333-2140	AB DEF	93% (30)	73%	89%	80%	97%	83%	87%	93%	57%	90%	\$101	✓	
Ross Veterinary Hospital 5138 MacArthur Blvd NW	202-363-1316	AB CDF	78% (27)	85%	67%	52%	81%	85%	80%	89%	52%	89%	\$99		
VCA MacArthur Hospital 4832 MacArthur Blvd NW	202-337-0120	AB	83% (35)	79%	77%	56%	54%	63%	89%	91%	47%	83%	\$140		
<b>Maryland—Montgomery County</b>															
A Cat Clinic 13507 Clopper Rd, Germantown	301-540-7770	B	69% (16)	81%	67%	69%	81%	63%	75%	88%	36%	75%	\$95 <sup>4</sup>		
A Cat Practice 2816 Linden Ln, Silver Spring	301-587-0052	B	76% (49)	82%	72%	71%	78%	79%	71%	80%	40%	81%	\$100 <sup>4</sup>		
Alpine Veterinary Hospital 7732 MacArthur Blvd, Cabin John	301-229-2400	A BD	89% (35)	88%	81%	97%	83%	77%	89%	83%	33%	83%	\$135		
Ambassador Animal Hospital 7979 Georgia Ave, Silver Spring	301-589-1344	AB	37% (19)	74%	31%	53%	53%	28%	32%	37%	17%	37%	\$116		
Animal Place Veterinary Hospital 13818 Georgia Ave, Silver Spring	301-603-1223	AB DF	83% (12)	83%	73%	75%	83%	73%	83%	83%	73%	75%	— <sup>5</sup>		— <sup>6</sup>
Benson Animal Hospital 4981 Cordell Ave, Bethesda	301-652-8818	AB	76% (71)	74%	67%	51%	86%	70%	74%	87%	21%	76%	\$121		
Brookeville Animal Hospital <sup>3</sup> 22201 Georgia Ave, Brookeville	301-774-9698	ABC DEF	85% (27)	74%	71%	63%	78%	78%	74%	81%	63%	81%	\$67		✓
Burtonsville Animal Hospital 15543 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville	301-421-9200	AB	68% (22)	86%	53%	86%	77%	52%	77%	77%	67%	73%	\$59		✓
Canal Clinic 9125 River Rd, Potomac	301-299-0880	A BF	95% (21)	100%	95%	95%	95%	86%	90%	90%	84%	90%	\$101	✓	
Chevy Chase Veterinary Clinic 8815 Connecticut Ave, Chevy Chase	301-656-6655	ABC DEF	65% (20)	84%	80%	65%	85%	74%	75%	70%	39%	79%	\$100		
Delray Animal Hospital 9301 Old Georgetown Rd, Bethesda	301-564-1923	AB	86% (14)	79%	69%	86%	86%	86%	86%	79%	85%	93%	\$91	✓	
Diamond Veterinary Hospital 17000 Longdraft Rd, Gaithersburg	301-869-3990	AB	86% (14)	57%	77%	71%	86%	93%	64%	71%	43%	93%	\$74		✓
Fairland Animal Hospital 12711 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring	301-622-2115	AB DF	87% (23)	91%	86%	87%	91%	86%	87%	96%	55%	96%	\$80	✓	✓
Falls Road Veterinary Hospital 10229 Falls Rd, Potomac	301-983-8400	AB	76% (38)	75%	74%	54%	79%	78%	68%	78%	36%	78%	\$109		

## FOOTNOTES ON PAGE 57.

\*TYPES OF ANIMALS CARED FOR: A=Dogs; B=Cats; C=Birds; D=Small rodents; E=Reptiles; F=Rabbits; G=Farm animals.

Table 2

Veterinarians <sup>1</sup>		Types of animals cared for*	Percent of surveyed customers rating firm "superior" on our survey for...										CHECKBOOK's price index score <sup>2</sup>	CHECKBOOK's top rating (✓)	
			Listening to you and (number of ratings)	Arranging to see you quickly	Giving helpful advice by phone	Keeping down office waiting time	Maintaining pleasant office and staff	Giving prevention/self-help advice	Spending enough time with you	Apparent competence/thoroughness	Helping keep pet's medical costs down	Overall care and advice		For quality	For price
														For quality	For price
<b>All-Firm Averages</b>			83%	80%	76%	64%	84%	78%	80%	86%	47%	84%	\$100		
<b>Maryland—Montgomery County (continued)</b>															
Flower Valley Veterinary Clinic 4201 Norbeck Rd, Rockville	301-929-1600	AB	100% (11)	73%	63%	82%	100%	82%	91%	100%	55%	82%	\$94	✓	
Four Corners Animal Hospital 105 University Blvd W, Silver Spring	301-593-6330	A BG	67% (19)	79%	57%	47%	68%	50%	68%	79%	40%	67%	\$118		
Gaithersburg Animal Hospital 280 N Frederick Ave, Gaithersburg	301-948-2828	ABC DEF	98% (50)	92%	83%	72%	94%	88%	96%	94%	40%	96%	\$100	✓	
Gaithersburg Square Animal Clinic <sup>3</sup> 582 N Frederick Ave #1A, Gaithersburg	301-840-9477	AB CDF	93% (14)	100%	85%	86%	100%	93%	100%	100%	54%	93%	\$88	✓	
Germantown Veterinary Clinic <sup>3</sup> 19411 Walter Johnson Rd, Germantown	301-972-9730	AB CDF	90% (21)	95%	89%	71%	100%	86%	95%	95%	30%	95%	\$104	✓	
Glenvilah Veterinary Clinic <sup>3</sup> 12948 Travilah Rd #E, Potomac	301-963-4664	AB DEF	84% (19)	100%	94%	63%	89%	95%	100%	95%	61%	95%	\$78	✓	✓
Goshen Animal Clinic 8357 Snouffers School Rd, Gaithersburg	301-977-5586	AB DF	95% (20)	95%	93%	65%	95%	75%	95%	95%	47%	90%	\$64	✓	✓
Hampden Lane Veterinary Office 4921 Hampden Ln, Bethesda	301-951-0300	AB CDF	80% (59)	81%	68%	88%	88%	71%	74%	79%	47%	81%	\$97		
Hillandale Animal Hospital 1900 Powder Mill Rd, Silver Spring	301-439-9444	AB	67% (19)	83%	62%	74%	74%	67%	68%	74%	56%	67%	\$65		✓
Kenhaven Animal Hospital 12311 Wilkins Ave, Rockville	301-881-6212	AB	73% (11)	70%	50%	55%	91%	56%	64%	64%	55%	64%	\$112		
Kentlands Veterinary Hospital 117 Booth St, Gaithersburg	301-519-7944	AB DF	94% (16)	94%	80%	94%	94%	100%	100%	100%	69%	94%	— <sup>5</sup>	✓	— <sup>6</sup>
Kindness Animal Hospital 2130 University Blvd W, Silver Spring	301-949-2511	AB DEF	82% (56)	84%	73%	57%	82%	76%	75%	82%	35%	85%	\$160		
Lake Forest Animal Hospital 18645 N Frederick Ave, Gaithersburg	301-948-6707	ABC DEF	94% (18)	88%	88%	94%	89%	88%	94%	89%	44%	89%	\$99	✓	
Layhill Animal Hospital 14360 Layhill Rd, Silver Spring	301-598-7300	AB	86% (22)	86%	83%	73%	95%	79%	86%	86%	52%	80%	\$76		✓
Laytonsville Veterinary Practice 5910 Sundown Rd, Gaithersburg	301-948-0158	AB DF	92% (26)	96%	70%	68%	92%	81%	88%	88%	67%	88%	\$69	✓	✓
Marymont Animal Hospital 24 Randolph Rd, Silver Spring	301-384-1223	AB CDF	86% (23)	71%	75%	57%	91%	80%	87%	87%	52%	87%	\$88		
Montgomery Animal Hospital 12200 Rockville Pike, Rockville	301-881-6447	AB DF	72% (30)	77%	58%	47%	70%	62%	70%	70%	19%	70%	\$115		
Montgomery Village Animal Hosp 19222 Montgomery Village Ave, Gaithersburg	301-330-2200	A BD	93% (15)	80%	73%	67%	87%	71%	87%	100%	20%	87%	\$121		
Negola's Ark Veterinary Hospital 9401 Fields Rd, Gaithersburg	301-216-0066	AB	91% (11)	100%	100%	73%	100%	100%	91%	100%	40%	100%	— <sup>5</sup>	✓	— <sup>6</sup>
Norbeck Animal Clinic 2645 Norbeck Rd, Silver Spring	301-924-3616	AB DF	93% (15)	93%	93%	80%	93%	80%	93%	93%	71%	93%	\$65	✓	✓
Olney Sandy Spring Vet Hosp 1300 Olney Sandy Spring Rd, Sandy Spring	301-774-0700	AB	96% (23)	87%	90%	74%	87%	100%	91%	91%	48%	96%	\$88	✓	
Peach Tree Veterinary Clinic 18620 Darnestown Rd, Beallsville	301-972-7010	AB	96% (26)	88%	80%	69%	96%	84%	92%	96%	52%	96%	\$90	✓	

Table 2

Veterinarians <sup>1</sup>		Types of animals cared for*	Percent of surveyed customers rating firm "superior" on our survey for...										CHECKBOOK's top rating (✓)		
			Listening to you and (number of ratings)	Arranging to see you quickly	Giving helpful advice by phone	Keeping down office waiting time	Maintaining pleasant office and staff	Giving prevention/self-help advice	Spending enough time with you	Apparent competence/thoroughness	Helping keep pet's medical costs down	Overall care and advice	CHECKBOOK's price index score <sup>2</sup>	For quality	For price
<b>All-Firm Averages</b>			83%	80%	76%	64%	84%	78%	80%	86%	47%	84%	\$100		
<b>Maryland—Montgomery County (continued)</b>															
Pet Dominion Veterinary Hosp 15820 Redland Rd, Rockville	301-258-0333	AB	79% (28)	84%	67%	42%	71%	81%	82%	82%	43%	82%	\$122		
Petvacc 14636 Rothgeb Dr, Rockville	301-838-9506	AB CDF	83% (29)	79%	71%	77%	79%	78%	79%	86%	56%	83%	\$86		✓
Potomac Animal Hospital 10020 River Rd, Potomac	301-299-4142	AB DF	89% (45)	91%	88%	67%	87%	86%	82%	91%	30%	93%	\$126		
Quince Orchard Veterinary Hosp 11910 Darnestown Rd, Gaithersburg	301-258-0850	ABC DEF	67% (36)	67%	54%	39%	78%	55%	44%	67%	17%	63%	\$100		
Richard A Weitzman 8924 Liberty Ln, Potomac	301-762-2070	A BD	94% (34)	88%	77%	50%	91%	74%	76%	94%	45%	97%	\$100		
Seven Locks Animal Hospital 7817 Tuckerman Ln, Potomac	301-299-6900	AB	96% (26)	88%	96%	92%	100%	92%	88%	92%	38%	96%	\$127	✓	
Takoma Park Animal Clinic 7330 Carroll Ave, Takoma Park	301-270-4700	AB	88% (43)	60%	51%	44%	72%	63%	69%	79%	23%	66%	\$110		
Town & Country Animal Clinic 2715 Olney Sandy Spring Rd, Olney	301-774-7111	AB DFG	89% (35)	74%	67%	51%	89%	83%	80%	89%	64%	89%	\$79		✓
Wheaton Animal Hospital 2929 University Blvd W, Kensington	301-949-1520	ABC DEF	87% (68)	87%	83%	60%	81%	84%	82%	82%	55%	88%	\$104		
Wisconsin Animal Clinic 9500 Wisconsin Ave, Bethesda	301-493-4808	AB	91% (59)	88%	87%	81%	93%	89%	85%	90%	59%	95%	\$84	✓	✓
<b>Maryland—Prince George's County</b>															
Animal Clinic of North Bowie 6796 Laurel Bowie Rd, Bowie	301-464-3611	A BD	80% (10)	60%	75%	60%	90%	100%	80%	90%	44%	90%	\$68		✓
Belair Veterinary Hospital 15511 Hall Rd, Bowie	301-249-5200	AB CEF	92% (12)	83%	89%	67%	92%	83%	92%	100%	82%	83%	\$70	✓	✓
Beltsville Veterinary Hospital 4246 Powder Mill Rd, Beltsville	301-937-3020	AB	80% (56)	79%	66%	65%	73%	83%	84%	88%	62%	88%	\$57		✓
Bowie Towne Veterinary Hospital 13801 Annapolis Rd, Bowie	301-464-0402	AB	93% (14)	71%	83%	36%	77%	79%	86%	100%	43%	93%	\$69		✓
College Park Animal Hospital 9717 Baltimore Ave, College Park	301-441-2547	ABC DEF	76% (33)	55%	57%	35%	73%	67%	69%	73%	38%	76%	\$93		
Coolridge Animal Hospital 6801 Old Branch Ave, Temple Hills	301-449-1610	ABC DEF	75% (16)	63%	63%	44%	88%	75%	75%	75%	56%	75%	\$70		✓
Glenn Dale Veterinary Clinic 10843 Lanham Severn Rd, Glenn Dale	301-390-6770	ABC DEF	67% (12)	92%	70%	50%	83%	82%	75%	91%	64%	83%	— <sup>5</sup>		— <sup>6</sup>
Highway Veterinary Hospital 2604 Crain Hwy, Bowie	301-249-2005	AB DF	82% (11)	64%	55%	45%	82%	80%	82%	82%	18%	73%	\$97		
Indian Head Animal Hospital 10909 Indian Head Hwy, Fort Washington	301-292-1150	AB	88% (24)	83%	100%	63%	92%	88%	79%	88%	71%	91%	\$50	✓	✓
Lynn Animal Hospital 6215 Baltimore Ave, Riverdale	301-779-1184	ABC DEF	88% (24)	75%	78%	42%	79%	75%	88%	83%	64%	86%	\$70		✓

## FOOTNOTES ON PAGE 57.

\*TYPES OF ANIMALS CARED FOR: A=Dogs; B=Cats; C=Birds; D=Small rodents; E=Reptiles; F=Rabbits; G=Farm animals.



Table 2

Veterinarians <sup>1</sup>		Types of animals cared for*	Percent of surveyed customers rating firm "superior" on our survey for...										CHECKBOOK's top rating (✓)		
			Listening to you and (number of ratings)	Arranging to see you quickly	Giving helpful advice by phone	Keeping down office waiting time	Maintaining pleasant office and staff	Giving prevention/self-help advice	Spending enough time with you	Apparent competence/thoroughness	Helping keep pet's medical costs down	Overall care and advice	CHECKBOOK's price index score <sup>2</sup>	For quality	For price
<b>All-Firm Averages</b>			83%	80%	76%	64%	84%	78%	80%	86%	47%	84%	\$100		
<b>Maryland—Prince George's County (continued)</b>															
New Carrollton Veterinary Hosp <sup>3</sup> 7601 Good Luck Rd, Lanham-Seabrook		AB DF	86% (29)	79%	79%	46%	93%	69%	83%	69%	32%	72%	\$105		
Rocky Gorge Animal Hospital 7515 Brooklyn Bridge Rd, Laurel		AB CDF	80% (30)	57%	85%	47%	83%	90%	80%	93%	62%	83%	\$49		✓
<b>Virginia—Alexandria</b>															
Alexandria Animal Hospital 2660 Duke St		ABC DEFG	84% (105)	74%	71%	47%	81%	78%	72%	88%	33%	85%	\$106		
Del Ray Animal Hospital 524 E Mt Ida Ave		ABC DEF	78% (41)	83%	76%	63%	85%	63%	76%	78%	43%	83%	\$75		✓
Elpaw Veterinary Clinic 33 S Pickett St		AB	57% (23)	74%	75%	74%	83%	74%	78%	78%	36%	77%	\$101		
<b>Virginia—Arlington County</b>															
Arlington Animal Hospital <sup>3</sup> 2624 Columbia Pike		AB	84% (19)	100%	93%	79%	95%	89%	89%	95%	32%	95%	\$121	✓	
Ballston Animal Hospital 5232 Wilson Blvd		AB	67% (39)	58%	61%	46%	62%	65%	56%	67%	28%	67%	\$137		
Capital Cat Clinic 923 N Kenmore St		B	84% (31)	80%	82%	77%	90%	80%	87%	87%	52%	84%	\$111 <sup>4</sup>		
Cherrydale Veterinary Clinic 4038 Lee Hwy		AB	73% (48)	77%	67%	60%	79%	62%	65%	79%	15%	72%	\$157		
Northside Veterinary Clinic 4003 Lee Hwy		AB	86% (21)	81%	74%	71%	62%	70%	90%	81%	33%	81%	\$117		
Suburban Animal Hospital 6879 Lee Hwy		AB	70% (73)	65%	65%	32%	65%	64%	69%	74%	31%	68%	\$96		
<b>Virginia—Fairfax County</b>															
Adams Mill Veterinary Hospital 10205 Colvin Run Rd, Great Falls		AB DF	95% (19)	79%	100%	58%	94%	100%	100%	100%	58%	100%	\$92	✓	
Annandale Animal Hospital 7405 Little River Tpke, Annandale		AB	94% (62)	89%	90%	53%	90%	90%	94%	98%	55%	98%	\$67	✓	✓
Austin Veterinary Clinic 7323 Little River Tpke, Annandale		AB	71% (28)	68%	80%	68%	79%	64%	64%	75%	44%	71%	\$99		
Banfield The Pet Hospital <sup>7</sup> 6535 Frontier Dr, Springfield		AB DF	40% (11)	30%	22%	45%	36%	40%	45%	45%	45%	36%	— <sup>5</sup>		— <sup>6</sup>
Belle Haven Animal Medical Centre 1221 Belle Haven Rd, Alexandria		AB	94% (17)	81%	76%	76%	100%	88%	100%	100%	35%	100%	\$126	✓	
Blue Cross Animal Hospital 8429 Lee Hwy, Fairfax		AB	65% (20)	55%	38%	45%	70%	42%	50%	53%	25%	50%	\$99		
Burke Animal Clinic 6307 Lee Chappel Rd, Burke		AB	83% (23)	87%	76%	70%	87%	74%	70%	83%	22%	74%	\$105		
Burke Forest Veterinary Clinic 6214 Rolling Rd, Springfield		AB	67% (12)	92%	80%	92%	92%	75%	83%	83%	33%	75%	— <sup>5</sup>		— <sup>6</sup>

Table 2

Veterinarians <sup>1</sup>		Types of animals cared for*	Percent of surveyed customers rating firm "superior" on our survey for...										CHECKBOOK's price index score <sup>2</sup>	CHECKBOOK's top rating (✓)	
			Listening to you and (number of ratings)	Arranging to see you quickly	Giving helpful advice by phone	Keeping down office waiting time	Maintaining pleasant office and staff	Giving prevention/self-help advice	Spending enough time with you	Apparent competence/thoroughness	Helping keep pet's medical costs down	Overall care and advice		For quality	For price
														For quality	For price
<b>All-Firm Averages</b>			83%	80%	76%	64%	84%	78%	80%	86%	47%	84%	\$100		
<b>Virginia—Fairfax County (continued)</b>															
Burke Veterinary Clinic 6401 Shipleff Blvd, Burke	703-455-6222	AB DF	100% (41)	98%	89%	85%	98%	98%	98%	98%	50%	100%	\$124	✓	
Caring Hands Animal Hospital 5659 Stone Rd, Centreville	703-830-5700	AB DF	85% (13)	92%	92%	54%	69%	85%	77%	85%	62%	85%	\$122		
Cat Hospital of Fairfax 3915 Old Lee Hwy #21B, Fairfax	703-273-5454	B	95% (20)	78%	83%	85%	95%	95%	95%	90%	40%	90%	\$156 <sup>4</sup>	✓	
Centreville Animal Hospital 13663 Lee Hwy, Centreville	703-830-1182	AB CDF	83% (23)	83%	77%	57%	83%	78%	87%	91%	38%	87%	\$86		✓
Chantilly Animal Hospital <sup>3</sup> 13705 Lee Jackson Memorial Hwy #A, Chantilly	703-802-8387	ABC DEF	93% (14)	86%	58%	57%	79%	62%	93%	93%	43%	93%	\$121		
Clifton-Centreville Animal Clinic 13822-A Braddock Rd, Centreville	703-830-8844	AB	94% (16)	94%	92%	81%	94%	94%	94%	100%	73%	100%	\$99	✓	
Clocktower Animal Hospital 2451 Centreville Rd, Herndon	703-713-1200	AB DF	95% (19)	84%	88%	84%	95%	89%	89%	89%	61%	83%	\$98	✓	
Colonial Animal Hospital 6733 Commerce St, Springfield	703-451-5400	A BF	90% (52)	86%	84%	85%	87%	87%	90%	90%	65%	90%	\$126	✓	
Columbia Pike Animal Hospital 4205 Evergreen Ln, Annandale	703-256-8414	ABC DEF	91% (79)	78%	80%	48%	77%	88%	78%	82%	55%	84%	\$75		✓
Commonwealth Animal Hospital 10860 Main St, Fairfax	703-273-8183	AB CDF	85% (46)	86%	82%	65%	80%	77%	91%	91%	65%	89%	\$88		
Companion Animal Clinic 10998 Clara Barton Dr, Fairfax Station	703-250-4100	AB	100% (16)	94%	93%	94%	94%	100%	81%	94%	40%	100%	\$117	✓	
Companion Animal Hospital 7297 Commerce St, Springfield	703-866-4100	AB	93% (14)	93%	85%	57%	100%	86%	86%	93%	43%	93%	— <sup>5</sup>	✓	— <sup>6</sup>
Deepwood Veterinary Clinic 7300 Ordway Rd, Centreville	703-631-9133	ABC DFG	81% (28)	67%	63%	15%	81%	80%	75%	79%	65%	75%	\$78		✓
Dominion Animal Hospital 795 Station St, Herndon	703-437-6900	AB	88% (17)	81%	93%	76%	94%	81%	94%	94%	81%	94%	\$70	✓	✓
Dunn Loring Animal Hospital <sup>3</sup> 2304 Gallows Rd, Dunn Loring	703-573-7464	AB DF	85% (13)	69%	60%	42%	85%	82%	69%	83%	42%	83%	\$109		
Fairfax Animal Hospital 5914 Seminary Rd, Falls Church	703-820-2557	AB DF	80% (26)	57%	61%	50%	77%	71%	77%	81%	48%	80%	\$95		
Falls Church Animal Hospital 1249 W Broad St, Falls Church	703-532-6121	AB	74% (69)	84%	67%	65%	67%	62%	70%	78%	37%	74%	\$89		
Feline Veterinary Clinic 7189 Lee Hwy, Falls Church	703-241-8480	B	74% (23)	82%	89%	39%	57%	86%	83%	87%	30%	83%	\$94 <sup>4</sup>		
Fort Hunt Animal Hospital 1900 Elkin St, Alexandria	703-360-6100	AB	81% (26)	81%	82%	46%	77%	72%	88%	85%	46%	80%	\$95		
Franklin Farm Veterinary Clinic 13320 Franklin Farm Rd #J, Herndon	703-435-3335	AB	80% (11)	82%	89%	82%	100%	82%	82%	91%	70%	73%	— <sup>5</sup>		— <sup>6</sup>
Great Falls Animal Hospital 10125 Colvin Run Rd, Great Falls	703-759-2330	ABC DEF	88% (66)	86%	82%	62%	92%	72%	77%	88%	40%	86%	\$134		

## FOOTNOTES ON PAGE 57.

\*TYPES OF ANIMALS CARED FOR: A=Dogs; B=Cats; C=Birds; D=Small rodents; E=Reptiles; F=Rabbits; G=Farm animals.

Table 2

Veterinarians <sup>1</sup>		Types of animals cared for*	Percent of surveyed customers rating firm "superior" on our survey for...										CHECKBOOK's price index score <sup>2</sup>	CHECKBOOK's top rating (✓)	
			Listening to you and (number of ratings)	Arranging to see you quickly	Giving helpful advice by phone	Keeping down office waiting time	Maintaining pleasant office and staff	Giving prevention/self-help advice	Spending enough time with you	Apparent competence/thoroughness	Helping keep pet's medical costs down	Overall care and advice		For quality	For price
														For quality	For price
<b>All-Firm Averages</b>			83%	80%	76%	64%	84%	78%	80%	86%	47%	84%	\$100		
<b>Virginia—Fairfax County (continued)</b>															
Hayfield Animal Hospital 7724 Telegraph Rd, Alexandria	703-971-2127	ABC DEF	80% (40)	87%	80%	56%	83%	82%	85%	85%	31%	88%	\$85		✓
Herndon Animal Medical Center 720 Jackson St, Herndon	703-435-8777	AB	100% (23)	70%	75%	74%	100%	95%	87%	100%	52%	100%	\$92	✓	
Herndon Reston Animal Hospital 500 Elden St, Herndon	703-437-5655	A BD	88% (17)	67%	79%	29%	65%	81%	88%	82%	38%	76%	\$127		
Hollin Hall Animal Hospital 7930 Ft Hunt Rd, Alexandria	703-660-0044	ABC DEF	86% (23)	86%	81%	87%	96%	86%	83%	91%	74%	87%	\$87	✓	
Hunter Mill Animal Hospital 2935 Chain Bridge Rd, Oakton	703-281-1644	AB	85% (35)	86%	79%	69%	89%	77%	80%	83%	35%	74%	\$127 <sup>4</sup>		
Hybla Valley Veterinary Hospital 7627 Richmond Hwy, Alexandria	703-765-9292	AB	83% (23)	91%	72%	78%	78%	83%	83%	91%	70%	96%	\$66	✓	✓
Kings Veterinary Hospital 5241 Rolling Rd, North Springfield	703-978-8900	AB DF	75% (16)	75%	62%	69%	81%	75%	56%	75%	38%	80%	\$133		
Kingsview Animal Hospital 7434 Beulah St, Alexandria	703-971-9292	AB	86% (37)	79%	81%	78%	86%	76%	84%	86%	62%	86%	\$98		
Kingstowne Cat Clinic 5830 Kingstowne Ctr #120, Alexandria	703-922-8228	B	97% (35)	85%	97%	80%	94%	97%	94%	100%	69%	100%	\$93 <sup>4</sup>	✓	
Little River Veterinary Clinic <sup>3</sup> 4000 Burke Station Rd, Fairfax	703-273-5110	AB DF	83% (30)	71%	64%	60%	87%	76%	76%	77%	35%	77%	\$104		
McLean Animal Hospital 1330 Old Chain Bridge Rd, McLean	703-356-5000	A BD	83% (89)	82%	74%	75%	79%	74%	82%	83%	40%	78%	\$108		
Montrose Animal Health Center 3883 Pickett Rd, Fairfax	703-425-5020	AB CF	83% (19)	95%	82%	74%	89%	83%	89%	94%	53%	94%	\$109	✓	
Old Dominion Animal Health Ctr 6719 Lowell Ave, McLean	703-356-5582	AB DF	76% (71)	79%	63%	43%	86%	83%	66%	82%	16%	71%	\$129		
Parkway Veterinary Clinic 5743 Burke Centre Pkwy, Burke	703-323-9020	AB	93% (46)	85%	83%	84%	93%	82%	89%	96%	45%	89%	\$79	✓	✓
Pender Vet/Eastern Exotic Vet Ctr 4001 Legato Rd, Fairfax	703-591-3304	ABC DEF	86% (165)	82%	78%	57%	88%	80%	79%	88%	36%	84%	\$87		
Potomac Valley Veterinary Hosp 9553 Braddock Rd, Fairfax	703-425-7387	ABC DEF	83% (12)	64%	73%	33%	92%	83%	75%	83%	27%	83%	\$122		
Reston Animal Hospital 2403 Reston Pkwy, Reston	703-620-2566	AB	86% (36)	62%	72%	46%	75%	66%	75%	81%	45%	72%	\$98		
Saratoga Animal Hospital 8054 Rolling Rd, Springfield	703-455-1188	AB DF	84% (25)	92%	88%	56%	100%	84%	88%	84%	38%	88%	\$106		
Seneca Hill Animal Hospital 11415 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls	703-450-6760	AB DF	100% (22)	100%	95%	91%	91%	95%	100%	95%	77%	100%	\$161	✓	
Seven Corners Animal Hospital 6300 Arlington Blvd, Falls Church	703-534-1156	AB	61% (33)	82%	59%	48%	70%	53%	55%	61%	34%	58%	\$121		
South Paws Veterinary Center 6136 Brandon Ave, Springfield	703-569-0300	AB	72% (29)	76%	86%	62%	79%	88%	69%	90%	36%	90%	— <sup>5</sup>		— <sup>6</sup>
Springfield Animal Hospital 6580 Backlick Rd, Springfield	703-451-1995	AB CDF	77% (31)	74%	73%	55%	84%	63%	77%	80%	53%	81%	\$88		

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Veterinarians <sup>1</sup>		Types of animals cared for*	Percent of surveyed customers rating firm "superior" on our survey for...										CHECKBOOK's price index score <sup>2</sup>	CHECKBOOK's top rating (✓)	
			Listening to you and (number of ratings)	Arranging to see you quickly	Giving helpful advice by phone	Keeping down office waiting time	Maintaining pleasant office and staff	Giving prevention/self-help advice	Spending enough time with you	Apparent competence/thoroughness	Helping keep pet's medical costs down	Overall care and advice		For quality	For price
<b>All-Firm Averages</b>			83%	80%	76%	64%	84%	78%	80%	86%	47%	84%	\$100		
<b>Virginia—Fairfax County (continued)</b>															
Town & Country Animal Hospital 9836 Lee Hwy, Fairfax	703-273-2110	AB DE	82% (44)	81%	74%	64%	73%	74%	86%	79%	67%	88%	\$78		✓
Tysons Corner Animal Hospital 8496 Tyco Rd #E, Vienna	703-893-7030	AB	87% (23)	73%	84%	87%	96%	78%	78%	91%	43%	96%	\$107	✓	
University Veterinary Clinic 10681 Braddock Rd, Fairfax	703-385-1054	AB	70% (27)	74%	71%	59%	78%	65%	63%	81%	30%	67%	\$118		
VCA Beacon Hill Cat Hospital 6610 Richmond Hwy, Alexandria	703-765-2287	B	63% (16)	63%	75%	56%	75%	80%	81%	88%	27%	69%	\$98 <sup>4</sup>		
Vienna Animal Hospital 531 Maple Ave W, Vienna	703-938-2121	AB	85% (66)	82%	78%	59%	77%	80%	77%	88%	44%	91%	\$110		
Village Veterinary Clinic 9544 Burke Rd, Burke	703-978-8655	AB DF	92% (39)	82%	78%	46%	90%	76%	92%	92%	53%	87%	\$75		✓
<b>Virginia—Loudoun County</b>															
Companion Paws Mobile Vet Svc 1301 Moran Rd, Sterling	703-450-6360	AB	100% (11)	82%	90%	100%	100%	82%	82%	100%	55%	100%	\$129	✓	
Countryside Animal Clinic 113 Edds Ln, Sterling	703-444-1666	AB	75% (28)	81%	76%	46%	79%	81%	71%	79%	50%	79%	\$105		
Leesburg Veterinary Hospital 21 Catactin Cir NE, Leesburg	703-777-3313	AB DF	93% (14)	93%	100%	64%	100%	75%	93%	100%	43%	93%	— <sup>5</sup>	✓	— <sup>6</sup>
Sterling Park Animal Hospital 800 W Church Rd, Sterling	703-430-3000	AB DF	93% (14)	79%	73%	64%	86%	79%	93%	93%	50%	93%	\$96	✓	
<b>Virginia—Prince William County</b>															
Dale City Animal Hospital 2980 Dale Blvd, Woodbridge	703-670-6181	AB DF	82% (17)	88%	75%	65%	94%	82%	82%	88%	53%	88%	\$129		
Occoquan Animal Hospital 14234 Jefferson Davis Hwy, Woodbridge	703-491-1400	ABC DEF	100% (13)	77%	100%	62%	100%	100%	92%	100%	77%	100%	— <sup>5</sup>	✓	— <sup>6</sup>
Old Bridge Veterinary Hospital 3604 Old Bridge Rd, Woodbridge	703-494-0094	AB DF	85% (13)	92%	90%	54%	92%	91%	85%	100%	55%	92%	— <sup>5</sup>	✓	— <sup>6</sup>
PetCentre Animal Hospital <sup>3</sup> 8307 Yorkshire Ln, Manassas	703-368-9241	AB DEF	79% (15)	53%	50%	64%	80%	53%	53%	73%	29%	67%	\$130		

\*TYPES OF ANIMALS CARED FOR: A=Dogs; B=Cats; C=Birds; D=Small rodents; E=Reptiles; F=Rabbits; G=Farm animals.

**FOOTNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> See text and page 96 for description of research methods, dates, and limitations. We've included all firms that received 10 or more ratings on our customer survey. If a firm is not listed here, it simply means that we did not have 10 ratings for it; that fact has no negative or positive implications.

<sup>2</sup> For each firm, this index is intended to suggest the price a customer might expect to pay for procedures that would cost \$100 at the "average" veterinary hospital. The price index is based on prices quoted to CHECKBOOK telephone shoppers who shopped for six procedures; except where otherwise noted, scores are based on at least three procedures.

<sup>3</sup> Firm changed ownership during customer survey period; management policies may have changed.

<sup>4</sup> Price index score is based on two price quotes.

<sup>5</sup> Insufficient data.

<sup>6</sup> Insufficient data to determine whether checkmark is warranted.

<sup>7</sup> Formerly Vetsmart.

# How We Gather (and How to Interpret) Our Data

Our tables rating individual firms will be more valuable to you if you know how the data were gathered and how they should be interpreted.

## Opinion Surveys

Customer survey scores reported on our tables are from our surveys of consumers, which are conducted via mail, telephone, and the Internet. We primarily survey *Consumer Reports* and *CHECKBOOK* subscribers, but we also survey a sampling of other consumers.

Since many firms were rated by rather small numbers of raters, small differences between two firms in the percent of raters who gave a particular rating (say, “superior”) should be ignored. The table below gives a rough guide to minimum differences you should look for in deciding on one firm over another.

When using these survey data, remember that the questions are to some degree subjective and that the differences among firms might be explained by differences in the personalities, backgrounds, and critical standards of the raters or by biases these raters might have.

## Complaints

Our ratings tables on bicycle shops, camera repair shops, camera stores, carpet cleaners, tree care services, and video equipment repair services show the number of complaints we found against individual firms in the files at the government offices of consumer affairs in Alexandria; in Arlington, Fairfax, Howard, and Montgomery counties; at the Consumer Protection Division of the Maryland Attorney General’s Office; and at the Virginia Office of Consumer Affairs. These complaint counts are from a two-year period. Since the Complaint Division of the District of Columbia’s Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs is closed, we were unable to count complaints there.

The ratings tables also show counts of complaints filed with the Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Washington, DC (BBB), during a three-year period.

On our ratings tables, we calculate complaint rates, where we are able, by dividing the number of complaints by the best measure we can devise of each firm’s business volume and exposure to complaints.

There are limitations to the complaint data. One problem is that some complaints may be unjustified, simply filed by cranks. Another problem is that, in some cases, we didn’t have a measure of business volume and therefore couldn’t control for differences in firms’ exposure to complaints. A third problem is that some firms may fall under the jurisdiction of more visible complaint-handling agencies than others—and as a result may have more complaints filed against them.

We always recommend that you look for substantial differences in complaint counts and rates. We also advise giving little weight to complaint counts if the total count against a firm is less than three or four.

## Survey of Firms

To gather much of the other information on our tables, we surveyed the firms. In general, our researchers surveyed firms by phone (sometimes without revealing their affiliation with *CHECKBOOK*), but in some cases data were collected by mail or from firms’ websites, or phone responses were confirmed by mail follow-up.

## Price Index Score

To compute our price index scores, we calculated an *average* price for each job or item for all the firms that quoted on that job or item. Next we compared each firm’s price to the average. One firm might come in at 120 percent of the multifirm average for a particular job, and another firm might come in at 90 percent. We took each firm’s percentage score on each job or item, standardized it, and assigned a weight to each job or item, based on our judgment. We then averaged the standardized, weighted percentage scores to find how the firm compared to other firms overall. Finally, we multiplied this overall percentage score by a flat dollar amount, say \$100.

The price index score, then, is intended to indicate the relative prices we found for the firms, adjusted to the base of this flat dollar amount. These index scores are imperfect for various reasons: for instance, the jobs or items checked may not be representative; the weighting of various jobs or items in the index may not accurately reflect typical expenditure patterns; and the number of jobs or items is small.

## Timeliness of the Data

All of the data must be interpreted in view of timeliness.

Our customer survey data apply to the period from April 1996 to December 2002 for bicycle shops, camera repair shops, camera stores, carpet cleaners, tree care services, and video equipment repair services and from April 1998 to December 2002 for veterinarians. Our survey of physicians was conducted from April to September 2001.

Our data on complaints for the government offices of consumer affairs are for a two-year period dating back from August 31, 2001. For the BBB, the data are for a three-year period dating back from November 6, 2002.

The data from our survey of firms were collected from August to September 2002 for camera repair shops, camera stores, and veterinarians; August to December 2002 for tree care services; September to November 2002 for carpet cleaning services; September to December 2002 for video equipment repair services; and October to December 2002 for bicycle shops.

Our price data were collected from May to September 2002 for veterinarians and June to September 2002 for bicycle shops.

For the most part, our tables include firms for which we collected 10 or more ratings on our customer survey during the customer survey period mentioned above, but we do not report data for periods prior to firms’ changes of name *and* ownership. As a result, some large firms are not listed at all. If only name *or* ownership changed, we do report the data. Changes subsequent to the dates listed above may not be taken into account.

## Top Ratings

We give checkmarks to firms that score highest on a scoring system that we devise for each service field. Our scoring systems weight the various data in our tables and text based on our subjective judgment of their importance. Since the scores are based entirely on information presented, you can apply your own subjective judgments, and decide whether you prefer firms we have not given checkmarks. Where we do not have important data on a firm, we cannot give our checkmark.

<b>A Rough Guide for Deciding Whether the Difference Between Two Percentages is Important</b>	<b>If one firm had this number of ratings:</b>	<b>And a second firm had this number of ratings:</b>	<b>Do not give much importance to the difference between the frequency with which the two firms experience a particular rating or result unless the difference is at least this many percentage points:</b>
<b>Assuming the average of the two firms’ percentages is 50 percent</b>	10	10	45
	30	30	26
	60	60	18
	120	120	13
<b>Assuming the average of the two firms’ percentages is 80 percent</b>	10	10	36
	30	30	21
	60	60	15
	120	120	10