

Using Telemedicine to Expand Accessible Veterinary Care to Remote and Socially Excluded Pet Owners



Why Tele-Medicine?



Overcoming the Barriers of Access to Care is one of the greatest steps as an organization we can take

We need to tackle the root causes of animal relinquishment and poor welfare and not remain reactionary with our programs and services



Understanding Accessibility



Definition Accessible: (Merriam-Webster)

1.a: capable of being reached

1.b: easy to speak to or deal with

2: capable of being used or seen

3: capable of being understood or appreciated

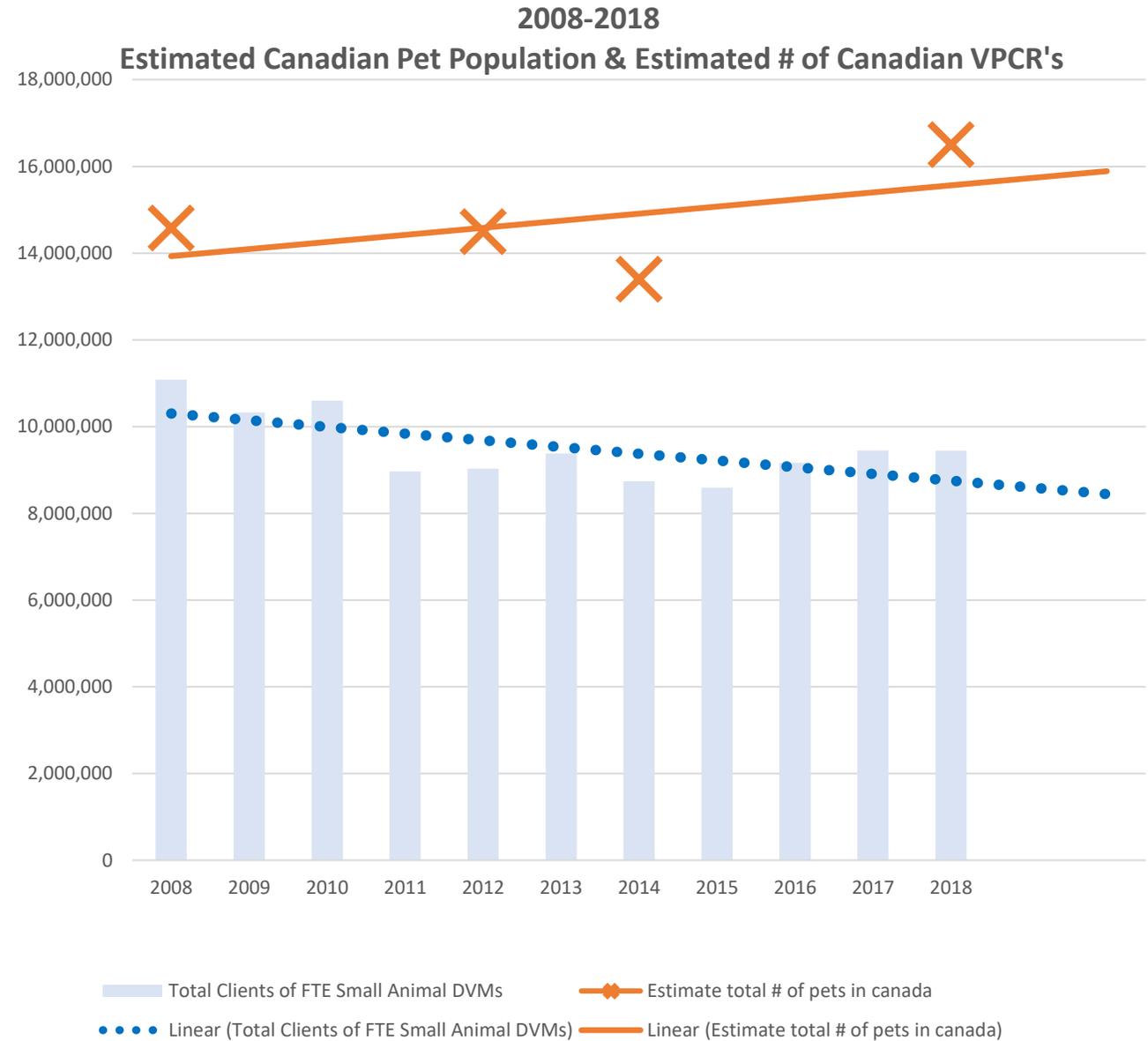
4: capable of being influenced

5: easily used or accessed by people with disabilities

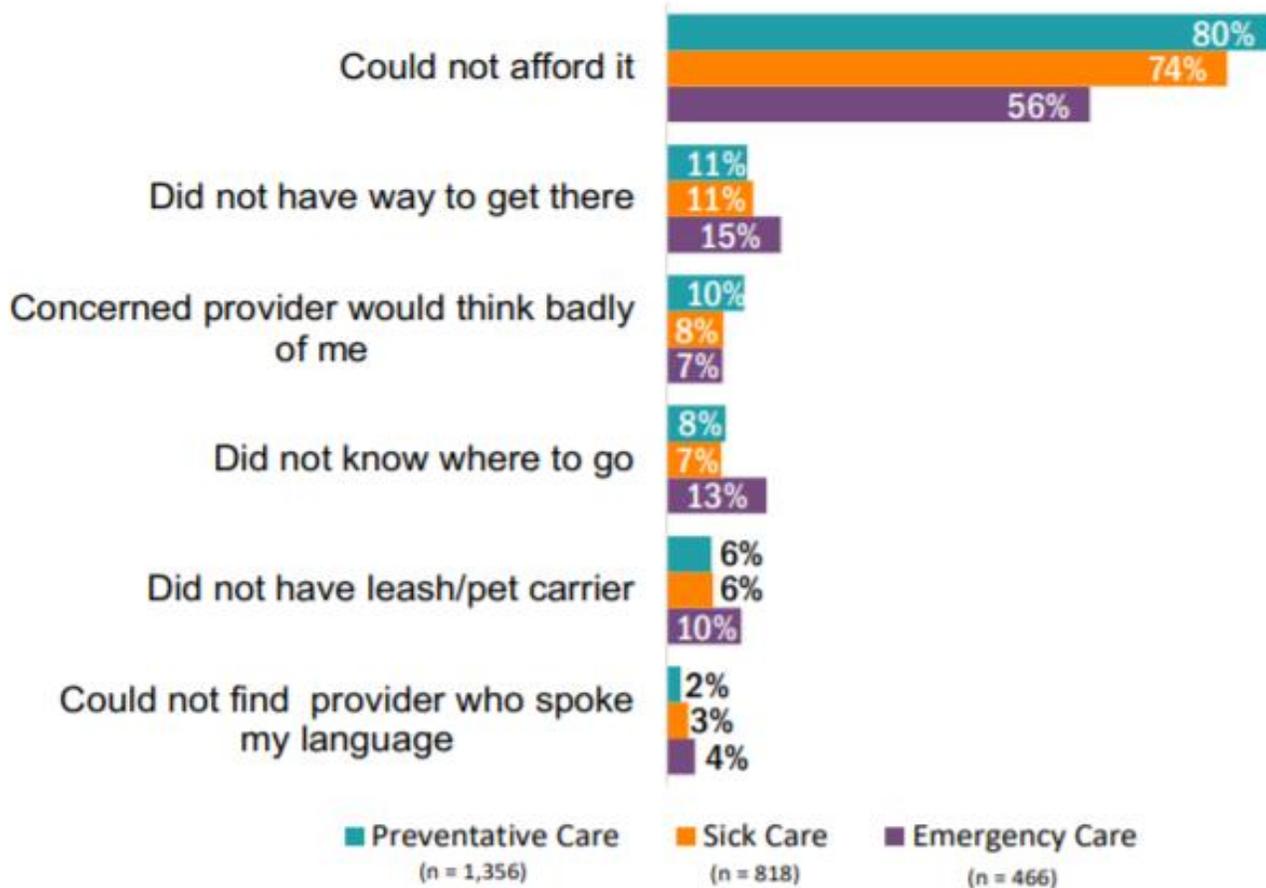


Why is accessible care needed?

- The Past Decade in Canada
- Gap growth of 20%



Why is accessible care needed?



- Figure 5.14 from “Access of Veterinary Care: Barriers, Current Practices and Public Policy” (2018)
- Illustrating the variation in the reasons given for not securing care between the three types of care explored in this study.

Figure 5.16: Pet Owner's Reasons for Not Receiving the Desired Treatment for Their Pet

Why Tele-Medicine?



Tele-Medicine presents opportunities to tackle two of the main barriers of Access to Care

Affordability

Opportunities exist for services to be provided with lower operating expenses than in person care

Accessibility of Physical Location

We can extend access to their location without the investments needed for travel



What does practising via telemedicine mean?



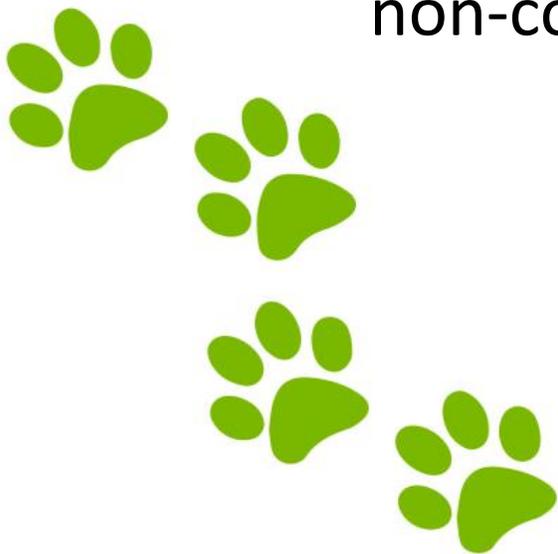
- Practising via telemedicine refers to delivering veterinary medicine at a distance using telecommunication technology.
- It is a method or mode of delivering veterinary medicine using information and communication technologies, such as video chat, when the veterinarian and animal being treated, are in different physical locations.



More Recent Developments



- March 18, 2020
- “The College has made the decision to not strictly enforce certain provisions of our regulation...during the public health emergency.”
- “Veterinarians may now, until otherwise directed, prescribe a non-controlled drug using telemedicine alone..”



<https://cvo.org/getmedia/c1132067-5181-49a2-b450-fd4b63ff118d/CoronavirusMarch182020urgentnoticeprescribingdispensing.pdf.aspx>

Where to Start



- The main thing when starting a telemedicine service is to understand your client needs and your business needs and start small.
- Don't offer the service to everyone right away; instead start with a particular subset of your clients and expand outwards from there.



https://www.ovma.org/assets/1/6/Aaron_Massecar_-_Telemedicine,_Virtual_Care_and_Adopting_Best_Practices.pdf

THS – Our Small Start



- Shelter Outreach Tele-Medicine Consultation Appointments
- Launched in May – 2020
 - Tele-Medicine Services have been growing slowly to a small client base of Animal Welfare Agencies within the province.
 - Currently we have 11 agencies who have signed on with us for service with monthly appointment volumes slowly increasing



Provided to Partners free of charge thanks to a generous program sponsorship from Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets

THS – Our Small Start



- We are using this service primarily to address the barriers of affordability and access to Veterinarians with greater exposure and experience in Shelter Medicine
- Secondly it is serving as a pilot to identify strengths and weaknesses in the system with an eventual goal of a more broad roll-out
 - Further expansions are dependant on current relaxations involving prescribing holding, to allow us to continue with current scope





Will it Work at a larger scale?

We think it has promise

- Not a full fledged solution, but, could be a great complement to support programs and services that have little capacity to be present and accessible physically all the time

Will it be Accepted?



Based on a 2016 study in Ontario we know that tele-medicine utilization is on the rise and that the utilization rates are highest in traditionally underserved rural areas

The AVMA Practice Advisory Panel in 2017 recognizes in their Final Report on Telemedicine that there is a growing societal demand for telemedicine in veterinary medicine



Clinical Telemedicine Utilization in Ontario over the Ontario Telemedicine Network
Laurel D. O'Gorman, MA, corresponding author John C. Hogenbirk, MSc, and Wayne Warry, PhD (2016)

AVMA Practice Advisory Panel FINAL REPORT ON TELEMEDICINE 01.13.17 -
<https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/resources/Telemedicine-Report-2016.pdf>

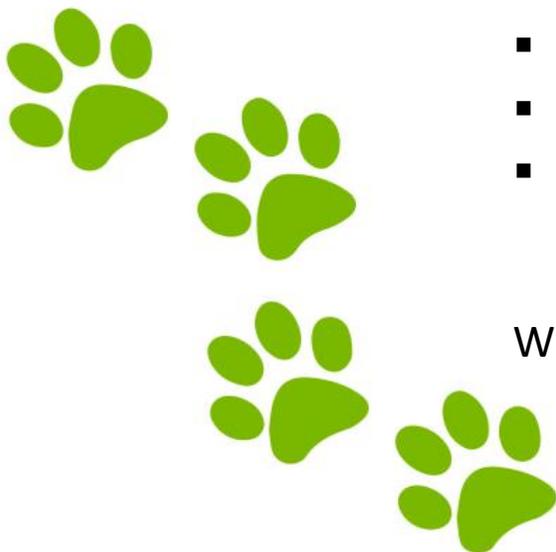
How should we consider our approach?



Implementation Challenges

- Incentives
- Culture and Behaviour
 - Within service provider systems
- Fear/Distrust in Reliability and Ability of the Technology
- Payment for Services
- Regulatory Issues
- Privacy and Policy Implications
- Rural Clinic Capacity
- Need for Critical Mass of Users and Specialists
- Sustainability

What might we see as additional challenges in the Veterinary Sphere?



Biggest Hurdle and Challenges?



In our experience so far, although limited

Acceptance of working within new and relatively un-tested areas
of practice

We need to keep the conversation going and continually look at
and find new and innovative ways to overcome the barriers and
hurdles in the way of access to veterinary care





Questions?

