

**INNOVATION STATION**  
New modes of care that cater to a changing clientele include mobile wellness clinics, apps, and language interpreters.

FROM THE FIELD

# Meeting Clients Where They Are

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**From the Field** shares insights from **Banfield Pet Hospital** veterinary team members. Drawing from the nationwide practice's extensive research, as well as findings from its electronic veterinary medical records database and more than 8 million annual pet visits, this column is intended to explore topics and spark conversations relevant to veterinary practices that ultimately help create a better world for pets.

As veterinarians, we know there is so much more to caring for a pet's health needs than visits to a veterinary hospital. In today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, the standard brick-and-mortar veterinary model doesn't work for everyone. To continue innovating and evolving the veterinary industry to better meet clients where and when they need us, we must extend and even transform the modes of care we provide to meet pet owners where they are.

At Banfield, we're doing this in a few different ways—through telehealth, a focus on culturally competent care, and new mobile options. No two clients or pets are the same, which is why veterinary practices should explore alternative ways to serve pets and owners to determine what works best for them and the hospital team.

## ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Last year, we introduced Vet Chat ([banfield.com/vetchat](https://banfield.com/vetchat)), a telehealth service that provides Banfield's

more than 2 million Optimum Wellness Plan clients 24/7 access to a veterinarian, via the internet as well as a phone app.

Banfield looked to address 2 issues it found in a survey: 71% of pet owners turn to the internet for information before their veterinarian and 90% of veterinarians worry pet owners may unknowingly put their pet at more risk by taking improper advice from the internet.<sup>1</sup> That's why Vet Chat gives our Optimum Wellness Plan clients on-demand access to general pet care advice and triage support from a reputable source. While Vet Chat does not serve as a replacement for in-person veterinary care, services, or treatment, it gives clients a smarter way to love their pets. To date, we've already completed more than 100,000 chats with thousands of clients.

Telehealth can provide added peace of mind for clients and help provide relief to hospital teams when they're at their busiest. There are also other ways to implement new forms of client communication into your practice. Whether it's exploring text communication or



leveraging social media as a tool to connect with and build relationships with pet owners, there are an increasing number of low-cost ways to use technology to meet clients where they are.

## NEW MODES OF CARE

With millions of U.S. pets not receiving regular veterinary care, we as a profession need to come together to evolve our modes of care to meet the needs of pet owners. One of the ways we're bringing this to life is through Banfield's Mobile Wellness Clinics, which offer select veterinary services such as exams, vaccinations, deworming, and heartworm testing.

Knowing more than one-fifth of people living in the U.S. speak a language other than English at home and that over 20 million residents speak limited English,<sup>2</sup> we're also working to eliminate one of the known barriers to veterinary care<sup>3</sup> by offering all Mobile Wellness Clinic and hospital clients access to over-the-phone interpretation services in more than 350 languages. This measure ensures those who don't speak English fluently understand their pet's diagnosis and treatment needs.

Banfield's Mobile Wellness Clinics are part of our larger journey to provide high-quality care to pets, great experiences to clients, and flexible work environments for our associates. But mobile veterinary clinics aren't the only option when rethinking how you might be able to provide new forms of care.

Whether it's partnering with a third-party service that allows you to connect with clients virtually to answer questions and give advice or switching up your practice hours to reach new clients that wouldn't otherwise be able to bring their pet in due to scheduling conflicts, it's about understanding your clients' needs and empowering your team to embrace new ways of working.

## FINDING NEW WAYS TO PROVIDE EVEN BETTER PET CARE

As veterinary professionals, we have the unique honor of caring for pets that can't care for themselves, and it is this reality that drives us at Banfield to introduce new modes of care. I encourage all veterinary practices, big and small, to remain open to new ways of thinking and innovative solutions for our clients so that we as a profession can positively impact even more pets. **TVP**

## References

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### Daniel Aja

Dr. Aja is Banfield Pet Hospital's chief veterinary relations and transformation officer. A Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine graduate, Dr. Aja has more than 35 years of experience in veterinary medicine. Prior to joining Banfield in 2014, he was director of U.S. Professional and Veterinary Affairs at Hill's Pet Nutrition, and owned and operated Cherry Bend Animal Hospital, an AAHA-accredited veterinary practice in Traverse City, Michigan.



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