

# Comparing online vs local veterinary pharmacies: client decision making in veterinary pharmacy selection

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## Background

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic saw the increase of pet ownership in the United States. As pandemic pets filled American households, pet owners were faced with treating a variety of health conditions such as food allergies and anxiety. Various treatments, such as prescription foods, are used to combat these conditions. On top of tackling various health conditions, owners were then left with the challenge of deciding which company or pharmacy to use to fill their pets' prescriptions. Owners had a plethora of both online and in person pharmacies to choose from.

Veterinarians are legally permitted to prescribe medications for pets. Veterinarians can have prescriptions filled in person at their clinic or send prescriptions out to online or retail pharmacies. Prescriptions that are filled outside the veterinarian's clinic, are not profitable for the clinic. Increased usage of outside pharmacies cause profit loss for the clinic and pet owners may not realize the impact that online pharmacies have on their local veterinary clinic.

The primary goal of this project was to determine whether cost, convenience, or other factors drive client decision making in selecting an on-line versus local veterinary clinics or veterinary pharmacy for their pet(s).

Secondary and tertiary goals were to characterize pet owners' perceptions of veterinary clinic pharmacies versus local or online pharmacies and determine satisfaction with an owner's selected pharmacy.

## Methods

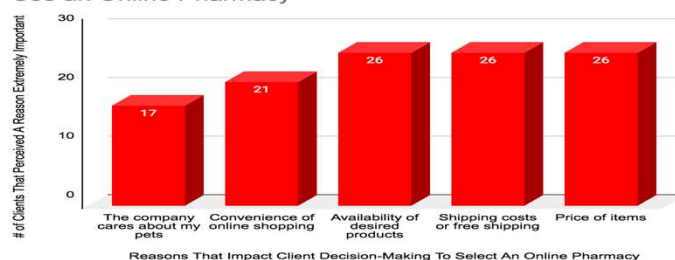
A 36-question survey was developed using Qualtrics, the online survey tool. The survey was then reviewed for readability by the University of Wisconsin's Survey Center.

The survey had various subsets of questions. Based on the respondent's answer to the initial question, the respondent could get up to 36 questions, including 6 demographic questions.

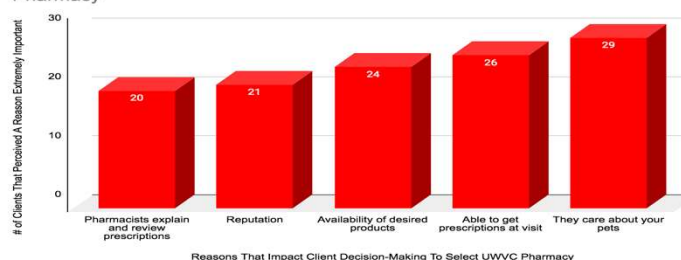
In total, 38 flyers for the survey were dispersed around the University of Wisconsin Veterinary Care Hospital (UWVC). The flyers were posted by the pharmacy, reception areas, and exam rooms. The survey was also shared online to the UWVC Facebook page. As a pre-incentive, owners were offered either a UWVC bandana or a cat toy. Pre-incentives were kept in the pharmacy and no proof of completion was needed to obtain.

## Results

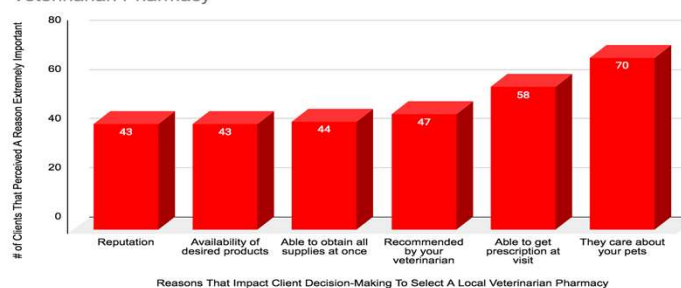
Five Most Extremely Important Reasons Clients Decide to Use an Online Pharmacy



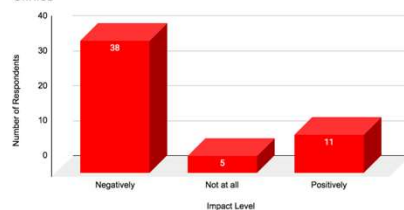
Five Most Extremely Important Reasons Clients Decide to Use UWVC Pharmacy



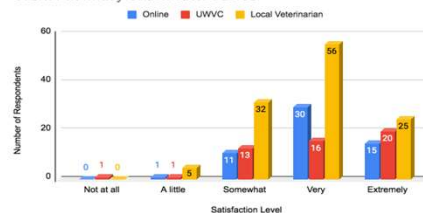
Six Most Extremely Important Reasons Clients Decide to Use a Local Veterinarian Pharmacy



Client Thoughts On How Online Pharmacies Impact Veterinary Clinics



Client Pharmacy Satisfaction Scores



## Discussion

Clients select online pharmacies based upon the perception that the company cares about their pets, convenience, availability of products, and product and shipping costs. Clients select the UWVC pharmacy because pharmacists are available to review medications, reputation of the hospital, availability of products, ability to get prescriptions at time of visit, and the perception that UWVC cares about their pets. Clients select their local veterinarian pharmacy because of their reputation, availability of products, ability to obtain all supplies at once, recommendation from their veterinarian, ability to get prescriptions at time of visit, and the perception that their local veterinarian cares about their pets.

The majority of respondents believe that online pharmacies negatively impact veterinary clinics.

Most owners are at least somewhat satisfied with their selected pharmacy.

Limitations include:

- Only UWVC clients were targeted to take the survey.
- For clients that use multiple pharmacies, the percentage they use each one was not evaluated.
- Respondents had to complete the survey in one sitting. They were not allowed to backtrack or pause and re-enter the survey once they exited.

## Acknowledgements

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## References

1. Wong-Li, Carol. "America's Pet Owners, US - 2022." Mintel Group Ltd.
2. Tilford, Ashley. "Survey: 78% of Pet Owners Acquired Pets During Pandemic." Forbes. 8 Dec 2022. <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/pet-insurance/survey-78-pet-owners-acquired-pets-during-pandemic/#:~:text=Pandemic%20Pets%20Fill%20Homes&text=A%20new%20Forbes%20Advisor%20survey,acquired%20pets%20during%20the%20pandemic.>