

MEDIA RELEASE

BLING, BALLS & BATTERIES: HCF SURVEY FINDS AUSTRALIAN DOGS DEVOUR MORE THAN JUST DOG FOOD

FRIDAY, 23 AUGUST, 2024: A new nationwide survey commissioned by HCF,¹ Australia's largest not-for-profit health fund, found that three in five (61%) dog owners reported their dogs have eaten something truly unusual.

In advance of National Dog Day, the survey highlights the strangest things that dogs have consumed, proving "the dog ate my homework" might be more than just an excuse.

From wedding rings to underwear, the list of unexpected household items dogs have devoured is as surprising as it is concerning.

According to the survey conducted by YouGov¹:

- **Sneaker Snacker:** 32% of dogs have made a meal out of their owner's shoes, turning streetwear into doggy fare.
- **Wimbledon't:** Almost a quarter (24%) of dogs ate their tennis balls, serving up a surprise at playtime.
- **Toys R Lunch:** One in five (20%) dogs couldn't resist turning kids toys into a snack.
- **Underdog:** 16% of dog owners have had their underwear stolen and swallowed, proving that no piece of laundry is safe.
- **Party Pooper:** 10% of dogs have eaten holiday decorations, turning festive cheer into an unplanned vet visit.
- **Dog Ate My Homework:** 7% of dog owners confessed their dogs have eaten their children's homework, giving school kids hope across the country.
- **Power Chews:** 5% of dogs have taken their curiosity to a shocking level by dangerously munching on batteries.
- **Puppy Love:** 3% of dogs added a bit of bling to their diet, swallowing the family wedding rings.

The survey also found that a majority of dog owners, correctly identify chocolate (84%) and alcohol (77%) as two of the household items most toxic to dogs.

"While these incidents make for amusing anecdotes, they also underscore the importance of being prepared for the unexpected," said HCF Chief Operating Officer Lorraine Thomas.

"Many dog owners might not realise just how dangerous everyday foods and objects can be."

PetSure's 2023 claims data highlights the financial impact of these unfortunate events, with treatment costs for ingesting toxins or foreign substances ranging from \$1,064 for non-surgical interventions to over \$5,000 for cases requiring surgery. Alarmingly, the highest reported cost for such treatment last year was over \$41,000.³

“While some pet parents might question the value of pet insurance, with no Medicare for pets or government subsidies like we see in human healthcare, vet bills can leave pet owners in a challenging spot,” Ms Thomas said.

To help dog owners manage these unexpected costs, HCF offers pet insurance with features like a GapOnly® service, allowing policyholders to pay only the gap³ at participating vets or get up to 80% back on eligible vet bills.⁴ HCF policy holders can also access 24/7 VetChat,⁵ a telehealth service that connects pet owners with registered vets by phone or video, providing quality advice whenever it’s needed.

HCF is using this National Dog Day to remind dog owners of the importance of safeguarding their pets from hidden dangers in their diets and homes. By raising awareness and taking proactive measures we can help ensure our furry friends stay safe and healthy all year long.

For more information on pet insurance and how it can benefit you and your four-legged family members, visit hcf.com.au/insurance/pet

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Media enquiries to:

Joni Thomes 0475 576 738 or jthomes@hcf.com.au

ABOUT HCF

HCF, Australia’s largest not-for-profit health fund protecting Australians since 1932, covers almost 2 million members with health and life insurance, travel, pet, home and car insurance. HCF has been awarded Outstanding Value Health Insurance by Canstar eight years in a row from 2016-2023. On average over the last ten years, HCF has paid out more cents in every dollar in premiums to members as benefits than the industry average. To learn more about HCF go to hcf.com.au/about-us

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REFERENCES & FURTHER DETAILS

1. YouGov. (2024). Paws and Pocketbooks Research Study. Conducted for HCF. Fieldwork undertaken between 14 and 18 February 2024. Total sample size: 1,043 adult pet owners aged 18 and above. The survey was carried out online. Figures weighted and representative of all Australian adult pet owners aged 18 and above.
2. PetSure. (2024). PetSure's Pet Health Monitor 2024 Report. Retrieved from: <https://petsure.com.au/pet-health-monitor/>
3. The gap means the difference between the vet’s invoice and the eligible claim benefit under your policy. GapOnly® is a trademark owned by PetSure (Australia) Pty Ltd ABN 95 075 949 923, AFSL 420183 (PetSure). GapOnly® is available on eligible claims at participating Vets with a pet insurance policy from a GapOnly® pet insurance partner.
4. Policy Terms and Conditions, limits, sub-limits, exclusions, excesses and waiting periods apply.
5. VetChat is a non-insurance product that is separate from the HCF Pet insurance product and is separately provided by VetChat Services Pty Ltd (VetChat). VetChat is a related company of PetSure (Australia) Pty Ltd. VetChat consult membership and consultations are subject to VetChat’s general Terms and Conditions, including the Privacy Policy which are available online at <http://www.vetchat.com.au>.