

# Stethoscopes

Stethoscopes help veterinarians listen to body sounds – respiratory, cardiac, bowel and circulatory – for critical clues in diagnostics, treatment and rechecks

## Your opportunity

**Commissions on \$15 to \$600+ stethoscopes (traditional and electronic models).**

Choosing the right stethoscope can be a personal experience for veterinarians and their teams because they depend on their scopes as a lifeline to their patients. You can help them make the right selection.

## Equipment overview

Veterinary professionals often use the same stethoscope for 20 to 30 years. Each individual learns to hear sounds in a certain way and becomes very attached to his or her scope. And, because veterinarians see so many animals every day, it's important to have a stethoscope with interchangeable pieces, permitting them to examine both larger and smaller patients.

**The biggest change in stethoscopes is the emergence of electronic models.**

- Unlike traditional scopes, which employ air or vibration to carry sound, electronic stethoscopes convert acoustic sound into an electronic signal. The sound is filtered and amplified, and then reproduced for the ear to hear.
- Many higher-end models permit filtering of heart and lung sounds. So, while some scopes provide more or less filtering capability, all electronic stethoscopes amplify and reproduce sound.
- By plugging an electronic stethoscope into a distributor box, and providing the client with a set of headphones, the veterinarian and client can listen to the same sounds together. Or, by connecting the electronic stethoscope to a laptop, the vet can record a heart sound and produce a reference ECG. Tools such as these enable the veterinarian to better explain his or her diagnosis to the client, and the client, in turn, can better appreciate the importance of certain treatments.

**There are many different grades of stethoscopes.**

**For instance:**

There's a direct correlation between sound quality and the mass of the head (chest piece) and tubing wall thickness: thicker, more solid tubing walls help prevent outside sound from penetrating the tubes and interfering with the veterinarian's ability to listen.

- An inexpensive, lightweight stethoscope produces a different sound than a more solid one.
- An inexpensive scope can be used for taking a patient's blood pressure or listening to general auscultation... while an expensive, cardiac-grade scope is

**Veterinary professionals often use the same stethoscope for 20 to 30 years. Each individual learns to hear sounds in a certain way and becomes very attached to his or her scope.**

more appropriate for a specialist trained to listen for more definition in sounds.

- Veterinarians often rely on a cardiology-grade stethoscope with adult and pediatric attachments. In comparison, veterinary technicians or assistants generally use a more general-purpose scope.
- In smaller animals, where the heart and lungs are located in close proximity, the veterinarian requires a smaller scope, such as a pediatric scope, with a smaller diameter chest piece to narrow down sounds. ■

# Stethoscopes

Prospecting Tips

## Prospects likely to buy the latest stethoscopes

All general veterinary practices are candidates for stethoscopes – either traditional or electronic. Pricing varies widely depending on the type of stethoscope.

- Low-end, general-purpose traditional scopes start at \$25, while high-end models are close to \$100.
- Cardiac-grade scopes range between \$140 and \$230.
- Lower-end electronic stethoscopes start at \$200, and, depending on the quality, the price increases.



- Electronic stethoscopes with filtering capability cost approximately \$350. In fact, some electronic stethoscopes can be combined with computer software systems, which permit the user to collect additional information, such as phonocardiograms or reference ECGs. These can cost up to \$1,000.

Also keep in mind that accessories need updating too, which means any practice is a candidate for replacing accessories. While professionals replace their stethoscope infrequently, remind them to replace certain parts of the scope before they wear out. For instance:

- Tubing should be replaced every 3-4 years, as continual cleaning with alcohol dries out the rubber.
- Ear tips, the diaphragm piece and the anti-chill rubber ring that encircles the diaphragm also must be changed every couple of years for hygienic reasons.

## Clinic clues for quality leads

When visiting a practice, see if you can notice the type of stethoscopes being used by various team members. See if anyone's using electronic models or if everyone uses traditional models (and some units are outdated).

## Approaching the sales discussion

By providing a variety of stethoscopes for the veterinarian and staff to test, you can help them weigh their options. Remind them that an investment now will provide better patient care and greater client trust.

- **Check-off/qualify:** You can initiate a discussion by asking, "Doctor, is your practice set with its current stethoscopes? Does anyone need parts for their products, or is anyone looking to upgrade?"
- **Confidence:** If YES, confirm and support benefits. If NO, assert the benefits with confidence. "I'm certain that the latest stethoscopes will provide even more medical value than your outdated models."
- **Invitation to neutral:** "Let's look at how today's stethoscopes provide extraordinary sound to help advance your diagnostics, treatments and follow-up visits."
- **Seek alignment/understanding as the dialogue continues:** "Can you help me understand ..."
  - "Doctor, are you looking to improve client communication? Would the ability to generate a phonocardiogram and/or ECG be helpful?"
  - "Are any of your assistants looking to upgrade their stethoscopes from a general purpose stethoscope to a cardiology scope?"
  - "If you have an electronic record keeping system, what would it mean to save auscultatory sounds and an ECG waveform for future reference?"
- **It's the customer's decision...** "You can decide if new stethoscopes will deliver more sound and therefore more medically significant information on your patients." ■