The cloud and you

How cloud-based veterinary software delivers powerful solutions for modern practices

IDEXX
Veterinary Software

In this guide, we'll explore the practical potential of cloud technology:

- What is it?

- How does it work?

- What benefits does it offer your practice?

- What technology infrastructure do you need in place to support cloud solutions?

Understanding cloud technology.

Veterinary practices are experiencing unprecedented demand for service, and streamlined operations are more critical than ever.[1] Practice management systems form the frontline of this effort. But for many veterinarians, current software processes create their own challenges around data entry, management, and security.

The cloud provides a progressive remedy to these process problems by offering "accessibility, flexibility, and convenience" for practices.[2] But it's one thing to read industry articles about the promise of cloud technologies—it's another to implement these solutions at scale.

The Big Picture
Over 94% of companies now use the cloud.[3]

IDEXX
Veterinary Software

What is the cloud?

Over the past few years, cloud offerings from brands and companies have gone mainstream. According to the Zippia 2023 Cloud Report, 94% of companies are now using the cloud.[3] Perhaps one of the most widely used forms of the cloud is email—major email service providers use the cloud to store and manage email messages.

On a larger scale, streaming services use cloud servers to store and deliver content to billions of households worldwide, something that wouldn't be possible using conventional computing models. The concept of cloud computing, however, is much older than current market success suggests. Development of cloud frameworks began in the late 1960s with the creation of mainframe computer networks accessed through "dummy" terminals, which in turn set the stage for the development of three fundamental cloud concepts:

- Service delivery
- Resource sharing
- Network access

Today the combination of broadband internet connections, powerful mobile devices, and falling computing prices have helped cloud services make the move into mainstream markets.

1. McReynolds T. "Slammed. Tired. Grateful": Veterinary caseloads during a pandemic. NEWStat. May 28, 2020. Accessed September 18, 2023. www.aaha.org/publications/newstat/articles/2020-05/slammed.-tired.-grateful-veterinary-caseloads-during-a-pandemic
2. Hashmat A, Holland D. The future of the cloud. Vet Pract News. January 3, 2020. Accessed September 18, 2023. www.veterinarypracticenews.com/the-future-of-the-cloud
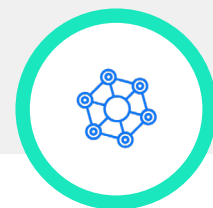3. Flynn J. 25 Amazing Cloud Adoption Statistics 2023. Zippia. Published June 22, 2023. Accessed September 19, 2023. https://www.zippia.com/advice/cloud-adoption-statistics

Service delivery

Technology functions, such as storage, data processing, or security, are delivered as a service.

Resource sharing

Multiple users have access to the same resource simultaneously.

Network access

Services must be accessible via networks rather than the installed software.

How it all works.

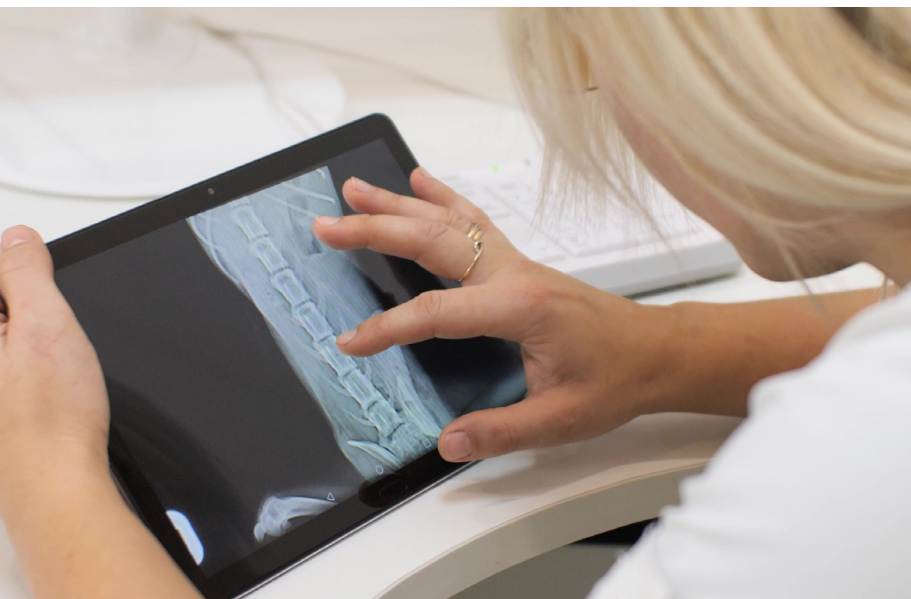History helps frame the cloud market, but how does this technology actually work?

Let's start with a simple definition:

The cloud delivers computing services on-demand using a pay-as-you-go model.

Costs are typically assessed on a pay-per-use or pay-per-user model, which **shifts spending away from capital expenses, such as new IT hardware, to operational expenses that offer better predictability over time.**

In addition, **cloud services can be scaled up (or down) as needed to meet changes in demand.** This isn't possible with physical hardware—companies must either overspend to account for potential traffic and network demands or minimize IT budgets with the hope that demand doesn't exceed supply.

The value of cloud technology for veterinary practices.

Technology is now an integral part of veterinary practice. From payroll solutions to inventory management, appointment scheduling, and patient data storage, veterinarians and practice managers now recognize the value in digital solutions.

But what about the cloud? How can cloud offerings improve practice outcomes and help prepare them for increased digital adoption? Some of the biggest cloud benefits for veterinary practices include the following:

Increased efficiency

Accessing services on-demand makes it easy to add new software or increase capacity, in turn reducing the amount of time staff spend installing, configuring, and managing technology—and making it easier to help clients.

Enhanced satisfaction

With streamlined data access comes the ability to retrieve client and patient information quickly and easily, which helps boost overall satisfaction and client retention rates.

Ease of access

Because they use a shared resource model, cloud solutions make it possible for veterinarians and the team to access key data anytime, anywhere. This includes workstations in the office, desktop computers at home, and mobile devices on-demand.

Reduced risk

Cloud providers are now on the cutting edge of IT security, offering proactive solutions to help detect, manage, and mitigate potential data compromise. In addition, the distributed nature of cloud-based resources means that if one server goes down, data isn't lost, and access isn't interrupted.

Improved TCO

For practices, the total cost of ownership (TCO) of technology services includes everything they spend on hardware and software. And while initial spend on physical servers often seems quite reasonable, the cost to maintain, upgrade, and replace this hardware over time can steadily ramp up over time.

However, cloud solutions help reduce TCO since they minimize the need to purchase, manage, or replace these technologies. Instead, providers handle these processes and distribute costs across all users.

Automatic updates

On-site servers and software require veterinarians and practice managers to worry about upgrades that could take hours or days—and impact their ability to work. Cloud solutions, however, offer automatic upgrades that are designed to minimize disruption and downtime.

This means that practices are always equipped with the most current software versions available, in turn providing access to the latest features, functions, and quality-of-life upgrades.

Cloud technology in practice management software.

Practice management software is the workhorse of veterinary workflow, used for everything from scheduling client appointments to verifying patient data to managing payments and tracking client satisfaction. **The right system is critical for practices to streamline common processes.** If employees are stuck using cumbersome and complex legacy solutions that don't play well with new applications and services or they struggle to keep pace with growing data entry requirements, the results are twofold: frustrated team members and falling client satisfaction.

Cloud technology is now being integrated into practice management software. This integration offers the potential to solve these challenges by providing a unified interface and single source of truth for all veterinary data sources. **Instead of using multiple applications to manage client transaction, scheduling, and personal data, comprehensive cloud offerings make it possible for staff to complete critical operational tasks from a single, streamlined application.**

The Big Benefit
Cloud solutions offer direct value for veterinary practices—without increasing IT complexity.

As patient volumes increase, it's critical that your software can keep up.
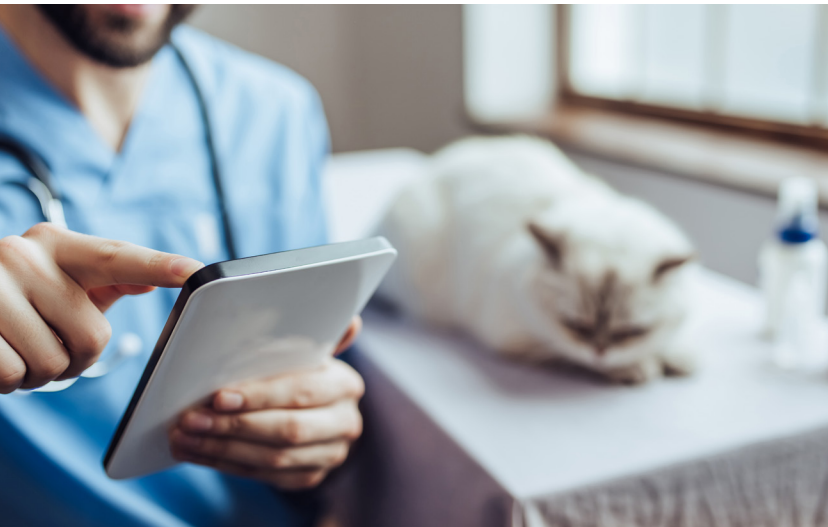
As veterinary best practices now include the need to keep comprehensive digital records of visits, historical issues, vaccine certificates, and potential treatment plans, the amount of information veterinarians must access on-demand is skyrocketing. Aging, on-site servers simply can't keep up with these requirements. And if they fail at inopportune moments, then staff may be left with no choice but to lean on unreliable paper processes that take more time and may lead to data-entry errors later.

Cloud-based practice management software, meanwhile, offers a forward-looking path to digital transformation that scales in tandem with veterinary technology need.

The cloud deployment roadmap.

While cloud computing offers significant benefits for veterinary practices, these deployments don't occur in isolation: Without the right IT backbone, veterinary practices won't be able to make best use of emerging cloud technologies.

As a result, it's critical for practices to consider a cloud deployment roadmap that addresses underlying IT supports, including these:

The Big Foundation

Veterinary practices need modern hardware infrastructure to make best use of the cloud.

Network bandwidth

Because cloud solutions require network connections, bandwidth is critical. Even best-of-breed cloud offerings won't deliver on their potential if the practice's current internet connection can't handle data throughput. To make best use of cloud offerings, practice managers should ensure they have reliable last-mile connections of at least 4 Mbps up and down for each workstation.

Existing workstations

It's also critical to consider the capability of current workstations, such as operating system, processor, and memory. While there are no hard-and-fast rules here, practices are well-served by workstations running Microsoft® Windows® 10, a sixth-generation or later Intel® (or equivalent) processor, and at least 8 GB of RAM.

Wired or Wi-Fi

Connection type also matters. With many veterinary practices now expanding to meet evolving demand, it's often easier to deploy Wi-Fi networks than run new wired connections. Here, routers capable of handling both 2.4 and 5 GHz networks are essential to ensure sufficient throughput, while newer standards, such as Wi-Fi 6, can improve speed and interoperability.

IDEXX
Veterinary Software

Your cloud readiness.

Considering a cloud deployment to boost your practice performance and streamline operations? Follow these steps to get started.

Step 1: Consider the age of your current IT infrastructure.

The older your existing infrastructure, the more challenging your cloud transition. Beyond the 3–4-year mark, it's worth considering updates to existing workstations, internet connections, and bandwidth.

...... Modern (1–2 years old)

...... Aging (3–4 years old)

...... Outdated (5–6 years old)

...... Legacy (6+ years old)

Step 2: Determine which IT issues are most commonly reported by staff.

Identifying pain points for your staff helps ensure cloud solutions address specific operational concerns.

...... Slow system response

...... Cumbersome or confusing user interface

...... No support for specific process (*e.g., payment integration or inventory*)

...... Substantial downtime

Step 3: Decide which processes need immediate improvement.

With the cloud market rapidly expanding, it's easy to over-provision solutions and end up paying too much for services you don't need. Defining your biggest process problems allows you to prioritize spending where it matters most.
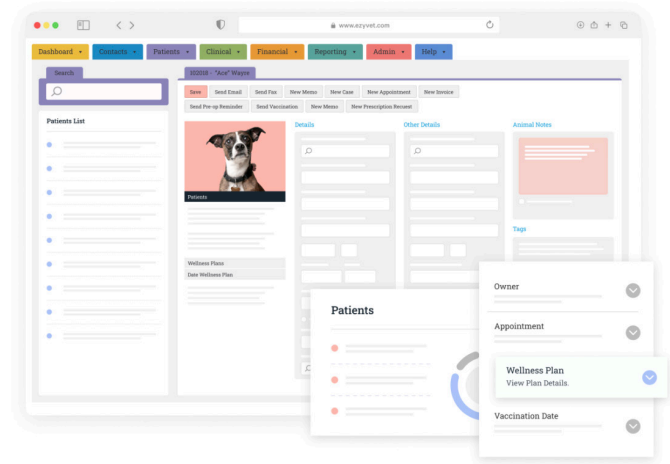*(Rank 1–4 in order of importance)*

...... Appointment booking and scheduling

...... Payment processing

...... Records keeping

...... Compliance

Ready to streamline operations and improve practice outcomes? Cloud-based software from IDEXX has you covered.

IDEXX software will streamline the way you run your practice with a range of efficient solutions that can fit your unique management needs, and all available in the cloud. Whether you want to grow your business, increase efficiency, or improve client compliance, IDEXX has the right solution to meet your practice's unique needs:

- No need for a dedicated server
- Automatic updates
- Simple monthly subscription pricing
- Built-in payment processing

Learn more

ezyVet
The practice management software that does it all.

Neo
Even the brightest minds need easy-to-use software.

Explore ezyVet® and Neo® software today.

Learn more