

Project Pitch — “Pet Care Companion: Smart Scheduler & Community Tips for Pet Owners”

Problem

Pet ownership in the U.S. has surged, with 66% of households owning at least one pet (APPA, 2023). Yet veterinary compliance remains low: studies show that up to 25% of dogs miss annual checkups, and nearly 40% of owners forget preventive treatments like flea/tick or heartworm medication (Banfield Pet Hospital, 2022). The fragmentation of care tasks—vaccines, medication refills, grooming, walking schedules—creates stress for busy owners.

Opportunity: Build a simple companion app that:

1. Tracks and reminds pet care tasks (vaccines, medications, grooming).
2. Offers a lightweight dashboard for owners to view schedules.
3. Hosts a feed of owner-submitted “tips” (e.g., affordable vets, favorite groomers, dog park updates).

This app blends **compliance support** with **community knowledge-sharing**, addressing both the practical and emotional sides of pet ownership.

Users & Stakeholders

- **Primary users:** Pet owners (especially dogs & cats) juggling health tasks and schedules.
 - **Secondary stakeholders:** Veterinarians (increased compliance), pet service providers (groomers, trainers, sitters).
 - **Institutional stakeholders:** Potential partners like shelters, vet clinics, and pet product brands that could co-sponsor or integrate reminders.
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Scope (Phase 0 → MVP)

In scope (MVP):

- Create pet profiles (name, type, age, weight).
- Add up to 3 care reminders (e.g., flea medication, grooming, vet visit).
- Show a simple weekly dashboard of upcoming tasks.

- Community tips: short, anonymous advice tied to category (e.g., vet, park, training).

Out of scope (future):

- Prescription integration with vet APIs.
 - Real-time location-based services (pet tracking, nearby parks).
 - Wearables/IoT integration.
 - Multi-pet households with shared accounts.
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Value Proposition

Pet Care Companion reduces owner stress and improves animal health by consolidating care routines into one accessible dashboard. Unlike existing generic calendar apps, it is **domain-specific**, providing defaults for common pet tasks and a lightweight community layer that builds trust and engagement.

Success Metrics (First 2–4 weeks)

- **Compliance proxy:** $\geq 70\%$ of users complete at least one scheduled reminder.
 - **Engagement:** $\geq 50\%$ of users submit or view a community tip in the first 2 weeks.
 - **Usability:** $\geq 80\%$ of users report the app makes tracking pet care “easier than their current method.”
 - **Iterative testing:** At least 2 design/test cycles with 5–7 pet owners per cycle (NN/g guideline).
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Minimal Viable Artifact (Shippable in 2 Weeks)

A responsive web/mobile app that:

1. **Pet profile setup:** Simple form (name, type, breed, age).
2. **Reminders:** Add/edit up to 3 care tasks with due dates. Default templates: “Annual Vaccination,” “Monthly Flea Prevention,” “Daily Walk.”
3. **Dashboard:** Calendar card showing next 7 days of tasks, with “mark as done” button.

- 4. **Tips Feed (minimal):** Allow submission of short, anonymous tips tagged to a category. Show the 5 most recent.
- 5. **Assumptions panel:** State that data is local (no cloud sync for MVP), limited categories, and no medical advice.

Tech stack:

- Frontend: React or simple HTML/CSS/JS.
- Backend: Node/Express lightweight API.
- Database: SQLite/Postgres for reminders & tips.

System Sketch — Pet Care Companion (MVP)

- **User Interface:** Pet Profile, Reminders Dashboard, Tips Feed
- **Backend API:** Django (or Node/Express)
- **Database:** PostgreSQL (stores pets, reminders, tips)
- **Modules:**
 - Reminder Engine (schedules & notifications)
 - Tips Engine (submit/view tips)
- **Reference Defaults:** Preventive Care Templates (vaccines, flea/tick, walks, grooming)

Iterative Design Plan (Week-by-Week)

- **Week 1 (Design sprint):** Build low-fi sketches, run quick interviews with 5–7 pet owners, validate categories of tasks/tips.
- **Week 2 (MVP build):** Implement reminder CRUD + dashboard + minimal tips feed. Run usability test, iterate copy/flows.

Risks & Mitigations

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
Scope creep (adding too many features early)	Delays MVP	High	Strict 3-feature limit (profile, reminders, tips) for MVP.

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
User trust (medical liability, inaccurate advice)	Abandonment, legal risk	Medium	Add disclaimer: “Not medical advice”; encourage vet consultation. Moderate posts.
Engagement stagnation (users set reminders once then stop)	Low retention	Medium	Add default reminders and notifications; seed community tips to show value immediately.

Evidence Base (APA-style, examples)

- American Pet Products Association. (2023). *2023–2024 National Pet Owners Survey*. APPA.
- Banfield Pet Hospital. (2022). *State of Pet Health Report*. Banfield Research Institute.
- Nielsen Norman Group. (2018). *Why You Only Need to Test with 5 Users*. Retrieved from nngroup.com.
- World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA). (2021). *Global Guidelines on Preventive Care for Dogs and Cats*. Journal of Small Animal Practice.