

Vanderpumping Up Airvet

What do you get when you cross a nationally renowned veterinarian, an MBA graduate from **USC** and a reality TV star?

Peace of mind for pet owners, if everything goes to plan for Beverly Hills-based **Airvet**, a veterinarian telemedicine startup that has raised \$14 million since launching two years ago, with backing from local venture investors **Hawke Ventures** and **Bracket Capital**. The enterprise last week launched a program to give anyone who gets an animal from a participating rescue shelter a free telemed visit and a 72-hour window for follow-up consultations—a package of services typically offered for \$30.

The latest marketing push starts with the reality TV angle. The **Vanderpump Dog Foundation**'s rescue center in West Hollywood—started by **Lisa Vanderpump**, featured in **The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills** and **Vanderpump Rules** cable TV shows—is lined up as the first participating shelter.



The nationally renowned veterinarian is Dr. **Jeff Werber**, a cofounder who has helped grow Airvet into a network of about 4,500 veterinarians around the U.S. The roster is now facilitating thousands of visits each month.

And that leads to the MBA, a degree that Werber's son **Brandon** got from USC before diving into the world of digital development and marketing.

Brandon came up with the app for Airvet's platform, aiming for pet owners who might need some basic knowledge from a trusted source.

"People have a lot of questions about basic things when they first bring a pet home—like 'what is crate training?'" he says. "They go online for answers, and half the people will say crate training is great, and the other half will say you're a monster for crate training."

The truth often lies in the middle—and can be found with a qualified veterinarian.

"It often depends on the breed, or age or any number of factors," says the younger Werber, adding that he hopes Airvet's service will help reduce the rate of pets that go back to shelters because the folks who adopt them get unnerved by questions about care. That's especially important now, he says, given the record levels of pet adoption spurred by the Covid-19 pandemic, with more than 3 million over the past year or so, and the cutbacks on the number of in-person veterinarian visits available due to social distancing.