

Vetech View

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Do You Believe in Ghosts?

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Backup your valuable data

By Matthew Sanregret

Making regular backups of your Advantage data is an essential part of your computer maintenance. With a data backup, you can recover from a computer failure with minimal or no data loss.

Making a backup is simply a matter of copying your data from the computer's hard disk to another location (typically a removable drive of some kind). Making a backup does not change any information on your computer.

Backups should be performed on a daily basis as insurance against computer problems. A backup should also be made prior to any major changes to your computer. Procedures like installing new software, or software upgrades, and even installing new hardware should only be done after you have made a backup of your valuable data.

A backup is your insurance in case something happens to your computer. Just like with any other type of insurance there are those who would rather assume the risk in exchange for saving a little time and money. This is the decision we all have to make. How important is your data and what would you do if you lost it? We hope that we never have to use your backup insurance but when you need it, you will be glad you have it.

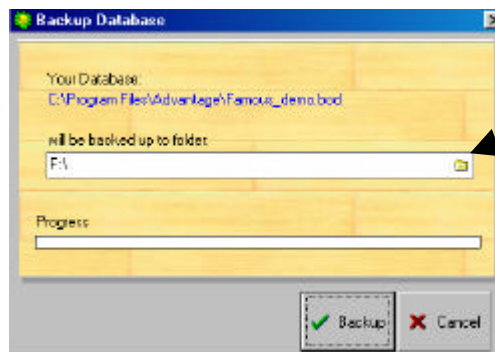
After you start using software, the value of your data quickly becomes much higher than the computer itself. You can always go out and buy a new computer, but think about re-entering all your clients, patients, history, reminders, etc. How do you put a price on that?

Today's backups are faster, cheaper and more reliable than ever before. A few years ago it was not uncommon for a backup of veterinary software to take over an hour. Current backup drives and fast computers can reduce your backup time to about 10 minutes or less in many cases.

How to make a backup copy of your database

The Advantage system makes performing a backup on a regular basis very easy. Basically there are only two steps.

1. Exit the Advantage software on all computers, except the one making the actual backup. Click the File menu and select Backup Database. The following menu will be displayed.
2. Click the File menu and select Backup Database. The following menu will be displayed.



Click the folder icon to select a new backup drive or folder

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Using the built in backup in the Advantage system requires that the backup device be a drive letter that is accessible through Windows Explorer. Many tape backups do not create a drive letter; therefore to use these types of backups you will need to use the backup software that comes with that device.

CD-RW drives are very popular these days. In order to write directly to a CD-RW disk from Advantage you need to format a CD-RW disk with the software that came with your CD drive. Roxio is a popular CD -RW software package and they include a program called "drag to disk" that allows other programs, such as Advantage, to copy directly to a CD. If you do not have this ability, you will need to exit Advantage and use your CD backup software to copy data to a CD.

How Many backup disks?

While we're discussing backups I frequently get asked how many different backups you should have. Or just as frequently I'll be working with someone and find out they only have one backup tape/disk and they've been using it for the last two years. There is no magic number. In fact, the more the merrier! But, at the minimum you should have at least 3 backups that you alternate daily.

It is probably best to have 6-7 so you have one for every day that the practice is open. Label the media for each day - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc., and use that disk only on that day. Also, the Advantage system automatically keeps up to three individual backups per backup folder, so with this strategy, you will be able to go back almost a month.

The last suggestion about backups is to keep one off-site but also keep the most recent one handy. If you live 45 minutes away and you need to restore a backup, that's almost 2 hours additional down time just waiting for you to go home and get your backup. The reason for off-site backup is to protect against theft or property damage. A backup won't do you any good if it gets stolen with your computer.



Trade Shows

Please visit us at the upcoming trade shows!

Western Veterinary Conference - Las Vegas, NV - February 16-19, 2004