



Bringing your pets to the vets

When your pet gets very stressed coming to the vets it is totally natural to want to avoid coming to see us. But leaving problems for longer, or missing out on check-ups may compromise your pets health. So if we can make it even a little more pleasant for human and animal alike then that would be a big bonus for everybody.

Why do pets find vets so scary?

Well even though we are kind smiley people, us vets do have the unfortunate habit of having to administer treatments or do procedures, and our pets aren't daft, they never forget. Also it is helpful to remember that pets have much better awareness of their environment than we do and in particular having an excellent sense of smell at the vets can make it even more scary. Our pets are very aware of all the other species that have been in the vets that day and can also smell the operating theatre and hospital out the back which you as a human are less aware of.

Then there is the journey to the vets. Dogs are used to going places in the car with their owners, but consider other species who rarely leave their own territory. For them any journey is terrifying.

What can we do about it?

Sadly, despite us loving our patients, the nature of what we do means they aren't all going to love us back whatever we do. However there are some simple ways to improve or at least not exacerbate the stress our pets endure coming into the vet.

DOGS:

- For young puppies it is essential that they have a positive experience and aren't overwhelmed or over excited by their visit to the vets. This means making sure that they are allowed to remain calm in the waiting room and that the less confident pups are allowed to wait quietly and take in their surroundings. It is better not to push them to interact with other people or animals if they are timid as this can increase their stress levels.
- Unvaccinated puppies are not protected from infectious diseases so they should be held on your lap and kept off the floor.
- Assess the waiting room when entering the vets to check who is waiting. It's important that we recognise that some dogs will generally be quite eager to meet and play with all dogs and people as well as other species. In some cases this is fine but in many cases this playful interaction will increase the participants level of arousal and make them more vulnerable to a stressful experience with the vet. The other animals in the waiting room may well be poorly and not feeling up to meeting and greeting others so check with other owners before allowing this. Also any elderly dogs waiting maybe stressed by bouncy young dogs. Other species may well be already terrified and being trapped and unable to run away when a loud bouncy dog sniffs their box can be extremely distressing for them. If possible choose a seat in an area which is as quiet as possible and avoid sitting near another animal who may be intimidating or intimidated.

- Consider the use of an Adaptil collar for your dog. This can help relieve travel anxiety associated with stress or car sickness, also it can help make your dog feel more calm and secure at the vets and that will help the experience to be a positive one.
- Try to bring your dog to the vets when he/she is calm. Exciting exercise or activities prior to your appointment will heighten their state of arousal and make them more reactive to any vet related stress.
- Bring your dog in on a short lead to prevent them running through the door into reception. Often there are animals waiting at the desk with their owners. Cats would find it terrifying if a dog rushes in as they would not be able to run away from the situation.

CATS:

- When selecting a carrier to bring your cat to the vets look for a top loading model. This will allow you to lift your cat in and out with out having to pull from the front door or even tip, which would be a frightening experience.
- Use a carrier that is covered but allows your cat to see out of a small opening. Place a towel or blanket with the scent of home in the carrier to give security. Some cats like to hide under the blanket. If you have a wire cage carrier always place a blanket/towel over the top. Otherwise your cat will feel very exposed and unable to hide or runaway, which would be their natural response to danger.
- Do not place your cat on the floor, it makes them vulnerable and dogs coming in and out will be able to approach. Where possible put them on a chair next to you in the cat area or under your chair behind your legs or on our special cat shelf behind the seating.
- Use feliway spray in your cat carrier 15 mins before putting your cat inside. This is an appeasing pheromone to help your cat feel more secure and deal better with stressful events.
- If you feel that the waiting room is too stressful then if at all possible we can try to find a free room for you to wait in.

PUPPIES/KITTENS:

- For a puppy or kitten it is even more important to reduce the stress of visiting the vet. These first veterinary experiences will help determine how your new young pet reacts to the vet throughout its later life. So let us work together to make sure your puppy or kitten doesn't feel anxious and vulnerable during his/her visit with us and try to make it as positive an experience as possible.

If there is anything you think we could do to make your pet feel more at ease when coming to see us or if you need any help or advice just give us a call, drop us an email or of course pop in for a chat.

