

Quick fixes that boost client satisfaction

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VETERINARY ECONOMICS

How often do you hear, "You should see the great job Dr. Jones did on my cat's neuter" or "This is the best removal of a foreign body in a beagle that I've ever seen"? Probably never. While a veterinarian may possess outstanding technical skill, clients often can't tell.

They *can* tell how they're treated. And as more pet owners view their animals as family members, service expectations are rising. You can boost client satisfaction at your practice with these quick fixes.



1. The appointment

Avoid placing callers on hold for long periods of time.

Instead, offer to call them back or set up an e-mail appointment system.

Confirm appointments by phone, e-mail, or letter with helpful messages such as, "We will expect Fluffy on Friday. Remember, we're doing a complete wellness check so please set aside one hour for the appointment."

2. The visit

- **Use clients' names** and the names of their pets.
- **If clients must wait**, provide coffee, water, and other amenities in the reception area.
- **Give clients something to do.** Let them brush their dog, amuse their cat with toys, or clip their bunny's nails.
- **Become an information source.** Provide literature and access to CDs and DVDs in your waiting area.
- **Be particular about the practice's appearance.** Make sure all areas look and smell clean.
- **Offer all staff members training** on communication skills and good bedside manner. The doctor who kissed my sick cat on the forehead now treats my three cats and four rabbits, as well as many of my neighbors' pets.
- **Make the visit convenient for clients.** Offer curbside assistance for clients with multiple pets. Develop a network of visiting specialists so clients don't have to drive far.





3. Follow-up

- **Provide clear, typed discharge instructions.** Avoid jargon and terms that clients won't understand. Be explicit about medication, special diets, and other care.
- **Call to see how the pet is doing** after treatment.
- **Call or send a card or flowers** to clients whose pets have died.

4. Client value

- **Look for ways to add value** to the client's experience.
- **Add related services.** Bathing, grooming, nutritional counseling, wellness and preventive care, and behavior training can all be done with limited space.
- **Educate clients** and discuss new services through e-newsletters, booklets, and bulletins.
- **Sponsor seminars,** workshops, and other events tailored to particular groups, such as seniors with cats, first-time bunny owners, or clients with geriatric pets.
- **Reward owners** who take good care of their pets with unexpected perks and gifts.



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