

Better Vet Visits



There is a lot that owners can do to affect their pet's health in between trips to the vet. Keeping your pet at a healthy weight and applying flea and tick medication goes a long way towards keeping your pet healthy. However, most owners don't realize they also have a lot of influence over how their pet behaves at the vet. Training for better visits to the vet is easy and has numerous advantages. When your pet easily tolerates or even enjoys their trip to the vet it results in...

- Lower stress levels for the pet, owner, and vet staff.
- Allows the veterinarian to get a better look at your pet during their exam, leading to better information about their health.
- Owners who aren't stressed about bringing their pets to the vet are more likely to come in when their pet first shows signs of being ill rather than waiting. This can lead to lower costs for the owner and better outcomes for their pets.
- Your veterinarian will love you for it!

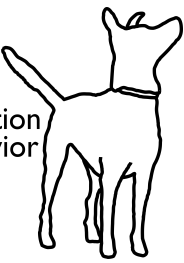
Getting Weighed

Getting weighed is an important part of your trip to the vet but it can be stressful for many pets. To your pet, stepping onto the scale feels a lot like stepping onto a rickety wooden rope bridge does to us. The scale may shift slightly and make a noise when your pet steps onto it, making it seem like an unstable and potentially dangerous surface. Take your time and don't force your pet onto the scale. Bring treats to the appointment or ask the receptionist for some to help your pets associate the scale with something positive. If your pet cannot be encouraged onto the scale, don't push or pull them onto it, this will only make them more afraid to go on the scale in the future. Instead, lift your dog onto the scale and reward them profusely for being so brave.

Handling

Most pets are not used to someone handling their feet, mouth or ears and so these things are only associated with something scary like nail trims or visits to the vet. This can make your pets resistant to someone else looking at their feet, mouth or ears. What can you do?

Teach your dog or cat that people can pet them in places other than their belly or back. Pick a time when you and your pet are already relaxed, like when you watch TV or movies in the evening. Stroke your pet like you normally would but extend those strokes down your pet's legs or tail. When your pet is relaxed, try massaging their face or ears. Start slow and make sure your pet remains relaxed while you are handling them. Over time, your pet may allow you to look in their mouth or feel in between their toes as they learn to associate these things with positive bonding time, rather than something painful. Handling your pet can also lead to you noticing changes to their health much earlier than you normally would.



If your pet is especially resistant to being handled, you can give your pet treats when you touch their feet, mouth, or ears. This will cause them to associate being handled with something positive. Try to give treats during those times when your pet is being especially cooperative. Remember to go slow, your pet should feel like they are getting a great massage, not being poked and prodded.

Preventative Muzzling

If your dog is already nervous at the vet, your vet may need to muzzle them to take a better look. This will make the doctor and their techs more comfortable with handling your pet, which in turn can lower your dog's stress level as well. Every pet has the potential to bite, even if they have been socialized very well and normally aren't aggressive. If your dog needs a muzzle at the vet, you may consider getting a muzzle for them that you can practice with at home. If your dog is already comfortable wearing muzzle it can make vet trips and grooming much less stressful. It also allows you and others to stay safe if your pet needs to be handled during an emergency when they are already frightened or in pain.

Begin by placing or holding treats in the muzzle and allowing your dog to sniff the muzzle and take treats from you. Over time, hold the treats so that your dog needs to put their nose farther and farther through the muzzle in order to get them. There are many videos online that go more in depth about teaching your dog to like their muzzle.

Taking Medications

At your vet visit, your doctor may prescribe medications that your pet needs to take. Not all pets will readily eat these medications, even if hidden in pill pockets or cheese. However, you can associate taking medication with positive things. By giving your pet a few treats after you give them their medication, pilling them will become easier over time rather than harder. In turn, this will increase your pet's chances of feeling better sooner.

Socialization

It is very important that your puppy is socialized to other people and dogs and the sights and sounds of the human world. Never force your puppy to interact with something. Socialization means building a history of positive experiences, not just exposing your puppy to new things. You can help your puppy by making sure they are always comfortable with their environment. Giving your puppy treats when they experience new things can help them to build positive associations with new and unusual things. Remember you want to socialize your puppy to the types of things they will be around as an adult, this includes making positive associations with the vet. Our goal is to make each trip to the vet easier and more positive for your pet than the last visit.