

Pre-visit information for dog owners

We want to give you and your dog the best chance of having a positive experience when a trip to our clinic is required, for whatever reason. To achieve this there are lots of things that we and you can do to make this possible.

1. Get your puppy used to having all of its body looked at and gently handled. Similarly, gently introduce being picked up so that they are comfortable being lifted onto a table, if necessary, when they are with us. This all needs to be done slowly with lots of positive reinforcement with treats!
2. It's really important that puppies' early experiences at a veterinary clinic are positive so it's a great idea for them to come and see us at other times than just when they have interventions like vaccinations and microchipping. Monthly weighing for worming up to 6 months of age are a great opportunity to come and have a fuss and treats. It's a good idea to do this at quieter times of the day so that they can have a relaxed experience and not be over stimulated or over-faced by their visit. Please ring/ask at reception about a good time to do this.
3. When booking an appointment please let us know if you think your dog will be worried about coming to see us as there are things we can do to help e.g. making an appointment at quieter times, waiting in the car/ outside or pre-visit anti-anxiety medication.
4. Make your journey to us as calm as possible by giving yourself plenty of time and having all the things you might need. Ideally the period of time leading up to their appointment should be as stress free as possible so plan how best to get to the clinic e.g. maybe walk instead of drive if your dog isn't a big fan of the car. Also try to avoid other intense emotional triggers like interactions with other dogs on the way to the surgery if they are not comfortable with this. All dogs will need a well fitting collar/harness and lead (to ensure they can't get loose inside or outside the building), ideally some favourite treats, possibly a blanket from home that they can lie on whilst waiting – if that will make them more comfortable.
5. Give your dog as much space as possible if waiting in the waiting room and do not let your dog approach other pets (of any species) as this can inadvertently cause anxiety for pets and owners. Encourage your dog to focus on you with encouraging words and/or treats.
6. It's a really good idea to muzzle train all dogs, ideally from an early age. This is so that if at some point in their life one is required for your safety and that of the veterinary team, the application of a muzzle is something they are already familiar with and relaxed about. There is a good guide to how to go about this on The Dog's Trust Website.
7. Be aware that the vet may wish to pause or completely stop the examination on that day if your dog is showing signs of mounting anxiety which is to the detriment of their emotional wellbeing. We have behavioural charts up in our consult rooms which help explain the signs a dog may show when they are getting more worried, but it certainly helps a dog in all aspects of life if you are aware of signs of anxiety. The Dog's Trust Website has a vast amount of information and advice on all of the above in their "Dog Advice" section. www.dogstrust.org.uk

