

FINDING the Right Veterinarian

Guide
to

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Finding a veterinary hospital in your area with a health care team that's right for you is an important task. It's best not to wait until an emergency strikes, and be left calling at the last minute. When choosing a veterinarian:

- Ask family, friends, and neighbours to refer you to a clinic where they have had a good experience with quality client service and patient care.
- Make a consultation appointment with your first choice practice, and visit the practice to meet the office staff, animal health technician(s), and veterinarian(s). If possible, arrange to tour the facility, and ask questions to help you determine whether this is the best clinic for you and your pet(s). Repeat this process with your second choice if necessary.

Each client has individual needs, so the best practice for one client is not necessarily the best for another. To help you decide whether a particular clinic is the right one for you and your pets, consider the following questions:

1. Do you feel at ease speaking with the veterinary health care team?
2. Do you sense a caring, empathic, professional environment, and a kind attitude towards patients?
3. Do you feel rushed, or is plenty of time spent addressing your concerns?
4. Are things explained in terms that you can understand?
5. Does this veterinarian show a special interest in, and knowledge of your breed of cat or dog (if purebred)?
6. Does your pet see the same veterinarian consistently, or is this a team-care practice?
7. Are the facilities clean, modern, and designed to minimize patient stress (for example, are dogs and cats kenneled separately, or one on top of the other)?
8. Does the practice handle after-hours emergencies?
9. Where are difficult cases referred?



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10. Are educational handouts available for clients, or does the clinic house a loaner library to help you learn more about preventive health care, nutrition, or disease?
11. Does the clinic offer new puppy or kitten classes, or other informational seminars for clients?
12. Are average waiting times for appointments appropriate? (Note: emergencies will sometimes affect scheduling, and client patience is needed on those days!)
13. If they treat a specific class of pets (exotics only, cats only), does facility design address the special needs of these species?
14. Does clinic policy synchronize well with issues of importance to you (house call availability, hours of operation, use of alternative therapies etc.)?
15. Is the location reasonably convenient for you?
16. What are the payment policies of the practice? Are detailed quotes and invoices provided?

The biggest mistake people often make in choosing the right veterinarian is to select based on price. A client will often phone a number of practices, ask them to quote on a procedure, and select the practice offering the cheapest quote. Note that price does not equal quality or value. It is hard to compare prices between practices because different services are bundled within package quotes, and different depths of services are offered between practices.

It is important to remember that practices are businesses, and overhead, staff wages, and equipment costs are considerable. Charging reasonable fees helps a practice to thrive and provide optimal patient care, by being able to hire the best staff, afford the best equipment, support staff in their continuing education, and offer you, the client, the best service. 🐾

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