

## **Pre-visit advice for pets visiting Acorn House Veterinary Hospital**

### Making an appointment

Appointments can be made using the online booking system or by telephoning Reception. Clients are free to select an appointment with any of the veterinary surgeons with consultations slots at the time that is convenient to the client. However, wherever possible it is recommended that clients make appointments with one particular vet to allow for case continuity and rapport building between the patient, client and vet.

In an emergency please do not use the online booking system but telephone the practice directly instead, so that an urgent appointment can be made.

### Travelling to the hospital

Some dogs live close enough to walk to the veterinary practice. This should be avoided in uncomfortable weather conditions (particularly in very hot weather) and for pets that are unwell. If your pet is attending the practice for sedation or surgery, it is not appropriate for them to walk home afterwards unless you live extremely close to the practice (within 200 yards).

Cats and small pets should travel to the practice in a safe and secure carrier. This should be large enough for the pet to turn around inside. Pets should be transported in individual carriers rather than sharing (newborn litters of puppies and kittens are an exception to this). Carriers should be well-ventilated but primarily opaque so that the inhabitants are not "on display". A blanket can be draped over the carrier to assist with this.

Carriers may also be appropriate for small dogs. Carriers should be fixed in the car using a seatbelt and dogs that are not in carriers should be restrained using a seatbelt or harness. If dogs travel in the boot of the car be aware that a travel guard provides protection for the human occupants of the car from the dog in the event of an accident, but not for the dogs themselves.

Arriving early to allow for a short walk before the vet appointment may help dogs that become distressed or over-excited during a car journey. If possible, try to teach your dog to be comfortable with car travel well in advance of the vet visit by providing treats in the car, spending time in the car without driving anywhere, and using the car to visit different walking spots as well as for vet visits. Having a passenger available to sit with and attend to the dog so that the driver can concentrate on driving is also a good idea.

### Arriving at the hospital

Clients should "check in" at the reception desk. The practice has separate waiting areas for dogs, cats and small mammals and these are clearly marked. Please be mindful that some dogs visiting the practice are unwell and may not feel like interacting with unfamiliar people and animals! Many dogs will find it over-exciting or stressful to try to wait patiently in the waiting room so please know that alternative options include waiting in the gazebo outside or in the car (the Reception team will take your mobile number so that the vet can call you when it is time for the appointment to start). The vet can also arrange for dogs to enter through the side door if necessary.

### Information

At the start of the appointment the vet will talk to you about any problems you have noticed with your pet and their general health and routines. It will be very helpful if you are able to bring information regarding your pet's usual diet, any medicines they are taking, the symptoms that you

have noticed, and any vaccination or other documents for pets that are new to the practice. This is particularly important if another person is bringing your pet to the appointment on your behalf.

### Examination

The vet is likely to start the consultation with a discussion and then move onto examining your pet. Sometimes examination is “hands off” (watching the way a pet moves around the consulting room or in the car park, for example). Often it is necessary for the vet to handle the pet to examine problem areas or listen to the heart, for example. The practice provides a variety of food rewards to offer pets during the appointment, which it is hoped will build a positive association with the practice. If your pet has a favourite treat or a special diet, please feel free to bring this with you for the vet to use instead. Pets that are attending for surgery, sedation or digestive problems should not be offered food during the consultation.

### Pets that are fearful of the veterinary practice

It is hoped that pets will learn to associate the veterinary practice with friendly staff, gentle handling and plenty of treats. However, we understand that the practice can be an overwhelming place for some patients. Please speak to your vet about your pet’s particular circumstances. Sometimes “hands off” observations and a detailed conversation about the problem can avoid a stressful examination for nervous pets. Other times, performing the consultation in the practice garden, or using anti-anxiety medicine before an appointment can help. In other situations sedation may be the most sensible option, rather than physically restraining a nervous dog or cat.

Any pet can react defensively if they are in pain or afraid. It is a great idea to purchase a well-fitting basket muzzle for your dog and gradually train them to wear it happily for short periods during home training sessions. A specific muzzle training information sheet is available on the practice website and muzzles are available for purchase in the waiting room. Teaching this skill should mean that your dog could be handled safely and without any additional stress if they were unlucky enough to suffer an accident or emergency in the future.

Dogs are more likely to feel comfortable at the veterinary practice if they are able to spend some time relaxing at the practice when they are fit and well, without any stressful examinations or procedures being carried out. We recommend that puppies attend the Canine Hub puppy classes, which are held in the practice waiting room at the end of the day, or that adult dogs attend “happy visits” to the practice at quiet times of day. Please ask at Reception for details.