

Helping Your Dog Feel Calm at the Vet

Preparing your dog for stress-free veterinary visits

Veterinary visits are essential for keeping your dog healthy, but many dogs become worried long before they enter the consulting room. Fortunately, with a little preparation, most dogs can learn that visiting the veterinary practice predicts good things rather than something to fear.

The key is to progress gradually, allowing your dog to remain relaxed throughout each stage whilst building positive associations using high-value food rewards and praise.

SEE RELATED HANDOUTS;

-  **Muzzle training** - for safer, happier lives together
-  **Helping Your Dog Feel Safe During Handling** - Teaching a simple chin rest

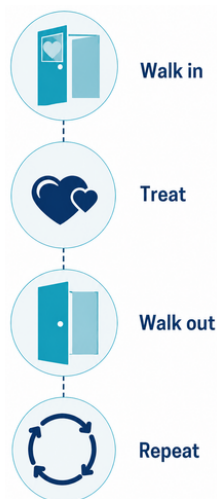
1. BUILD POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS - outside the vet practice



- Drive to the practice without having an appointment.
- Walk around outside at whatever distance your dog feels comfortable.
- Let your dog sniff and explore. Scatter treats and praise calm behaviour.
- Leave before your dog becomes worried..

Always watch your dog's body language. If they show signs of anxiety, increase the distance and try again next time.

2. HAPPY VISITS Make the vet predict good things



Keep visits short, positive and non-medical. This helps change your dog's emotional response to the veterinary practice.

3. BUILD COOPERATIVE CARE SKILLS - use skills your dog already knows



- Once your dog is comfortable entering the consulting room, practise the chin-rest and handling exercises you have already taught at home.
- Use a familiar mat or cushion to create a positive station.

Over time, the veterinary practice becomes another place where cooperative care happens.

4. INTRODUCE THE VETERINARY TEAM - go at your dog's pace

- Visit 1**  Vet ignores your dog.
- Visit 2**  Vet tosses treats.
- Visit 3**  Vet stands nearby.
- Visit 4**  Vet joins chin rest exercise.
- Visit 5**  Vet offers brief handling.
- Visit 6+**  Gradually increase handling as your dog remains relaxed.

 *Always reward your dog for calm choices.*

 *Treats should be tossed towards your dog, not offered hand-to-mouth.*

THE VETERINARY CONFIDENCE LADDER

Progress gradually from home to a full examination. Rushing can increase fear and set back progress.

Take one step at a time



Stay below your dog's threshold and celebrate small steps forward.

Building confidence step by step

TOP TIPS

- Take your dog when they are slightly hungry, if appropriate.
- Bring your dog's favourite treats.
- Bring a familiar mat or blanket.
- Request a quieter appointment if possible and/or wait outside until your appointment.
- Keep visits short and finish on a positive note.

Ask your vet about anti-anxiety medication if your dog remains highly anxious despite training.



NEED MORE HELP?

Behaviour concerns are often easier to address when support is sought early. Did you know most pet insurance companies cover the costs of clinical behaviourists?



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