



WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Read these true stories from pet owners, then use the discussion questions below to decide how to avoid client service mistakes.

CASE 1:

I took my dog, Yoda, to the veterinarian to have one of his paws stitched up. It was on a Sunday, so one of the local veterinary practices was on call for emergencies. In the middle of the procedure, the veterinarian's spouse barged in and laid a piece of paper with an address on it on the surgical table where my dog was lying. He asked the veterinarian for directions while she had a needle in my dog's paw. The doctor started explaining where to go, using hand signals, then finally realized it wasn't the smartest thing to do and asked him to wait until she was done.

Discussion questions

How would your team handle this situation?

When is it appropriate to interrupt an appointment or procedure?

Do patients and clients who visit for emergencies or after-hours care receive the same service as those who visit during regular business hours?

CASE 2:

I scheduled an appointment with my regular veterinarian. When I arrived, I was surprised because another veterinarian took my appointment. I'd been taking my pets to this clinic to see this doctor for almost 10 years. No explanation was offered—my regular veterinarian wasn't ill or absent. I was simply passed off to another doctor. I would think that after 10 years of taking my business to a doctor, I deserved to know why he was no longer going to be my veterinarian. I have since taken my business to another clinic.

Discussion questions

How would your team handle this situation?

Do you ask clients which veterinarian they prefer to see?

Do you introduce and recommend new doctors to your established clients?

CASE 3:

I left my veterinary practice for several reasons. First of all, the office smelled of urine and pet odors. The surroundings were dirty and depressing. When the doctor examined my cat, I didn't get the impression he liked my cat as much as I did. You have to remember, pet people consider their pets as part of their families and enjoy the extra attention you give their pets.

My cat Sneakers was diagnosed with fatty liver disease, and the doctor told me to put him down. He gave me no alternatives. I sought a second opinion. My new doctor agreed with the diagnosis and offered me alternatives. I enjoyed five more years with Sneakers.

Discussion questions

How would your team handle this situation?

What is each person's role in maintaining the practice's appearance?

What are your policies to keep your practice clean and odor-free?

How do you demonstrate interest in clients' pets?

Do the doctor offer alternatives when he or she offers a diagnosis? Why or why not?

CASE 4:

I left one veterinarian because I rescue strays and he was always critical of me for doing it. He would say things like, “You know you’ll probably get stuck keeping this cat” and other discouraging comments. I found homes for every stray I rescued and took to him.

The last straw was when I took a stray I found near my home to the veterinarian. The assistant, who also lived in my neighborhood, told me that this very cat followed her to her front door a week before and she had chased it away.

Discussion questions

How would your team handle this situation?

What recommendations or assistance do you offer for clients who foster stray pets?

CASE 5:

We rescued Brandye, a sweet little fawn boxer, several years ago. We noticed she had a bad cough and began to lose weight. When we took her to the veterinarian, he suggested we run tests and more tests. The tests cost us several thousand dollars and didn’t help us arrive at good decision points.

Brandye underwent surgery for lung cancer successfully. Unfortunately, she died a week later of stomach cancer. We learned we have to ask the purpose of tests, the possible outcomes, and how we’ll use the information. While the veterinarian was a nice man, we felt he gave us too many options, wasn’t clear on the purpose of the tests, and didn’t help us understand the severity of Brandye’s illness.

Discussion questions

How would your team handle this situation?

Do you explain the tests your practice recommends and how the doctor will use the results to offer a diagnosis and a treatment plan?

Do you offer strong recommendations?

Do you prepare clients for all possible outcomes of the treatment the doctor prescribes?