



December 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

The veterinarians and veterinary staff in your community are passionate about what they do, and they truly care about the well-being of each of their patients. Also, providing clients with excellent customer service is very important to veterinarians. Thus, it is no surprise that veterinarians take online reviews and comments seriously.

Recently, pet owners are taking to social media to voice their frustrations, but all too often these outlets are used to berate and even threaten veterinary hospitals and individuals working in these care settings. This is one factor contributing to a high rate of mental stress, burnout and veterinarians leaving this field. The veterinary industry has one of the highest rates of suicide of any profession, and we want to protect the mental health of our veterinary community in sharing this information with pet owners of the Central Coast.

Please consider the following when corresponding with your veterinarian and their staff:

1. **Please be patient.** Due to a combination of popularity of pet ownership, the COVID pet adoption boom, and individuals leaving the job force due to insufficient income or need of childcare, the veterinary field is under more demand and challenges than ever. Many hospitals may not have openings available for non-urgent issues. Some practices may have wait-lists for new patients. There may be long waits at emergency hospitals. Staff are doing everything in their power to get your pet the care they need without sacrificing quality of care.

Bottom line: Please be patient if there is a wait, and plan ahead. If your pet is in need of a rabies vaccine next month, schedule your appointment now. If your pet needs a refill of medication next week, call now to get the process going. If your pet has an ear infection and you visit the pet ER, understand more critical patients are going to be triaged before your pet.

2. **We are not “in it for the money,” but we do still need to make an income.** Trust us - if we could treat your pet for free, we would. We are animal lovers and want to do everything we can to help any animal in need. However, veterinary practices are still businesses, and we need to cover rent, utilities, wages for staff, equipment costs, inventory, and hopefully bring enough income home to cover our own home mortgages, astronomical student loan payments, and childcare expenses.

Bottom line: Accusing veterinarians of being greedy or price gauging does not help anyone’s cause. We have committed our lives to serve the pet population and deserve to make a living, just like anyone else.

3. **Understand and plan for the medical costs of pet ownership.** Many pet owners are caught off-guard by the true price of services because the human health insurance industry shields us from the real costs of patient care. No one wants to deny care to an animal that needs it, but we cannot be held responsible for giving away free services for the entire community; this would put us all out of business. In addition, as technology improves and more effective/advanced services are offered, pricing will change. This is similar to any business. Remember that emergency services will cost more, as these facilities need to be staffed adequately 24/7 and maintain surgical and emergency equipment needed to help your pet when life-threatening situations occur.

Bottom line: Please invest in pet insurance plans, create a pet budget, and/or start a pet savings account.

4. All practices are different. Make sure you are in a good fit. What is it that you are looking for? If you are upset your veterinarian never has appointments available when you are off work, look for another practice with extended hours. On a tight budget? Look for low-cost alternatives, but realize you may be giving up some services offered at other practices. Looking for a specialty service? Be prepared to pay more for the expertise this involves.

Bottom line: Ask neighbors, friends, or family with similar views on pet ownership for a veterinary recommendation that aligns with your priorities. This will be more effective than turning to strangers on social media.

How can we as veterinarians and you as pet owners work together for the best care of your pets? If you are unhappy with the service you receive by a veterinary practice, by all means, please bring this to the attention of the team serving you -- respectfully. All-too-often team members are yelled at, threatened, and left in tears. Just as we make your pet's health a priority, we will no longer operate to the detriment of the mental health of our staff.

Appropriate ways of expressing dissatisfaction with a practice could include the following:

- Call the practice and ask to speak with the practice manager. Have an honest and respectful discussion. This is the most effective way to make your concerns known so they can be addressed or corrected.
- Write a respectful letter to the veterinary team if you are more comfortable expressing your concerns in writing.
- Simply decide to take your business elsewhere. The veterinary-client relationship is based on trust. If you do not have this with your current veterinary team, why not try another hospital?
- Please do not turn to social media to voice your frustrations and concerns. We would much rather work out any issues with you in person.

We appreciate you taking the time to review the above suggestions. We will continue to advocate for our wonderful community of veterinary professionals and hope you will, too.

Respectfully,

The Mid-Coast Veterinary Medical Association Board