



Happy Vet Visits

Just like any animal, even when healthy our dogs need to have regular trips to the vets/even dogs without medical conditions will still need general health checks for worm and flea protection and vaccinations, as well as neutering and spaying, We know that the types of experiences dogs have will influence their future behaviour, so if a dog has a bad time during a vet visit they're likely to be worried next appointment, but if they had a good time they're likely to be more comfortable in future.

Relaxing in the waiting room

The waiting room can be very exciting, scary and confusing so dogs will benefit from feeling that this is a good place to be, despite smelling strange and being full of other dogs as well as other species. Don't always expect them to stay calm, quiet as it can be worrying for them – unless of course yourself and canine companion have practised!

Teaching your dog to settle down calmly, no matter where they are, will make waiting times much more relaxing for everybody! Practice this at home, placing a lightweight blanket in your dog's bed when you do. You can bring the same blanket along to the clinic to help them know what to do here – it'll smell of home too!

Please contact our Dog School to learn how to make the settle mat MAGIC! Start at home when it's calm and quiet then, once your dog is getting the hang of it, practice in increasingly busier places so your dog will be 'waiting-room-ready'!

Helping your dog LOVE the clinic – and the things and people in it!

If your dog associates being at the vet clinic with tasty treats and good things happening, then there's no need for them to worry about it!

Popping in when it isn't busy as part of your normal walkies, just for a sniff around and a fuss or a treat (or two!) from the clinic team, will help your dog enjoy visiting and prepare them for the occasional time they need to be examined or receive treatment.

Think of every 'just for fun' visit as plumping up a large cushion of good experiences to fall back on should they ever need to visit when they're poorly! – top tip is to take your dog in and pop on to the scales, they get a treat, and you also can monitor their weight (amazing for both the vets and you as owners).

Learn to recognise what your dog is telling you, so you can reassure them, and help them feel safe!

The vet clinic can be a strange place – at the same time both exciting and scary – every dog will feel differently here and how they feel might also depend on a whole host of things, such as what's wrong with them, any exciting or worrying experience they had earlier that day, how hungry they are or whether they've met this particular vet before for example!

By watching and understanding your dog's behaviour you can manage their experiences and ensure these are as good as can be. You might be able to recognise a happy dog with their tail loosely swinging, eyes round, ears



floppy and tongue lolling out of a relaxed mouth, but signs of anxiety and fear can be very subtle, at least to begin with.

Signs that your dog is becoming worried can include panting and inability to remain still, visible dandruff or hair shedding, eyes wide with the whites showing, a closed, tight mouth, ears held backwards, a tense, lowered body with their tail tucked beneath them, leaning backwards and lifting a paw and blinking or turning their head away from something.

Dogs need us to respond appropriately when they're becoming worried and take steps to make them feel safe again! This could be really simple, such as leaving the room and allow the vets to examine them without us or waiting outside the clinic until it's time to see the vet if they're feeling worried or overexcited in the waiting room.

Teach our dog that being examined all over is okay!

Please see our 'Happy Handling' handout for more information.

Introduce strange things, like medicines and muzzles, slowly and in a fun way!

Use whatever your dog loves - treats, toys, a gentle fuss – to teach them that new things like ear or eye drops, tablets or flea treatments are okay and can mean good things are going to happen now!

Whenever you have to give your dog any medication, always prepare some extra special tasty treats ready to give them straight away afterwards, so that the new and potentially scary or uncomfortable thing always means that something lovely and yummy will happen right away.

If your dog is already worried about having medicine either applied to their skin or put into their food or mouth...

Be proactive and start to teach them that it's okay before they next need it. Ask your vet for an empty ear/eye drop bottle or flea treatment tube and start gently by just holding it in one hand, just as though you're carrying it without any significance for your dog at all, then giving them a treat with the other hand. Your dog needs to get used to you holding it and realising they don't need to worry about it in your hand at all!

Gradually build on this until you can hold it out towards your dog while giving them a treat with the other hand at the same time. All these times when they're just getting a treat and nothing uncomfortable happens to them are part of that cushion they'll have to fall back on when they next need medicine given to them!

You can slowly progress to touching them briefly with it while feeding them – you can see how this gradual approach teaches them not to be worried as soon as they see the medicine in your hand, even if it comes towards them and touches them!

If your dog appears to be worried or frightened at the vets – and becomes aggressive when being examined, you might benefit from professional support.



Dogs Trust provide lifelong behavioural support for all our adopted dogs. If you need help for your Dogs Trust Dog, please email: reception@dogstrust.ie

For more information about Dogs Trust, to make a donation or help us in our campaigns please call 01 8791000, write to: Dogs Trust, Ashbourne Road, Finglas, Dublin 11 or visit www.dogstrust.ie



If you are interested in Dog School training classes, please contact the team via [www. DogsTrust.ie/DogSchool](http://www.DogsTrust.ie/DogSchool)

The advice contained in this handout is of a general nature and is no substitute for specific behavioural or veterinary advice.

Registered Charity Number: 20057978