



## Choosing a Veterinarian – *How to know if they're a good match for you*

Helping our pets to have the best life possible, often means teaming up with a great veterinarian. Finding the perfect match goes a bit further though if you want to help not just your pet, but all those you can't adopt (but would like to!).

I've been taking my "Noah's Ark" of animals to the same veterinary practice for over 20 years. I appreciate their skill and attitude so much that I wish they'd take care of me sometimes! When I chose them, I really did my homework, as I knew I'd be bringing many family members to them for many years. I also tend to adopt a variety of pets....reptiles, mammals, amphibians, etc., so I needed a practice that would support my ever-growing family.

There are a few key questions which should be asked, when evaluating a veterinarian in particular, or an animal hospital in general.

- Do the pet hospital's days and hours of operation fit your schedule? It's always good to check this first, so you don't find someone you love, but could never find the time to see!
- When you walk through the door, is the facility clean? Does it smell pleasant? If one of their clients has an "accident", is it thoroughly cleaned up immediately?
- Is the staff responsive, from beginning to end? Are you greeted when you arrive or left to stand, waiting for someone to acknowledge you? Is the veterinarian interested to learn more about your pet, your needs and takes their time with the examination?
- Is everyone certified, including the vet techs and other staff workers? Is there meaningful training for other support staff?
- Does the practice have connections with a 24/7 emergency care facility, or can they recommend one in case of emergency? Do they know of specialists in the area for situations which are outside of their expertise? Would they willingly recommend them?
- Are written estimates provided for procedures which can be anticipated?
- Do they welcome a tour of their facility? For offices that have invested in great people, proper equipment and the latest technology, they typically love to show it off to prospective clients.

By the time you sift through these questions you should have a good feel for the place and the doctor. Trust your gut to tell you if they are a good match for your family.

For animal lovers that care not just about their own family members, but all pets, I've found there are a few other items to consider. These will really separate the good veterinary practices from the truly great ones. It's also a great way to use the "power of your purchase" to support businesses that provide this higher level of caring.

Bring up these topics with your veterinarian to really get a feel for where their heart is:

- Does the practice try to find homes for displaced pets? Most offices will have at least an occasional client that passes away, or for some other reason cannot care for their beloved pet. Great veterinary offices have a way to help find a home in these circumstances.
- Do they help out their local animal shelters? While some shelters are fortunate enough to have a veterinarian on staff, most do not. They rely on a local veterinarian to either donate their time or offer their services at a greatly discounted rate. If you find a doctor that helps out their local shelter, you've surely found a winner!
- Do they have a charitable fund which helps out clients with financial hardships? Some practices do have a fund that they can dip into for extreme cases. Other clients can donate into this fund, to help support pet owners faced with difficult decisions.
- Do they work with a separate non-profit to offer charitable services? They may also suggest you donate to a separate organization, such as the Veterinary Care Charitable Fund, which helps veterinarians to offer charitable services to clients facing personal hardships as well as animals rescued from abuse and neglect.

All these issues can be revisited periodically, to make sure the practice you are using is still the right one for you. As pets age, or new pets are added to the family, it's always a good idea to make sure your veterinarian is still the best choice for your growing family. It's also a great way to see if there are any new ways you can make life better for just not your pet....but all those you can't adopt!

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