



## Preparing Your Dog for a Veterinary Visit: A Fear Free® Approach

Visiting the veterinarian can be stressful for dogs, but with the right preparation, you can help reduce their fear, anxiety, and stress. Follow these steps to make the experience smoother:

### A Few Days Before the Visit

#### Travel Fear Desensitization, Handling, & Environment

- ☐ If your dog uses a carrier, leave it out in a familiar space with their favorite blanket or toy. Reward them when they explore or rest in it.
- ☐ For car rides, take short, positive trips with treats, praise, or their favorite toy to help your dog associate the car with fun experiences.
- ☐ Practice handling. Gently touch your dog's paws, ears, and mouth to get them accustomed to handling. Offer treats, praise, or their favorite toy to create positive associations with this interaction. **Please consult with us if you require help with this.**
- ☐ Introduce pheromones and a thundershirt if appropriate. Use a calming pheromone spray or diffuser (like Adaptil) in areas where your dog spends time, in their carrier, or in the car.
- ☐ Review basic commands if you've worked on this with your dog. Practice basic cues like "sit," "stay," and "calm" to help your dog feel engaged and prepared for cooperative care.
- ☐ If your dog experiences fear, anxiety, or stress at the vet let the hospital know in advance so we can prepare and assist you.
- ☐ Avoid loud noises, sudden routine changes, or stressful activities in the days leading up to the visit if possible.

### The Day Before the Visit

#### Setting Up for Success

- ☐ Provide mental and physical stimulation, such as a walk, playtime, or puzzle toys, to help release energy and reduce stress.
- ☐ Prepare comfort items. Gather your dog's favorite blanket, toy, or treats to bring along. Having familiar items can help soothe them during the visit.
- ☐ Familiarize them with the Vet Bag. If you're bringing medications or question lists, ensure they are included.
- ☐ Prepare their feeding schedule to align with your appointment the following day. **Consult with us if you are unsure how to best proceed.**
- ☐ **Bring their favorite treat(s).** Having a low-value and high-value treat can be helpful. We will have a variety on our end as well.

### On the Day of the Visit

#### Meal Planning, Emotional Prep, & Transport

- ☐ Withhold food (unless medically/behaviorally indicated) or align meals so that dog cat is at least moderately hungry. Otherwise stick to their routine.
- ☐ Exercise before departure. Take your dog on a calm walk to expend energy and allow them to potty before heading to the vet.
- ☐ Use a secured harness, carrier, or seatbelt attachment in the car. Reward calm behavior during the ride with treats or praise.
- ☐ Play soft, calming music or use white noise if your dog is nervous during car rides.

### Arriving at the Veterinary Hospital

- ☐ Enter calmly. Keep your dog leashed and close to you, avoiding interactions with other animals unless they are comfortable with it. **Delay entering the building if you see another pet in the reception area.**
- ☐ If your dog is nervous, create space between them and the waiting area activity. Ask the staff if you can wait in an exam room, your car, or outside.
- ☐ Reward calm behavior with treats and soothing words to reinforce positive experiences.
- ☐ Communicate with our staff. Let us know how your dog is feeling. We can adjust our approach to help your dog feel more comfortable.



*By following these steps, you can help make your dog's visit to the veterinarian a low-stress experience for both of you!*

