

Dog Safety at the Veterinarian: Waiting Rooms Not Worry Rooms



Karen Peak

The Safe Kids/Safe Dogs Project

Waiting areas at veterinary clinics are stressing for owners and animals. Here are a few tips to help lessen the stress and improve waiting room safety for all.



Just because your dog is friendly, does not mean the dog, cat, bird, iguana or human across the room is appreciative of his attentions. Your pacing dog may not be happy, his panting and pacing may be stress behaviors. Stressed animals are more likely to react negatively: keep your dog close for safety sake.

If there is a poorly managed dog near your pet, advocate for your pet and nicely ask the owner to control the dog. If needed, ask staff to address an out of control dog (staff may not see the dog from their spot behind a desk). If the staff fails to speak with the owner or the owner refuses to comply, tell clinic staff you will wait outside. After the appointment, ask speak to a manager. If this is happening to you, it is happening to others. Safety is part of proper care.



If your dog has fears (which may present as aggression), do not punish. He is letting you know he is stressed and you will worsen things. Instead, let the staff know you will be waiting outside or ask to wait in a quieter area. Call a trainer and learn how to prevent future issues without punishment.

Bring books or handheld games for your child. No matter how calm or cute a dog looks, keep your child away unless permission is given to visit. A loud, running, screaming child or even a calm one just wandering up to a dog adds to stress. Stressed animals are more likely to react.



This may be reproduced in its entirety for educational purposes. It may be used in part with proper credit given. This is no substitute for working with a trainer and was created to help owners think and open lines of dialogue with the people they seek for assistance. ©2011 The Safe Kids/Safe Dogs Project www.SafeKidsSafeDogs.com