

## Safety for Veterinary Staff Waiting Room not Worry Room



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*Veterinary clinics are stressing for most pets which increases the chance the animal will react negatively. If you are worried about offending and possibly losing a client, always ask yourself: "Is it better to lose a client or lose a lawsuit?" Here are a few tips for clinic staff to encourage a safer experience.*

In moments, an incident occurs. Never assume owners will act responsibly. If they did, there would be no need for this handout. Staff observation and intervention in the lobby is crucial to safety. Post a set of lobby rules regarding pets and children.



Ask clients to keep pets close on lead or confined to a crate. No dogs or cats should be walking loose or at the end of a lead. If needed, hand the client a kennel lead and request control or keep a couple carriers on hand for smaller animals.

Aggressive and fearful dogs need a safe/quiet place to wait, even if it means waiting in the car with the owner. Recommend a good trainer who uses conditioning and desensitizing. Punishment will worsen the situation.

Encourage owners to visit as part of socializing (ask they call first to make sure the clinic is not overly busy). A positive association with the clinic helps lessen stress. Ask and even partner with local trainers to cover preparing dogs for visits in classes.



Children who are loud, running about, going up to strange pets, etc, create an unsafe and scary environment. Consider making coloring sheets, word searches and other easily reproduced, quiet activities available. Do not hesitate to intervene and offer these quieter activities. When you see a child behaving, thank the child and parent. Positive reinforcement works wonders!



Ensure your staff is trained in the newest concepts of animal safety, animal body language and handling, this will help reduce incidents. Dr. Sophia Yin, applied animal behaviorist, has some wonderful resources specifically designed for animal professionals.

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