

Getting Everyone On Board

Talking to Your Staff:
Staff training with an emphasis on increasing perceived value for feline preventative care.



Staff meetings

With fewer feline visits compared to canine visits, your staff may be out of practice when dealing with cat owners and their pets. Alerting the staff to a change in business strategy can help refresh information about standard practice procedures, increase employee engagement and positively affect the bottom line of the business.

- Schedule a staff meeting as soon as possible.
- Identify the cat champion who will help lead the efforts for the Have We Seen Your Cat Lately? (HWSYCL) program.
- Include all staff who interact with clients and their feline pets.
- Review your Feline Preventative Care Guidelines (FPCG). See: [“Establish Feline Preventative Care Guidelines”](#).
- Request feedback and handle concerns or objections; the goal is promotion of all services and products in the practice’s FPCG.
- Discuss the use of benefit statements to emphasize the importance of feline preventative care and, most importantly, regular feline preventative care examinations.
- Request photos of staff members’ cats for Cat-Friendly Practice efforts. See: [“Becoming Cat Friendly”](#).

Client benefit statements

Benefit statements address clients’ most pressing educational needs and desires. For example: why the recommended service or product will improve and maintain the health and well-being of his, or her, cat. Sharing these benefit statements with staff can help all practice members communicate the importance of feline healthcare. Create your own benefit statements that express, in your team’s own words, the benefits of your FPCG.

Sound bites:

Use sound bites such as these to demonstrate why annual preventative care check-ups are critical to safeguard their cat’s health:

- The health status of an individual cat can change in a short period of time.
- Ill cats often show no sign of disease.
- Early detection with frequent health checks and screening allows for earlier intervention and can improve disease management and quality of life.
- More frequent visits allow for better client education about preventative health as cats age.
- More timely diagnosis and treatment can reduce expenses.

Example benefit statements:

Importance of the Feline Preventative Care Examination

The preventative care physical examination is the centerpiece of all preventative care programs. It's important that all staff are prepared to overcome client objections. Recognizing the need for regular preventative care visits is key to the success of the HWSYCL program.

"<<Client Name>>, the best way to keep <<Pet Name>> happy and healthy is with a preventative care examination. With cats, it's really hard to know when problems are in the early stages because unlike dogs, it's hard to notice changes in their behaviour. Some examples are changes in weight, litter tray habits or any vomiting."

"Many people think that because their cats live indoors that they're not susceptible to diseases, and that's just not the case. Did you know that 40 percent of all cats have significant dental disease by age 4?"

Additional benefit statements/ talking points:

- A cat's health status can change in a short period of time. Every year of your cat's life is the equivalent of a human aging by between 4 and 10 years. See: ["Establishing Your Feline Preventative Care Guidelines"](#) tab for cat life stage chart.
- Cats are able to hide signs of sickness. Unlike dogs, it's very hard to notice when they're ill.
- Early disease detection allows for earlier treatment and can improve quality of life.
- Frequent visits allow us to provide thorough education to help keep cats healthy through each stage of life.

Overcoming client objections regarding cat transport difficulties

The benefits of a preventative care program may not be enough to get cats into your practice for a visit. Overcoming objections regarding transportation is a top concern. Here are some ways your practice can convince owners that the effort of transporting their feline friends is worth it.



Ask client:

1. Cat's name and the client's needs for their cat.
2. Cat's age, breed, lifestyle, any known health issues, other pets in household.
3. Previous preventative care and most recent vet visit.
4. Refer to cat by name.
5. Communicate the talking points/benefits of the feline preventative care examination and FPCG.
6. In known canine client households, enquire if there are cats in need of healthcare.

Provide tips for cat-friendly transport and ease the stress of travelling to the clinic:

1. Enquire with the client if they have previously experienced difficulty transporting their cat for vet visits.
2. Recommendations:
 - Leave the carrier out and make it a place to play or feed.
 - Steps to carrier training (entire process can be done in as little as a week if needed):
 - Put a towel or small blanket inside and place carrier in cat's preferred area of the house.
 - Put treats in the carrier and begin feeding just outside of the carrier until cat is comfortable with the new feeding location.
 - Move food dish just inside carrier until cat eats full meal without poking head out of carrier repeatedly to check surroundings (indicates high comfort level).
 - Continue to move food dish further inside until cat eats and rests comfortably in the carrier, the cat may even choose to sleep there.
 - Begin closing the carrier door from time to time and allowing cat to rest in closed carrier for short periods at first, gradually lengthening them until cat is comfortable in the closed carrier.
 - Take cat on periodic car rides associated with a positive experience.

If the cat is not already conditioned to the carrier or car rides:

1. Put soothing, synthetic feline pheromones or clothing the cat associates with a favourite person in the carrier before transport.
2. Cover the carrier during transport.
3. Cats de-stress more quickly in the dark.
4. Avoid motion sickness by withholding food before travel.
5. Consider if prescription medications are needed.

Recommendations for the feline consult room experience

Having a good consultation room experience is just as important for the owner as for the cat. Here are some tips for ensuring both the client and patient receive the best care and experience from your practice.

First: Take a good history

- Use open-ended questioning: "How has <<Cat Name>> been doing since the last visit?"
- Complete a risk assessment and use a checklist to gather additional important information:
 - Cat's environment at home.
 - General behaviour.
 - Previous surgeries.
 - Medications.
 - Elimination habits.

Feline preventative care examination

- Observe cat from a distance to assess:
 - Breathing patterns.
 - Gait.
 - Stance.
- Measure body weight, body condition score and vital signs and compare with prior examinations to detect changes.
- Collect a basic set of lab and other diagnostic test results for comparison from visit to visit.

