

## **My Approach to Veterinary Care**

### **Dr. Katrina Estes, DVM**

My goal is to provide a very high service level to my Clients while applying my knowledge and training to deliver compassionate veterinary medical care for their pets. My approach strives to blend optimal health care with discretionary use of Clients' financial resources. In all cases, my staff and I work diligently to ensure that each Client and pet has an experience that exceeds their expectations. What I provide for my Clients is what I would expect if I were treating my own pet. It is as simple as that: I treat each pet as if it were my own.

#### **Appointment Length**

I spend more time with each patient than typical veterinarians. Most clinics will run on a 15 minute standard appointment schedule. The majority of my appointments are scheduled for 30 minutes or more. I have found that there just is not enough time to perform a thorough examination, history, and diagnosis when confined to a 15 minute window. While my scheduling guidelines reduce the number of cases I can see in one day, I find this extra time crucial for learning more about the pet and his or her environment and for uncovering subtle problems. Appointment length is an important component to consider when choosing a veterinarian.

#### **Thorough Examinations**

Initially, some Clients are concerned that I do not focus solely on the particular problem for which they brought their pet to me or that I perform a thorough physical exam on an apparently healthy pet. This likely stems from their experiences with other veterinarians (or physicians) who may only spend a brief time with them to address a specific issue. Occasionally, a seemingly healthy pet may show small early signs of a more serious health condition, easily missed in a hurried appointment. Typically, the earlier we can find and address a particular problem, the easier it is to correct – saving your pet unnecessary suffering and saving you money. Spending a few extra minutes learning about your pet, discussing the pet's history, and performing a thorough physical exam may provide just the clue I need to proactively keep your pet healthy.

Of course, in most cases we find that pets are perfectly fine and no further action is necessary. But I sleep better at night knowing that I have gone over each patient in detail in an attempt to find any potential problems that may adversely affect their health and well being.

#### **Quick Response Time**

I strive to return all phone calls within one business day. I or my staff returns lab test and other results as quickly as possible, typically within one business day of the sample being submitted to the lab, and return results within hours in more critical situations. You will see comments in my testimonials section about me seeing a Client in the morning and then calling them the same night with lab results or other updates. While this can make for some long days, I owe this level of commitment to my Clients and their pets.

#### **“Whatever it Takes” Attitude**

When I leave at night, I walk through the hospital one last time to make sure everyone staying the night is comfortable, stable, and has clean bedding. It is not uncommon for me to swap out dirty bedding myself at 8 pm for a pet that has soiled its bedding after close. At least once per month, I find myself dragging my husband back to the hospital at midnight to administer medication to a sick animal that shouldn't wait until morning to receive the next dose. On rare occasions, I have taken pets home with me that I felt might not make it through the night if left unattended, waking several times throughout the night to check fluids, medications, and

general well-being. I just felt better knowing that I was watching over this animal as it worked through a critical phase of its recovery. This is what I would hope for if my pet were in similar circumstances. (Evidently, these situations have become a status symbol with some of my loyal Clients, earning the nickname “Dr. Estes Sleepovers”, a highly coveted event for both pet and Client!)

### **Exercise Discretion with Clients’ Financial Resources**

Like human medicine, veterinary medicine has enjoyed an explosion in technological advances fueled by research and collaboration, providing an arsenal of tools available to me for treating and diagnosing a wide range of ailments in my patients. Cancer treatment, joint replacement, advanced imaging techniques - just about any innovation available to human physicians is also available to me as a veterinarian.

One important difference exists, however. Unlike human medicine, where peoples' lives are spared at almost any cost, veterinary care does not have a robust insurance system to finance the required procedures: Clients are responsible for paying the full amount of any procedure.

In an ideal world, I would have carte blanche to order any test or procedure I wanted on the slightest chance that it may uncover an abnormality. In the real world, I realize that Clients will be paying for my services out of their own pockets and that I must exercise diligence in providing high quality care without unnecessary expense. Some Clients are willing to spend any amount required to fix whatever ails their pet, some will not. As a pet owner myself, I certainly understand this reality. In any case, I carefully examine and rule out possible causes in their most likely order, using those tests and procedures best suited to answering my particular set of questions before moving on to the next most likely cause.

Sometimes, there is nothing more I can do. If a procedure is required and it costs a certain amount to deliver it, the Client must decide whether to proceed or not. However, where options do exist, I work with my Clients to find ways to provide their pets with the care they need within the resources available.

### **Summary**

As I work through each case with my Clients, I constantly ask myself, “What would I expect or want if this were my pet?” This simple question helps me treat my Clients and their pets in a very intuitive way that often surprises new Clients with its thoroughness and attention to detail. I am human and not infallible, but I work very hard to keep every detail of your pet’s care as it should be, as if it were my pet on the exam table.