

## **Tips for communicating effectively with veterinary professionals and Information on understanding your pet's health needs**

- 1. Be Open and Honest:** Provide your veterinarian with accurate and detailed information about your pet's symptoms, behavior, diet, exercise routine, and medical history. This will help the veterinarian make an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan. This is especially important, even in a sensitive situation.
- 2. Ask Questions:** Don't hesitate to ask your veterinarian any questions you have about your pet's health, treatment options, medications, or procedures. Understanding the reasoning behind recommendations can help you make informed decisions. This also demonstrates to your vet that you are engaged and usually they are more than happy to expand the discussion!
- 3. Listen and Follow Instructions:** Pay attention to your veterinarian's recommendations and follow their instructions carefully. This includes administering medications as prescribed, following dietary guidelines, and scheduling follow-up appointments. If your vet does not regularly provide a written summary, especially when a pet is sick or has had surgery, ask for one!
- 4. Express Your Concerns:** If you have any concerns or doubts about your pet's treatment plan, don't be afraid to voice them to your veterinarian. It's important to have open communication to ensure the best care for your pet. This is closely associated with clear and kind dialogue from both sides!
- 5. Understand the differences between consultations and referrals if your vet recommends one or the other:** The main difference between consultations and referrals is the level of involvement of the specialist and the location of the patient. The family veterinarian continues to manage the patient while receiving advice and recommendations from the specialist following a consultation. With a true referral, the patient is often taken to the specialist's practice, and the specialist takes on the responsibility for managing the patient's care moving forward for that condition.
- 5. Stay Engaged:** Stay engaged in the veterinary visit and discussions with your veterinarian. Take notes if needed and ask for clarification if there is anything you don't

understand. Especially if your pet needs a consultation or referral, be sure you understand why another veterinarian is being invited to participate in your pet's care.

6. Be Respectful: Treat veterinary professionals with respect and trust their expertise. Remember that they have your pet's best interests in mind and are there to help. The cost of veterinary care certainly varies, especially between primary care and specialty care, however ask for options along a spectrum or range that can accommodate your financial boundaries.

7. Follow Up: After a visit to the veterinarian, follow up as needed and update them on any changes in your pet's condition or behavior. Regular communication is key to maintaining your pet's health. It is especially helpful to agree on expectations for level of communication or "who does what" particularly in the triad of care between you and your pet, your family vet and a specialist.

By practicing effective communication with veterinary professionals, you can ensure the best possible care for your pet and build a strong partnership with your veterinarian.