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CHOOSING VETERINARY CARE

Choosing a veterinarian to entrust with the care of your pet is an important decision that should not be based solely on a number in the yellow pages or the cheapest prices. There are many important rules to consider when looking for veterinary care - facts that you have a right to know! Not all veterinary hospitals or veterinarians are alike and unless you know which questions to ask or what to look for, it is difficult to determine which hospital/veterinarian will best take care of you and your pet.

At the Lodi Veterinary Hospital, we want you to be an informed pet owner. To facilitate this, we have designed a guideline to assist you in evaluating a veterinary practice. If you are new to our hospital, we encourage you to call and set up a time to tour our facility and discuss any questions that you may have regarding our services. If you are already a client, please take the time to review the questions below, ask if you would like any additional information, and evaluate us. Let us know how we are doing!

We are very proud of our full service facility. Our doctors and staff are committed to practicing the highest quality veterinary medicine. Your pet's health is very important to us, and we feel it is a privilege to be trusted with their care as your veterinarian.

1. SERVICE

- A. Convenience - Hours? Location? Scheduling - can you get an appointment in a reasonable time? Are there evening and Saturday appointments? Flexibility?
- B. What other services are provided? (Examples: boarding, bathing/dipping, grooming, assistance with flea control, behavioral consultations, obedience classes, puppy classes, miscellaneous pet products and dog foods available)
- C. Are house calls available upon request? Are there additional charges?
- D. Are you allowed to visit if your pet is hospitalized?
- E. Is educational material available?
- F. What efforts are made to keep drug costs down?
- G. Do the vaccinations and heartworm tests include an exam by a doctor?
- H. Are the routine surgeries discounted to help keep them affordable?
- I. Emergency services - Is a doctor available 24 hours a day? Will that doctor have access to your medical record and be trained/experienced in handling companion animal emergencies? How do you reach that doctor after hours?

2. DOCTORS

- A. Do they specialize in small animal medicine? How much experience do they have? How many doctors are on staff? What are their special interests?
- B. Are they accessible? Do they return your phone calls? Do they follow-up on medical care after treatment?
- C. Can they communicate with you in terms that you understand? Are they compassionate? Professional?
- D. Are they established? Can you establish a long term doctor-client relationship?
- E. Who will be there if your doctor is on vacation?

- F. If there are multiple doctors - Do they communicate? Do they solicit second opinions from their colleagues?
- G. Do they seek referrals/second opinions in difficult medical cases if needed?

3. FACILITY

- A. Is the hospital clean, sanitary, and organized overall?
- B. Housing - Are the patients comfortable? Who makes sure they are fed, watered, exercised, and monitored? Are there measures taken to prevent the spread of infectious diseases?
Is anything done to reduce the stress of boarding?
- C. Are tours of the facility encouraged?

4. FEES

- A. Are there written medical care plans (estimates) and/or signed consent forms?
- B. Are fees openly discussed? What are the payment options?
- C. Are the charges reasonable and in line with the services provided?
(Keeping in mind that cheapest is not always best and you usually get what you pay for)

5. RECORDS

- A. Are adequate records kept to provide an accurate medical history if needed?
- B. Is the accounting system accurate - keeping track of charges and payments?
- C. Are reminders sent out for vaccinations? Heartworm testing? Dental rechecks?

6. DIAGNOSTICS

- A. What specialized diagnostics are available? (Ex: endoscope, X-rays, ultrasound, electrocardiogram, blood chemistry machine)
- B. Are the tests performed in the hospital or are the samples sent out? What is the turn around time? (Time to get the results) Can results be obtained quickly in case of emergency?

7. SURGERY

- A. Is there a pre-surgical exam done prior to anesthesia? Any pre-surgical lab work?
Is there a discharge appointment to discuss post-surgical care?
- B. What type of anesthetic is used? Who monitors the anesthesia and recovery?
- C. What equipment is available to assist in monitoring?
- D. Is the hospital equipped to handle emergencies?

8. STAFF

- A. Are they pleasant? Attentive to your needs? Available?
- B. Are the Veterinary Technicians licensed animal technicians who have attended school and obtained a degree?

These are examples of questions you may wish to ask when choosing a veterinarian or evaluating your current providers. We hope this information helps you in developing a relationship with a veterinarian that can provide you with the quality of care you desire.