

Help Your Dog Love Visiting the Veterinarian

To prevent your dog from shaking and whining every time you pull into the veterinary clinic parking lot, start training him to show him that the veterinarian's office is the greatest place in the world when you first bring him home. This training obviously works better starting as a puppy, but any dog can benefit from having positive experiences at the veterinary office.

Follow these steps for a dog whose tail starts wagging when you reach the veterinarian's office:

- Talk to your veterinarian about bringing your dog in for a few quick visits. Most offices allow this as long as you don't abuse the privilege.
- Spend a few minutes in the reception area feeding your dog treats, then leave. The more often you can do this the more effective it will be, but even once a month can be effective.
- After your dog has had a few positive visits just receiving treats, have him get on the scale, feed him some treats, and then leave.
- Once your dog has had a few positive visits at that level, have the veterinary technicians feed him treats. Ask if you can take him back in an examination room. Feed him treats in the room and then leave.
- Repeat these steps until your dog struts into the veterinarian every time.

Some tips to remember:

- Always leave on a positive note. If your dog has a bad reaction, or is frightened by something, find an area where he's willing to take treats—even if it's outside the office. Don't leave right after your dog has reacted or been frightened by something.
- If your dog is afraid, wait until he calms down a little before leaving. He should offer you some type of relaxing behavior, such as sitting, sighing or shaking off, at some point in the visit. When he does that, reward him by leaving.
- If your dog is extremely fearful, you have more work ahead of you. Consider feeding him his meals there a couple of times per week.
- An extremely fearful dog might not be able to enter the building during the first few sessions. If he starts shaking when you pull in the parking lot, start by rewarding him for calming down while still in the car. Work up slowly to going inside the building.

Your Local APDT Member:

