



p8

Admin Cat:

Firm—but fair—judge of your social media policy

Stop clipboards

from scaring patients

3

Dr. Steve Ettinger

shares his worst trait

5

Got \$1,000?

Where to spend it on hospital design

6

Get what you deserve:

Why you need to negotiate *now*

12

Pick your path

from these 10 ways to attract new clients

14

Hot button:

When the holidays hurt

28

OWN? Me?

Don't look so shocked! You could make a great veterinary practice owner. Take our quiz to find out ...

p9



A close-up photograph of a man and a light-colored dog lying in bed. The man is on the right, smiling with his eyes closed, wearing a dark t-shirt. The dog is on the left, looking up at the man. The background shows a striped pillow.

I haven't needed an alarm clock
since Brody came along.

And I wouldn't want it any other way.

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idexx.com/brody

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IDEXX
LABORATORIES

Slippery when wet 3 options for spill-prone areas in your hospital

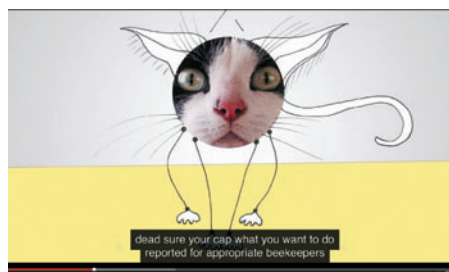
Our hospital design experts are ready to help you get a grip on flooring. See samples on video and find out which inexpensive option is recommended by Heather Lewis, AIA, principal at Animal Arts in Boulder, Colorado. To watch, scan the QR code or visit dvm360.com/slippy.



Scan to watch now!

DON'T STRESS OUT YOUR CAT

Share this video with your cat-owning clients to make sure they are aware of the many ways they may be inadvertently contributing to their cats' stress or anxiety levels. To watch, share or embed the video on your practice website, head over to dvm360.com/catstress.



Scan to watch now!

Video: Rescue rewards

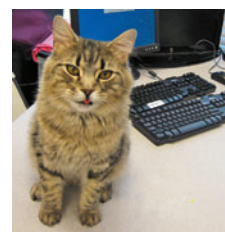
Our sister magazine *dvm360* takes you into Cavanaugh Pet Hospital in Blue Springs, Missouri, where Furry Kids' Refuge brings "Moustakas," a 6-year-old maltese, to be treated on his way to adoption. The Cavanaugh team talks about how they maintain a positive relationship with local shelter and rescue groups, the benefits to their practice and why they think providing shelter medicine—though sometimes unpredictable—is a worthwhile and rewarding priority at their practice. Watch it now at dvm360.com/cavanaugh.



We want your great photos

Whether it's a picture of your pet, a snapshot of your team on the job or at play or an amazing patient near-and-dear to your heart, we want to see it!

Send us your favorite images and we may feature them in upcoming photo galleries on dvm360.com. Use the submission form at dvm360.com/gotgreatphoto.



Get social ... with the dvm360 social media toolkit

In case you missed it, head over to dvm360.com/socialtoolkit for expert ideas on how to get started with social media, finesse your current strategy, avoid common mistakes and manage it all in just one hour per week.



This month, we asked hospital design experts what to do with \$1,000—see their tips on page 6. And check out the answers from our own team, below.

BRENDAN HOWARD

Save it.



ADRIENNE WAGNER

Go somewhere I've never been.



RYAN KRAMER

I'd build some DIY subwoofers that hit 16hz at 120db.



DR. HEATHER LEWELLEN

Something boring—pay bills.



ANNE BELCHER

I would go to Hawaii for a week.



JESSICA ZEMLER

I would upgrade my dog door! It lets out a lot of warm air in the winter and cool air in the summer.



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The business of client and patient care

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To give practicing veterinarians the business tools, insights, ideas and inspiration they need to fuel their passion for practice; run a well-managed, profitable business; enhance client loyalty and satisfaction; and maximize their patients' well-being.

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Fear Free tip: A solution for noisy clipboards

This veterinary hospital quiets offending clicks with a simple piece of tape. *By Shari Lyons, DVM*

Our clinic uses clipboards to hold the exam charts for each patient during an exam. The clipboards have a little sliding piece that can be placed on a hook. One day I was in the exam room with my reactive patient and realized the sliding piece made a click every time I moved my clipboard. (Actually, the patient alerted me to this problem!) So, immediately, all clipboards were scotch taped to eliminate the click.

Now that the offending click is gone, the entire staff realized how obtrusive it really had been.

*Dr. Shari Lyons and staff
Zionsville Country Veterinary Clinic
Whitestown, Indiana*



>>> The clipboards have a hanger that clicks when moved.



>>> Dr. Lyons and her staff taped down the hangers, quieting the click.

Trouble keeping it all together?

This practice uses rubber bands to keep everything in one place for doctor approval. *By Dawn Gabel*

When we are getting charges run for surgical procedures for the DVMs to look over we also get take-home medication ready as well. It was always hard

to keep the two together. On a clipboard I use a rubber band to secure the pill bottle to the clipboard in the hole provided at the top so the charges and meds are together and cannot get

separated in the process from treatment room, to the doctor's office to the front desk area.

*Dawn Gabel, Veterinary assistant
Abilene Animal Hospital
Abilene, Kansas*

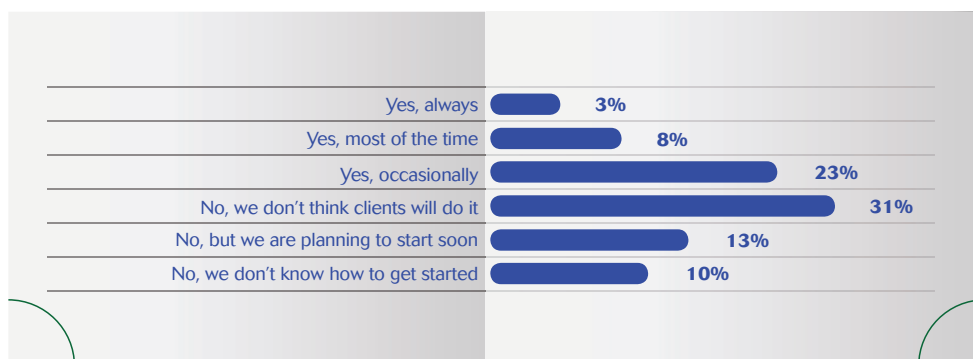
{THE DATA CENTER

This monthly column covers market data, industry trends and more. For more, head to dvm360.com/datacenter.

In the October edition of the Veterinary Hospital Managers Association's *Insiders Insights*, 31 percent of practices surveyed say that they don't think that clients will accept forward booking for routine appointments, and 11 percent don't know where to start. Some practices are seeing success scheduling these appointments in advance, like dentists do. For tips, visit dvm360.com/forwardbooking.

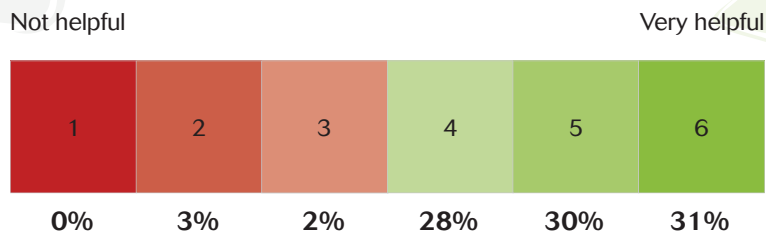
The Trone Accessibility Survey found that 31 percent of pet owners surveyed, out of a sample size of 478, found informational brochures their veterinarian provided very helpful, with no pet owners saying they weren't helpful at all. For free forms, visit dvm360.com/clienthandouts.

Does your practice forward book preventive healthcare or wellness plans?*



*Note: Numbers do not equal 100 due to rounding.

How helpful are medical brochures to clients?

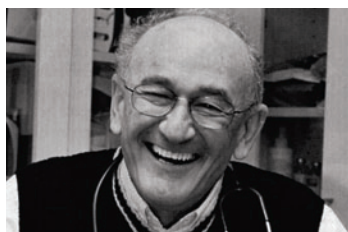


I don't know: 5%

Inside the mind of Dr. Steve Ettinger



What you'd ask and what you'd never think to ask a leading voice of veterinary medicine. Join us for "Fingerprints," a series of Q&As with veterinary luminaries. *By Marty Becker, DVM*



Dr. Steve Ettinger, DACVIM, DACVIM/ Cardiology, has more than 40 years' experience, and published an internal medicine book—the Textbook of Veterinary Internal Medicine. Pets' lives have been saved by Dr. Ettinger's work. But what makes him tick? To read an extended version of this Q&A, visit dvm360.com/fingerprints.

Where were you born and raised?
Queens, New York, and Honesdale, Pennsylvania

When did you first know you wanted to be a veterinarian?
Ever since I was in junior high school. I spent my summers in a farm community in Pennsylvania. My original intention was to be a large animal cow vet.

Tell us about a patient that shouldn't have lived but did.
My own Newfoundland named Katie. She was born with multiple congenital defects, eyes,

stifles, heart, etc. She's 11 now and still has a sweet and gorgeous disposition.

What is your greatest strength?
Tenacity and willingness to work hard.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?
Sometimes I can be too judgmental of people.

What do you consider the most overrated virtue?
My success.

What is your motto?
Every man should have a dog to adore him and a cat to ignore him (or bring him back to reality)!

What do you know now that you wished you'd have known before you entered veterinary school that would have caused you to live your life differently?
I didn't know there was a world of finance, even within medicine. I went to vet school for the love of animals and medi-

cine, and only later realized how important it was to know about management and all of the other factors that relate to development and success.

If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about veterinary medicine that would help pets, people and the profession, you would ...

Develop a system to pay our professionals as they deserve to be compensated and find a way to make good veterinary medicine financially feasible.

When and where are you the happiest?
When I attain a goal that seems insurmountable.

Describe a perfect day as a veterinarian.
Any day in practice when the one difficult client—who we know will be a problem—cancels!

*Veterinary Economics Practice Leadership Editor Dr. Marty Becker is a speaker, TV personality and author. He practices at North Idaho Animal Hospital in Sandpoint, Idaho. **VE***

What can I do with \$1,000?

Got some extra cash at the end of the year? Use it to spruce up your clinic.



Heather Lewis

Heather Lewis, AIA, NCARB, of Animal Arts in Boulder, Colorado, offers these tips:

- > A new **paint job** can do wonders. Use light neutral colors, but not white, which is generally too stark. Consider painting dark woodwork and doors to lighten and modernize the look.

- > When signage looks dated, it brings down your entire image. A **new sign** with modern colors can make a big difference and attract new clients.

- > If you have square, clipped, urine-soaked hedges out front, it's time to ditch them for **softer landscape**. Look at native grasses and something that blooms. Ask your local garden stores for plant selections that will fit these criteria but still hold up near your front door. Buy your staff pizza on the weekend and plant the new plants yourself.

- > Buy new **pendant lighting** fixtures to install over your reception desk.

- > Buy **new lobby furnishings** from an inex-

pensive retailer such as IKEA. If they're fun and colorful, they may look much nicer than the worn-out versions you currently have.

- > Invest in a **professional cleaning**—down to the cracks in the woodwork. Then have the floors stripped and waxed.

- > This one's free! Go on **clutter patrol** and get rid of everything you don't need. Clutter weighs on the mind and communicates disarray. A nice, neat hospital will win clients over even if it's not the youngest hospital.



Wayne Usiak

Wayne Usiak, AIA, of BDA Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has this input:

- > First, **walk your property**, camera in hand. Photograph your parking lot, front entry, reception area, waiting room and exam rooms. Then study the photos. Make a list of everything worn, broken, messy or out of date. Prioritize what you want to address with your funds.

- > **Clear weeds and debris** outside, cut the grass, trim the hedges and prune the trees. Sweep the parking lot. Does it need new stripes?

- > **Paint** renews and updates old walls, and accent colors give everything a fresh new image.

- > **Reface the front of your reception desk** with laminate or tile to make it look new.

- > A new **plastic laminate** surface on all the counters up front, from reception to exam rooms, can be done within a \$1,000 budget. Often the new laminate can be field-installed right over the existing material.

- > Change all **light bulbs**—even if they work. Fluorescent bulbs rarely match in color output as they're replaced over the years, giving off an eerie light. Buy color-corrected natural daylight bulbs to replace the old.

- > Look at your doors and door hardware. Do doors and frames need restaining or paint? Replace those old doorknobs with **lever sets**. Lowe's and Home Depot carry light commercial sets that work fine in a veterinary facility. **VE**



A new sign, like this one at Woodhaven Veterinary Clinic in Edmonds, Washington, can do a lot to boost your hospital image and even attract new clients.



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To order, contact your distributor or Virbac representative, or call 800-338-3659. Visit www.virbacvet.com/dental to learn more and download valuable dental resources.

References: **1.** Clarke DE. Drinking water additive decreases plaque and calculus accumulation in cats. *J Vet Dent.* 2006;23(2):79-82. **2.** Clarke DE, Kelman M, Perkins N. Effectiveness of a vegetable dental chew on periodontal disease parameters in toy breed dogs. *J Vet Dent.* 2011;28(4):230-235. **3.** Montgomery RE. Aqueous chlorhexidine digluconate extracts from CHX Hextra Rawhide Chews, 2002. Data on file, Virbac Corporation. **4.** Montgomery RE. The salivary peroxidase system. *Dentistry Matters.* 1995;7:1,3. **5.** Gorrell C, Inskeep G, Inskeep T. Benefits of a "dental hygiene chew" on the periodontal health of cats. *J Vet Dent.* 1998;15(3):135-138. **6.** Hennet P. Effectiveness of an enzymatic rawhide dental chew to reduce plaque in beagle dogs. *J Vet Dent.* 2001;18(2):61-64. **7.** Midda M, Cooksey MW. Clinical uses of enzyme-containing dentifrice. *J Clin Periodontol.* 1986;13:950-956. **8.** Pader M. *Oral Hygiene Products and Practice.* New York: Marcel Dekker, Inc.; 1988:318-329. **9.** Montgomery RE, inventor. Proteinaceous animal chew with dentally therapeutic cation. US patent 6,074,662. June 13, 2000. **10.** Montgomery RE, inventor; Oraceutical Innovative Properties LLC, assignee. Proteinaceous animal chew with dentally therapeutic cation. US patent 6,737,077. May 18, 2004.

Shaping the future of animal health

Am I ready to be a **practice owner?**

If you have to ask, it's "no." Just kidding! Take the quiz.

By Byron Farquer, DVM, CVA, and Doyle Watson, DVM, with help from David McCormick, MS, CVA

Editor's Note: This is adapted from Your Veterinary Practice: Buying, Selling & Merging (Simmons Educational Fund). Join us here in the pages of Veterinary Economics next month for a beginner's guide to buying a practice.

Everyone struggles with tough buying decisions sometimes, and one of the biggest ones veterinarians will face in their life-

time is buying or starting a practice of their own.

You know there are several ownership options available: buy an existing practice, start a new one, buy in as a partner or start as an associate and buy in over time. You'll be influenced by your current job, level of motivation, start-up capital and other resources. But your very first step is to decide whether you're ready.

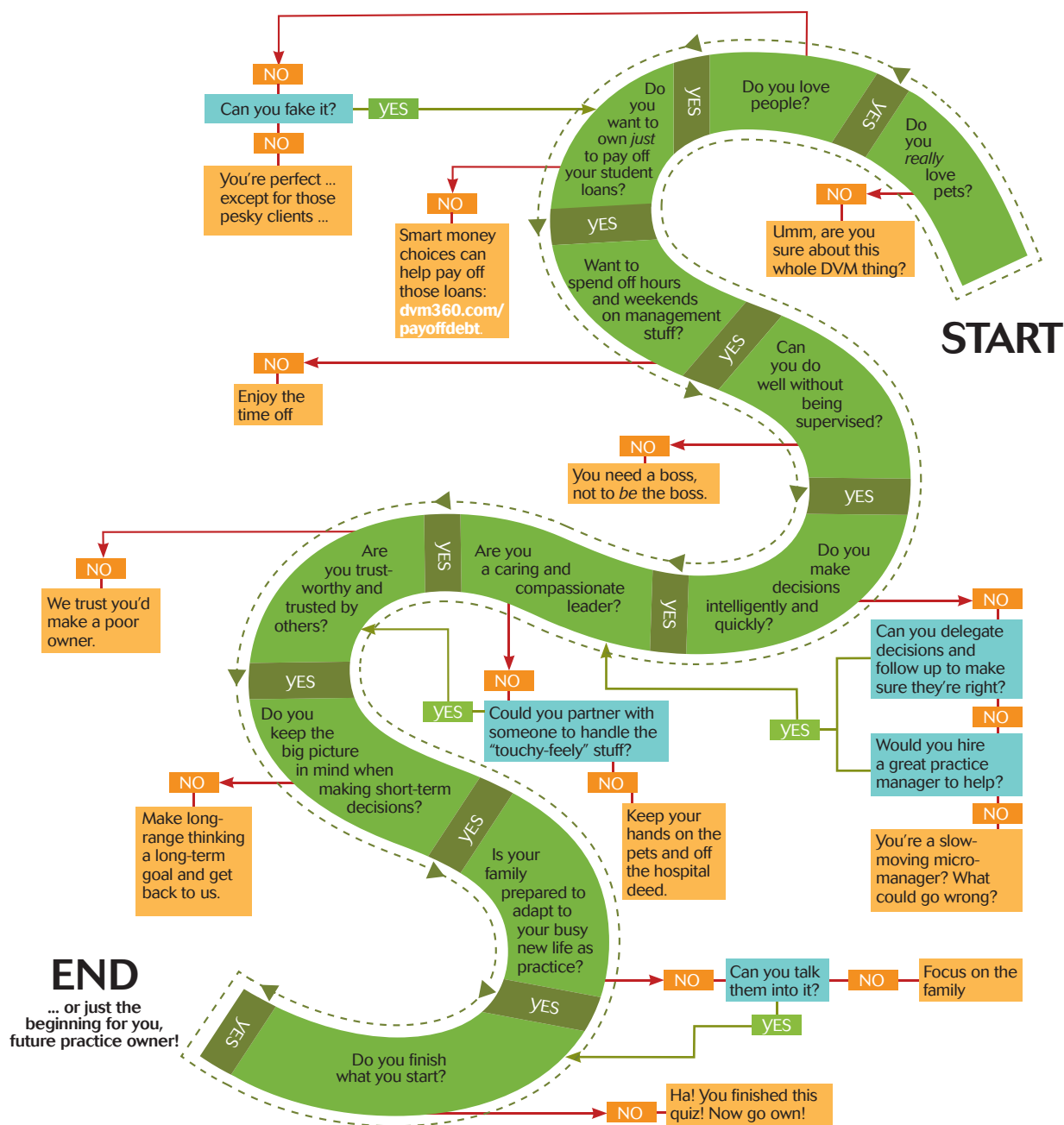
That's where the following quiz comes in ...

>>> Whether you're hungry to own a practice or frightened by the prospect, take a short quiz on the next page to see if you're ready ...



The road to owning

Start to finish—find out whether you're talented and skilled enough to take the wheel of an animal hospital.



You can see from the frank questions at left that the decision to buy or start a practice is not to be taken lightly. There are probably many issues you hadn't considered.

The goal here is not to evaluate your level of commitment; that's for you to do. Rather, you should consider these questions, and then use your answers to do a self-evaluation you share with your mentor, spouse and trusted friends.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. After all, you're venturing into a prestigious and difficult field that will demand more of your time, energy,

money and other resources than you ever thought possible. What's more, practice owner pay isn't that of a Wall Street CEO.

That's not to say being a successful veterinarian is a thankless job; it's not. It's a rewarding one—personally, professionally and often financially. Just make sure you've got all the right reasons to venture into practice ownership. **VE**

Dr. Byron Farquer, Dr. Doyle Watson and David McCormick work for the veterinary consulting group Simmons and Associates.

Want to delve more into practice ownership?

Head to **dvm360.com/ready2own** for top 10 articles on the topic.



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FOLLOW  

Why *you need* to start negotiating—*now*

Sick of paying more and getting less? It's time to put your fear aside and ask for what you want. *By Joan Freesh, MS, DVM*

I was born in Panama and lived there for 18 years. In that culture, negotiation was the norm. I watched my parents and other people negotiate for everything, not just with street vendors, but in stores. I observed and I learned.

When we moved to the United States, my father bought me my first car. I watched him walk away from the salesman

to negotiate for him because he doesn't like doing it. I've taught my sons to negotiate. I even helped an associate buy a new car. Because I'm a good negotiator, I usually get what I want.

What are we afraid of?

Most of us are not taught the art of negotiation. It's typically viewed as impolite, and many of us fear it and the consequences. But big businesses negotiate all the time—it's an accepted practice. So why are we afraid of the process? Why do we avoid it? Are we afraid of confrontation? Are we afraid to lose?

I stumbled into my first big negotiating experience before I opened my practice, when I was seeking financing. As I went from bank to bank, I found out that each one offered different services for free. So I played the banks against each other. As soon as I learned that they would negotiate fees and services, a world of possibilities opened. Suddenly, opening a new practice became a big negotiation party. I finally selected a bank that offered the most in free services at the lowest cost.

So what can you negotiate for?

Rental space is negotiable. You can negotiate the number of months you receive free rent while you build out the facility—up to six months. Rents that start lower and slowly increase each year during the first three to five years are also negotiable. Ask for any kind of deal and see what the lessor will agree to do. The worst that can happen is you'll get a “no.”

Veterinary equipment, drugs and supplies are almost always negotiable. Play distributors against each other—they'll play along. The sales rep will either reduce the price to make the sale or take it out of their commission. Everything is fair in business, so expect cooperation, not resistance. I've never had a vendor get mad at me for negotiating, nor were any of them surprised. I do suspect some wished I hadn't asked for better pricing, but it's my right to do so.

If you're buying laboratory equipment, ask for free supplies and test product. Ask for additional warranties and repair services. Ask for a loaner at no

>>> Not just for street markets. Did you know banks will often let you negotiate lower fees and free services to get your business? You have nothing to lose by asking.



at the dealership, only to be called back to receive the price he wanted. I stored all of these observations for future use.

Like my father, I have become an excellent car negotiator—and I enjoy doing it. I too have walked out of the dealership. In fact, my husband sends me in

charge if the equipment breaks. When I converted to digital radiography, I asked for a credit for my old processor. I got \$100. When I bought a new autoclave, I got a \$400 deduction from the manufacturer and a \$200 discount for donating the old autoclave to charity—and the distributor set all this up.

Computer hardware and software plus services are also negotiable. Property is always negotiable. Construction companies will negotiate. Loan interest rates and insurance may be negotiable. The list goes on. Everything is negotiable.

Ask and you shall receive

All you have to do is ask. More often than you think you'll be rewarded with lower prices and free or discounted products and services. But if you never ask, you'll never receive a better deal. I have never seen a downside when I've opened a negotiation. Plus, you'll gain respect and a reputation as a good negotiator—and that reputation will serve you well. Often a vendor will start negotiating once they understand how you operate. Or a vendor will look for discounts for you.

So develop an attitude and an ability to negotiate. Lose your fear. Never apologize for asking for a better deal—no one will expect you to do so. Be friendly. Be firm. Be assertive. Look the salesperson directly in the eyes. I can assure you that the worst that will happen is someone may say "no" and you'll have to pay the asking price. But most of the time you'll get a "yes." And soon you'll find that negotiations are really easy—and rewarding. **VE**

Dr. Joan Freesh owns St. Louis Cat Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. Send comments to ve@advanstar.com.



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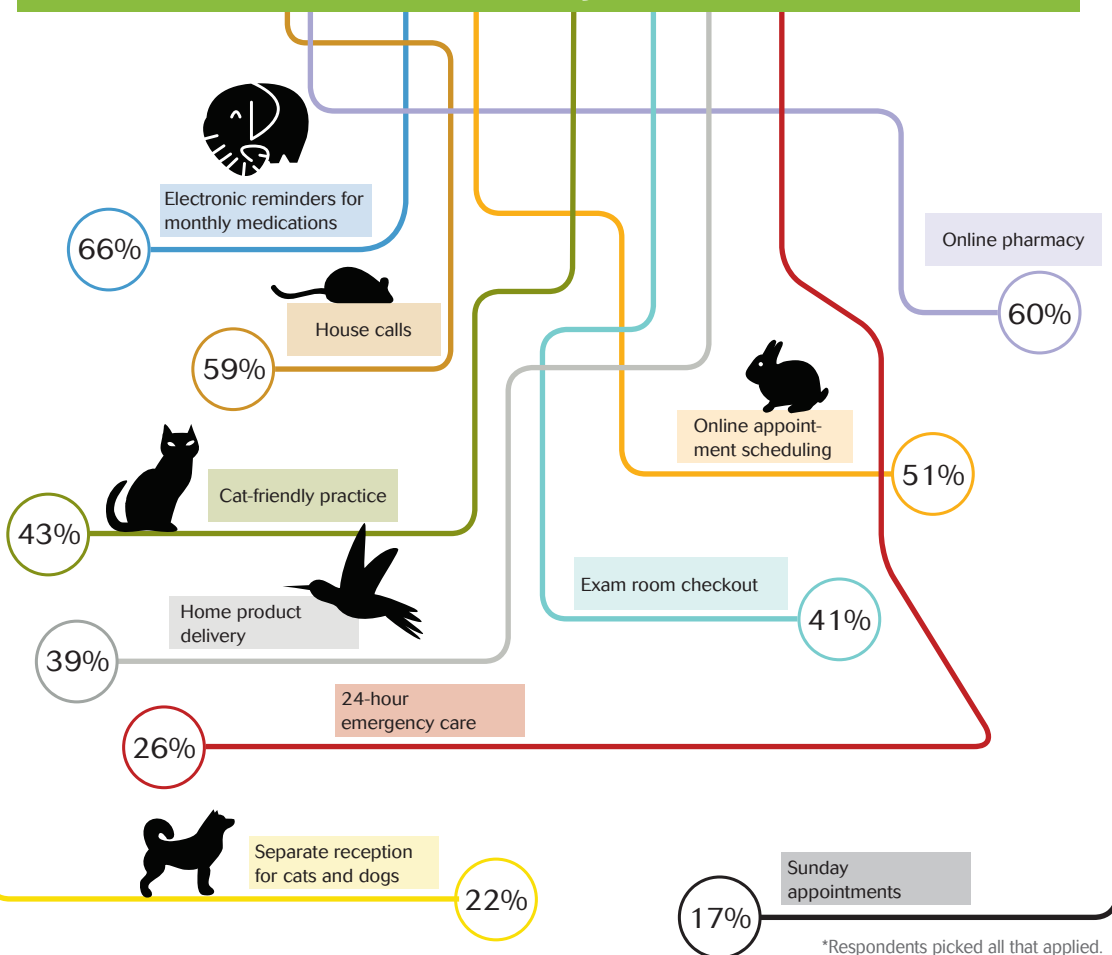
PICK YOUR PATH to promote your practice

Exclusive data from Benchmarks 2014 reveals which client-pleasing amenities practices are using to attract clients.

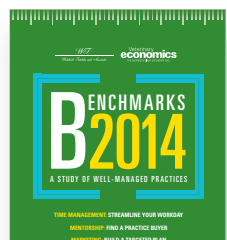
You're nuts if you don't add some of these services. Discover the ones clients are chirping for at dvm360.com/clientpicks.



How does your practice make it convenient to use your services?*



*Respondents picked all that applied.



There's a book for that

Get the complete 2014 Benchmarks data, including tips to manage your time, design and carry out your mentorship programs, market your services and products and much more at dvm360.com/2014benchmarks.



Are you ready for happier, better satisfied clients? Choose your adventure by selecting a service to add and promote it in your practice today. You'll find links to useful how-tos and advice to launch these services at dvm360.com/addaservice. [ve](#)

Top tools of 2014

December 2014 | dvm360.com/toolkit

client compliance



A special monthly package designed to help boost client compliance and make it easy for your team to educate pet owners about regular pet wellness care.



13 WAYS to **increase** client compliance



The best of the best

This year the dvm360 toolkit brought you and your team a number of tips, tools and ideas on topics including:

- >> Flea and tick control
- >> Heartworm prevention
- >> Dental care
- >> Ear and skin conditions
- >> Pain management and much, much more.

In this issue we chose the best tools to create a special edition devoted to keeping clients in-the-know. Can't get enough? Go to dvm360.com/compliancetoolkit for more.

Your client compliance tools:



iPad tools

Offer clients need-to-know info on tick control

p03



Handouts

- >> The life cycle of a tick
- >> Myths about Lyme disease

p03



Conversation tree

Tips to discuss chronic pain management with clients

p04



Sample script

What to say to help clients complete a diet trial

p05



Video

Give clients the facts about flea allergy dermatitis

p06



Structured planning

A how-to chart to brush up your practice's dental compliance campaign

p07



Social media

Posts and tweets on the best puppy and kitten care

p08

13 WAYS

to **increase** client compliance

If you feel your compliance numbers are lacking, try implementing these steps to boost client compliance.

To get your compliance numbers up, follow these 13 strategies at your practice:

1 Begin at the beginning. Focus on the family-pet bond as you make your plan.

2 Practice high-quality medicine or low-cost medicine—not both.

3 Train, train, and then train some more. Internal communication among team members is as important as external communication with clients. Your training essentially comes down to answering two questions: “How do we do things here?” and “How do we talk to clients about how we do things here?”

4 Get over your reluctance to ask clients for money. According to the AAHA compliance study, fewer than 10 percent of clients will decline a veterinary recommendation based only on cost.

5 Track your compliance efforts. What gets measured gets done.

6 Get everyone on the team involved. Make compliance and improved patient care fun.

7 Uncover “compliance enhancers” that you’re already using or that are easy to add to your repertoire.

8 Use written, phone, or e-mail reminders.

9 Conduct a compliance review of a pet’s medical record before the client arrives for an appointment.

10 Make specific recommendations—oral and written—for the best interest of the pet.

11 Make sure you stock recommended products, such as thera-

peutic diets, in your practice so they’re readily available to clients.

12 Schedule the next follow-up appointment before the client leaves.

13 Consider using scripts on the phone with clients. For example, “We’re reviewing our medical records and we’ve noticed that Butch hasn’t been in for 10 months. I’m sorry that we allowed this to slip through the cracks. We’d like to get Butch back on track with his healthcare. Could we schedule an exam for him this week?”





For the tick prevention tools your team needs for effective client compliance, go to dvm360.com/ticktoolkit.

CLIENT COMPLIANCE

Give clients the low-down on Lyme disease and tick life cycles

Have clients read these informational handouts to better illustrate the life cycles of these pests and the myths associated with Lyme disease—and encourage them heed your recommendations for prevention.



To get DIY tips for a tick-free backyard, myths about Lyme disease, and more tools to educate clients, use the tick control client modules on the dvm360 iPad app. Download now at dvm360.com/ipadapp.

Client handout: 7 myths about Lyme disease

Consider this list of common myths about Lyme disease and learn the facts to protect your pet:

Myth 1: I don't live in a wooded area, so my pet can't get ticks.

Even if you think your pets don't visit areas where ticks are commonly found, such as wooded areas and places with high grass or brush, remember that ticks are actually able to live out their entire life cycle within your home. Woodpile litter or inside a home provide the perfect environment for ticks to survive.

And when your pets are inside, this improves the environment for a tick's survival because ticks need readily available hosts.

Myth 2: I haven't seen any ticks on my pets, so they aren't at risk.

You may find ticks on your pets once they're engorged and visible to the naked eye. However, the tick's life cycle includes two stages, larva and nymph, where they're not as easily noticed. While you can remove adult ticks from their pets, you can't be sure that ticks haven't already laid eggs on the pets, continuing the tick infestation. Ticks in the larva and nymph stage shed blood meals to grow into adult ticks, and the pet's coat is the perfect place to grow.

Myth 3: I've only found a few ticks on my pet, so I'm sure he's fine.

The phrase "it only takes one" fits perfectly to describe the risk of Lyme dis-

ease. While you may diligently check for and remove ticks, it still only takes one tick bite for a pet to contract Lyme disease. When you find ticks on your pet, there's a good chance the pet has had other ticks you've missed. And even if you only find one tick, your veterinary team wants to protect the pet's well-being by testing for tick-borne diseases in the months following the bite.

Myth 4: I apply a flea and tick preventive to my pet monthly, so I don't need to worry about Lyme disease.

That's fantastic! Just remember, no product guarantees absolute protection. Depending on the pet's habits and environment, you may need to take additional steps to prevent Lyme disease. For example, because each product is different, the doctor may recommend different application schedules, and depending on the product and the pet, the veterinarian may also advise reapplying the product if the pet has been swimming or bathed, or it's a good idea to check with the veterinarian if your pet gets wet after an application. And the doctor may also suggest routine testing for tick-borne diseases and vaccinations against Lyme disease.

Myth 5: During the colder seasons, I don't need to worry about applying flea and tick prevention.

Because most insect populations decrease once cold weather sets in, you may assume ticks will follow suit. In reality, ticks are much harder—and their population even peaks during the fall season. Ticks can also survive through the entire winter even when frozen in the ground. And occasional

thaws during winter may release these frozen ticks for another blood meal. For the best protection, continuously apply preventives throughout the year, including the colder months.

Myth 6: My pet was treated for Lyme disease, so now she's cured.

Once a pet is diagnosed with Lyme disease, the doctor usually prescribes an antibiotic. Once the antibiotic course is finished, this doesn't guarantee the Lyme disease is cured and the pet is no longer at risk of experiencing Lyme disease symptoms. The infection in many pets is widespread, and in some cases it may take multiple courses of the antibiotic to successfully treat the Lyme disease. When the doctor diagnoses Lyme disease, he or she may require quantitative tests after treatment to ensure complete treatment. Your pet should also continue to be routinely screened for tick-borne diseases every year.

Myth 7: My pet has already contracted Lyme disease, so he can't receive a Lyme disease vaccination.

Pets that have been treated for Lyme disease run the risk of reinfection. So it's important to continue applying preventives and check your pets for ticks. Another way to prevent Lyme disease is to administer Lyme disease vaccination. Although there are more benefits to giving the vaccine before exposure occurs, such as with puppies, adult or seropositive dogs can receive the vaccination to help prevent the pet reinfection.

Source: Clara Miller, CVT

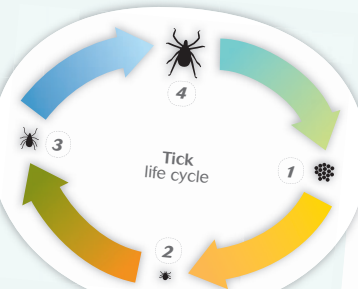
LIFE CYCLE: Ticks

Ticks are second only to mosquitoes in the number of diseases they transmit, which is why it's so critical to prevent ticks from attaching to—and feeding on—pets and people in the first place. Understanding the tick life cycle and the behavior of these pesky parasites can help keep them in check.

Here's a breakdown of the tick life cycle from egg to adult:

- 1. Egg.** An engorged female tick can lay up to several thousand eggs in sheltered environments (out on a host).
- 2. Larva.** The six-legged larval stage hatches from the egg within weeks to months, depending on environmental conditions. Larvae remain on the ground or on low vegetation waiting for a host, which is usually a bird or small mammal.
- 3. Nymph.** After feeding on a host for several days, the engorged larva drops to the ground and molts to an eight-legged nymph. The nymph then finds an appropriate host and feeds for several days to a week.

Adult. Once the nymph has engorged, it drops to the ground and molts to the eight-legged adult, which then must find a third host to complete the cycle. Ticks can survive in less-than-ideal environmental conditions. This is why it's so important to use year-round parasite protection.



Copyright Animal Parasite Council



SAMPLE CONVERSATION TREE:

How to discuss *chronic pain management*

“Pet owners don’t want their pets to suffer, so we rarely encounter resistance to our pain management recommendations,” says Robin Downing, DVM, Dipl. AAPM, owner of Windsor

Veterinary Clinic and The Downing Center for Animal Pain Management in Windsor, Colo. She recommends this conversation tree to help pet owners understand their pet’s pain.

Client: How do you know Fluffy’s in pain?

You: Remember during her exam, how we touched and moved Fluffy in very specific ways? That shouldn’t have bothered Fluffy. But she flinched, squirmed, and even cried out, which told us Fluffy is painful and signaled where Fluffy’s experiencing pain.

Client: How can I tell when Fluffy’s in pain?

You: Monitor Fluffy’s behavior during her usual activities. Behavior changes, such as getting out of bed slowly, are red flags that should prompt us to reexamine her. Also monitor Fluffy’s stamina on walks, her willingness to go up and down stairs, and changes in her sleep pattern.

Client: Now that we know Fluffy is painful, what’s next?

You: First, we will review the results of Fluffy’s blood work with you. We always screen our patients for any underlying medical problems before we prescribe a new medication. We want to make sure the medicine is appropriate based on the blood work results. We also want to make sure we have a baseline in case Fluffy has a reaction to any medication.

You: Second, we’ll discuss the medications we chose to prescribe, including the dosing schedule and any potential side effects. I’ll also provide you a written copy of this information.

You: Third, we’ll talk about simple changes you can make at home to make Fluffy feel more comfortable, and I’ll answer your questions. Then we can schedule Fluffy’s next recheck. At that appointment, we’ll make any appropriate adjustments to her medications or her daily routine. So now, let’s discuss Fluffy’s blood work...

Once you’ve finished your conversation with the client, make sure to follow up with a call, email or note that offers any information you promised. Then invite them to call with any additional questions or concerns they have.



Pain management is good medicine *and* good business. For more tools to help clients understand pets’ pain, head over and check out dvm360.com/paintoolkit.



Dermatology cases are tough on pets *and* their loving owners. For tools to help pets' skin and ears plus much more, visit dvm360.com/dermatologytoolkit.

CLIENT COMPLIANCE

Sample script: Help clients complete a diet trial

When searching for the cause of atopic dermatitis, don't let clients unknowingly sabotage their pets' diet trials. Explain the reasons behind the food eliminations and the importance of their strict at-home compliance.

you: A food allergy may be what's causing your pet's skin problem. To find out what food or ingredient is the culprit, we're going to need you to commit to the diet trial. Can you do that?

CLIENT: But why can't I just switch Charlie to another brand of pet food?

you: That wouldn't work because many pet foods include the same ingredients. Besides, it may not be Charlie's dog food that's causing the problem. It could be anything—like table scraps, treats or the flavoring in his heartworm medication or toothpaste. That's why you need to follow this diet exclusively and make sure all family members and friends know that he's following a special diet. The trial won't work if the diet's not followed as directed, which means Charlie will be uncomfortable for an even longer time.

CLIENT: What if I forget and give him a treat?

you: Make a note of any slip-ups and adverse reactions, and bring them in for your follow-up visit in two weeks. And don't get discouraged. Diet trials take time and work. You'll most likely have to change a lot of your routines. For example, you may want to keep Charlie out of the kitchen so he doesn't eat any dropped food. If you normally hid his pills in food, you'll need to hide them only in the prescribed diet now. Like I said, we need you to be committed. It may take six to eight weeks before you see any improvement in Charlie's skin, but his welfare is well worth the wait.



Fleas can wreak havoc on a home. Keep flea control top of mind for clients with the tools available at dvm360.com/fleacontroltoolkit.



The facts about FLEA ALLERGY DERMATITIS

Give pet owners need-to-know information about flea allergy dermatitis, one of the most common allergic skin diseases in dogs and cats.

Though it's rare these days to encounter a pet owner who isn't at least a little familiar with fleas, could your clients recognize the signs of flea allergy dermatitis (FAD) in their dogs or cats? Since FAD is one of the most common allergic skin conditions in pets, it's important to give pet owners the information they need about this itchy, uncomfortable condition.

This video, which discusses the top facts about FAD, does just that—use it to enhance your practice's exam room education, share it on your social media pages or embed it on your practice's website. To watch it now, head over to dvm360.com/FADfacts.



Watch it now

Get your 5 FAD facts fast—just scan the QR code below with your mobile device.



PLUS—get the handout

If video isn't your thing, not to worry—we've also provided the same information in the form of this pet owner handout. Download it now at dvm360.com/FADfacts.





Proper pet dental care is key to a lifetime of good health. Find more dental care tools for your team and clients at dvm360.com/dentalcaretoolkit.

CLIENT COMPLIANCE

Brush up your **DENTAL COMPLIANCE CAMPAIGN**

A great way to generate an action plan for marketing your dental compliance campaign is to review the status quo of your client education, says Bash Halow, CVPM, LVT, and partner at Halow Tassava Consulting. Halow says to identify the great ideas you already have in place (your “Crowns”), “Cavities” or areas that need immediate attention, “Polish points,” meaning opportunities for

improved reach-out, and the “Starting-to-smell bad” areas to keep your eye on.

Take a look at this sample chart, below, to get started. Then head over to dvm360.com/dentalcare-toolkit for a blank chart to fill out at your next team meeting.



EDUCATION POINTS	CROWNS	CAVITIES	POLISH POINTS	STARTING TO SMELL BAD
Website	Search engines love us!	We have no dental education web page.	Opportunity to create a dental blog page that could double as a source of client handouts.	We are appearing in fewer search results for ‘veterinary dentistry.’
While the client waits in the lobby	Clean, comfortable and not too loud.	The little client education we have on dentistry is not branded to our practice and isn’t reflective of our practice’s specific expertise in preventive oral health.	Opportunity to build an interactive tool or game about pet dental health for kids to play. Gets the whole family thinking about dentistry and keeps kids occupied.	More and more of our clients have their heads buried in their cell phone. It’s more difficult to grab their attention.
Technicians	Really believe in the value of preventive dentistry.	Too few are allowed to participate in our client education.	Opportunity to enrich the role of veterinary technician and give them more job satisfaction.	Not allowing our techs to function on a higher level selects for lower performing technicians over time.
Veterinarians	Dedicated and huge advocates for our clients.	Some believe that our dental prices are too high so they don’t recommend the service effectively.	Since they are so well loved, if veterinarians spent more time talking about dentistry, we would bond more clients to the practice.	Some of our veterinarians are increasingly concerned that all we ask them to do is sell stuff.

It's important for puppies and kittens to start on the right track. Find more educational tools at dvm360.com/pupkitten.



Posts and tweets about puppy and kitten care

Spread the word to pet owners about proper care for their new puppy or kitten with these social media posts.



DYK? Certain breeds are more susceptible to ear infections. Find out if you should be on high alert with your puppy or kitten and let us teach you how to clean your pet's ears.

Fact: Young pets can be microchipped as early as 6 to 8 weeks of age. Call and set up an appointment to get your new love chipped as soon as possible!

Pondering which treats to give your puppy or kitten? Ponder no more! We can hook you up with samples and coupons for goodies that are actually good for your pet.



Bringing home a new puppy is exciting -- and a bit overwhelming. Let us help! Come in & get a new #pet adoption kit. #petcare #pethealth

Not sure what to feed your new little kitten? We have free diet samples to get her off on the right foot. #pet #petcare #pethealth

ATTN new puppy & kitten owners: Pick up your complimentary adoption kit! It's packed with samples, handouts & more. #petcare #pethealth

Feeling frustrated with Facebook? Not sure how Twitter can be of service to you? Not to worry—we're here to help your practice get the right message out to clients on key pet healthcare topics like puppy and kitten care.

By serving up a mix of facts, statistics and reminders, you're encouraging your clients to join in the conversation—and learn something, too!

Head over to dvm360.com/puppykittencare to get your hands on these—and more—Facebook posts and tweets for your practice's social media pages. And for more ways to customize your message to clients on a variety of pet topics, visit dvm360.com/socialmediatoolkit.



It's all about those pets

Ensuring that your clients understand your team's recommendations and help carry out their pets' necessary care is crucial for long-term health. For more compliance tips and tools, go to dvm360.com/compliancetoolkit.



Use your mobile device to scan the QR code at left and send your first tweet about puppy and kitten care.

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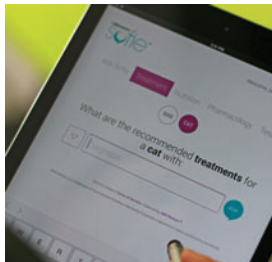
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Voice-activated clinical database

Some LifeLearn clients are testing a beta version of LifeLearn Sofie, a system created to leverage the collective intelligence of content providers and practices. With this language-processing system, veterinarians simply ask Sofie a question and Sofie uses the cognitive computing capabilities of IBM Watson to scan hundreds of thousands of pages of medical resources to return relevant, objective, evidence-based treatment options tailored to the patient.

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Brakke Consulting Oncology report

A new study from Brakke Consulting offers a look into veterinary cancer. The study, Cancer in Dogs and Cats, provides information on the incidence of cancer in pets, examines how cancer is diagnosed and treated in veterinary medicine, and offers estimated costs for treatment. The report reviews the FDA-approved cancer treatments that are now on the market. New and developing veterinary cancer products, including therapies and diagnostics, are also presented in the report.

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Customer service app

PetZam has introduced a new app and website using live video to connect pet parents to their veterinarians for one-on-one, real-time advice. Clients, utilizing their mobile phone, can show their veterinarian the exact health situation and receive immediate advice regarding further medical attention. The service is a pay-per-session model and augments a veterinarian's existing practice.

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Profit Solver from Zoetis uses a unique, patented and scientific method to make practice-specific recommendations using an individual practice's cost data rather than national or regional benchmarks. This financial tool measures labor rates as well as costs for overhead, materials and inventory via time-in-motion studies. From there, Profit Solver determines which services are profitable and which are not, providing the data practices need to make confident, smart pricing decisions.

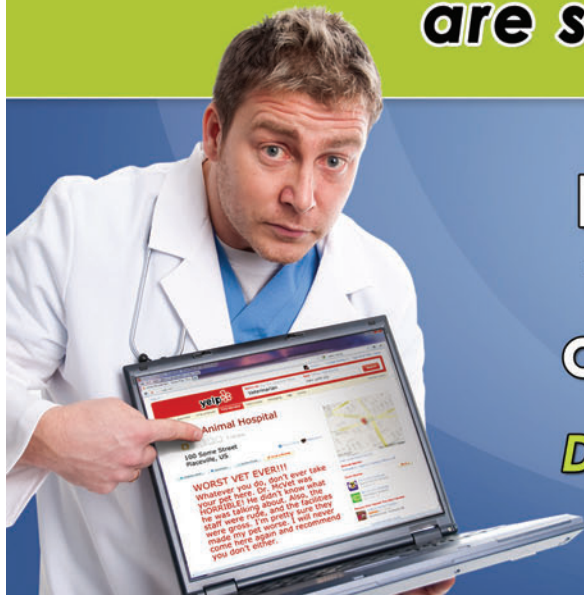
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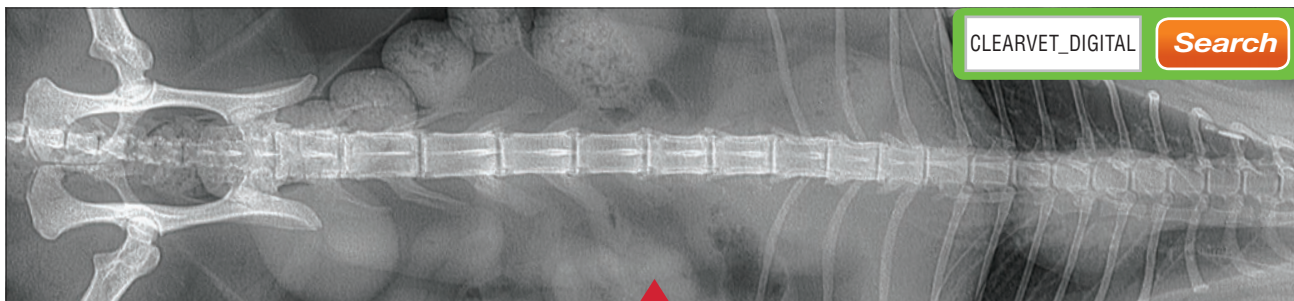
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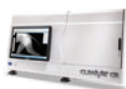


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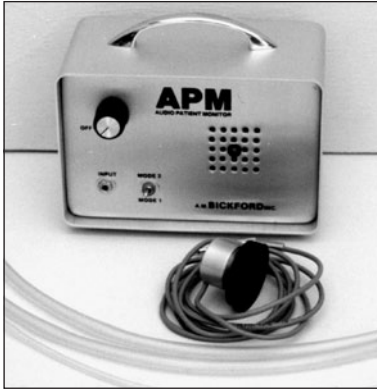
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Continued from page 16

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When the *holidays hurt*



Brendan Howard, editor of *Veterinary Economics*
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Everyone can help as holiday stress and high expectations buffet the vulnerable: Just talk and listen. *By Brendan Howard*

Like Dr. Jessica Vogelsang, who wrote here last month (“Let’s pull each other back from the brink,” November 2014), I was left sad and empathetic when news broke of Dr. Sophia Yin’s suicide. Since adolescence, I have struggled with anxiety and depression. I know how a successful, brilliant person like Dr. Yin could think about ending her own life—and then do it.

So, forget business, and let’s talk about life. Right now I want to raise a red flag in practices nationwide.

For many of us, holidays mean warm hugs, family dinners and gifts from the heart. For others, the holidays mean tearful memories of those who’ve died, stressful contact with family members we’d prefer to keep at arm’s length, and high expectations from family, from society and from yourself: “You’re not happy? You’re not enjoying yourself? What’s wrong with you?”

What can we do? Care for ourselves and others, be generous of spirit in judging others’ pain and be willing to reach out and help, even if someone is too scared, too hurt or too

proud to ask for it. Here’s a little advice from Jill Harkavy-Friedman, PhD, VP of research for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, on recognizing and learning to help yourself or others with depression and suicidal thoughts:

Warning signs

When people are depressed, visible warning signs include:

- > down mood
- > irritability or lack of interest
- > changes in sleep or appetite (either up or down)
- > low energy
- > feelings of worthlessness, failure and/or humiliation
- > talk about suicide or not wanting to be around anymore
- > increased use of alcohol and other substances.

Sometimes the changes are hard to see if you’re not looking, so it’s helpful to engage in a mental health check regularly for yourself and your family, friends and even co-workers.

“If you’re concerned about someone, ask how they’re doing and whether they’re feeling all right,” Harkavy-Friedman says. “Let them know you’ve noticed a change or are concerned. Asking about

suicide will not make someone suicidal if they do not already have those thoughts. Usually people feel relieved if you are respectful and compassionate.”

Professional counselors also can help, she says. They have the education and resources to help people solve life problems and mental health conditions.

In a crisis or emergency, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Crisis workers are trained to help are and they are engaged because they want to save lives.

Resources

For more, visit dvm360.com/mentalhealth for an evolving list of resources, including:

- > A heartfelt letter—a bit of a pep talk—from a *Veterinary Economics* reader on the topic
- > Videos with former practice owner and now-speaker Dr. Steve Noonan on depression and what helps him
- > More resources about suicide and talking to someone you’re worried about.

Be safe this holiday season. Don’t be rough on yourself or others. And remember, if you’re hurting, you’re not alone. It’s time you reached out for a helping hand. **VE**

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