

## The Right Vet for Your Pet

Ever considered laser surgery for your eyes? I've often wondered why so many people pick the lowest-priced clinic to have this type of surgery. Really, you only have 2 eyes, while the cheapest may very well be the best, there are other considerations to be made. Same goes for selecting the right vet for your pet. In today's economy, cost is a big consideration. But you need to make certain you are getting value for your hard-earned money. Here are a few things to think about when picking a veterinary hospital.

1. **You should feel like ALL staff members have your pet's best interest at heart.** A veterinarian should always perform an exam before vaccinating your pet or scheduling a surgery. A pet should not be vaccinated if there are underlying illnesses present. Make sure the hospital you choose conducts an exam before vaccinating and during any visit. The vet should look in eyes, ears, and mouth; listen to heart and lung sounds, and touch/feel the entire body.

**Pain medication should never be an option.** Have you ever heard someone say a dog doesn't feel pain like we do? How do they know? Your rule should be, if I would feel discomfort from this, so will my pet. Would you have a vasectomy or hysterectomy and go home without pain meds?

2. From a simple greeting and TLC when you arrive, to the type of care your pet receives in the exam room, you should feel that you are getting the best care for your pet. **You should leave visits from your veterinary office feeling like you and your pet had a positive experience and you know more about how to care for your pet.** Are you clear on how often and long medications are to be given, and when you should bring your pet back for follow up and routine care? Do you know what to do and who to call in case of an emergency after hours? A caring veterinary staff makes sure that your pet will get the care he needs after leaves the building.
3. A dog's sense of smell is 100 more acute than ours, if you smell it, so does he! A veterinary hospital should be clean and sanitized. The waiting and exams rooms serve as a window into the rest of the hospital. If they are clean, odor-free, and tidy, the remainder of the hospital should be as well. You expect your physicians' office to be clean, expect the same for your pet.
4. Friends and neighbors are good sources of referrals for vets, but be sure you ask those who have the same level of commitment to their pet as you do. Many veterinary hospitals have websites that can be visited prior to an in-person visit. The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) is an inspection and certification program that veterinary facilities submit to voluntarily. If an animal hospital is accredited by AAHA, it means that they meet standards of excellence in all the areas of medicine in which they practice. To learn more about AAHA, and get a list of area AAHA-certified hospitals, visit [www.aahanet.org](http://www.aahanet.org).