

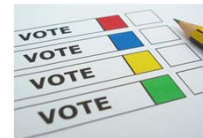
Win-Win: The Value of Shelter/Private Veterinary Practitioner Collaboration



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Poll question!

Which area of practice do you most identify with?

1. Private practice exclusively
2. Shelter medicine or spay/neuter exclusively
3. Mostly private practice, work with a shelter
4. None of the above

Healthy pets in loving, lifelong homes

Evolution of sheltering

Evolving community expectations
Cultural shift toward adoption
Ever expanding knowledge base
Veterinary involvement
Board specialty in shelter medicine

the "pound" → *Temporary home*



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A day in the life

Community veterinarian
Lifetime of care
Focus on individual
Personal relationship building

Shelter
Short term health and wellness
Herd health or population medicine
Emphasis on infectious disease prevention
Move 'em through!

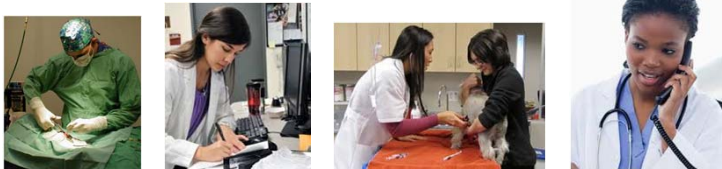
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A day in the life

Typical day for veterinarian in private practice:

- back to back 15-30 minute appointments
- 2-3 hours for surgical procedures (usually 1-5)
- 1-2 assistants
- +/- scheduled time for phone calls
- +/- scheduled time for medical records
- +/- scheduled time for drop-offs
- +/- scheduled time for hospitalized patient

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A day in the life

Typical day for shelter:

- Intake appointments + transfers + walk-ins
- Medical & behavioral work-ups
- High volume surgeries
- Often understaffed
- Customer follow-up
- Record keeping
- Medical & behavioral treatments




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Barriers to partnership

Opinions on veterinarians

- "All about the money" **Small business ownership**
- They don't understand how shelters work.
Show and tell!
- We send them so many new clients, and we get nothing in return. **Ask!**
- They tell adopters to return sick/injured pets.
Open lines of communication
- They aren't willing to donate their time or services. **Ask!**
- They think everything in the shelter is sick. **Share data!**
- They either think we should save everything or euthanize everything. **Share shelter's philosophies**

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Barriers to partnership

Views on shelters/nonprofits/rescues

- **Competition**
 Share mission and demonstrate goodwill
- **Concerns about quality of medical care**
 Share SOPs and give tours
- **Assumptions about competency/trust worthiness of shelter staff**
 Team meet & greets, tours, events
- **Misconceptions about how shelters operate**
 Educate! Tours!
- **Shelters/rescues always begging for more!**
 Set parameters and be consistent!
- **Local politics and community culture (ex: Austin)**
- **Appropriate role for shelters**
 Communication!


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Barriers to partnership

How do vets get paid in private practice?

- Practice owner - salary (?) + portion of practice profit balance of business & animal advocacy
- Associate - usually percentage of production
- Relief - daily rate
- Approx. 10% profit margin if doing well



Average educational debt upon graduation¹ = \$162,113 (2013)
 (plus practice debt + family/personal debt?)

No insurance subsidies for clients who cannot/will not pay Discounted/free services

- Family/friends - Good samaritans
- Staff - Other shelters/rescues
- Clients who need help


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Barriers to partnership

Discounted/free services involve:

- Vet's time
- Vet's knowledge & skills
- Labor costs for staff
- Supply costs
- Loss of time for paying customers (profit loss)



Study at Colorado State University² (Kogan, 2014):
 "more than 99 percent of the veterinarians who responded offer discounts on services at least sometimes and often frequently: 68 percent provide reduced-price services at least several times per month; just under 36 percent give discounts at least several times weekly; and 14.5 percent give discounts daily."


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Challenges

Shelters

- Never ending flow of animals needing help
- Limited resources (staff, money, supplies, etc)
- Increasing number of animals with special medical needs
- Difficult to find vets with interest/experience in shelter med.
- Staff turnover
- Community/societal expectations
- Pressures from community vets?





Challenges

Veterinarians

Pressure of personal debts (school, practice, personal)
 Competition (internet pharmacies, low cost clinics, specialists, etc)
 Economy (disposable income of pet owners)
 Small business ownership (management, payroll, conflict)
 Building the practice
 Staying current (CE, legislation, customer service)




Veterinary ambassadors

Prevention of shelter intake:

- ❖ spay/neuter
- ❖ behavior counseling & training referrals
- ❖ client education
- ❖ pet identification (strays >50%)


Donors
Volunteers
Board members
Adopter referrals
Low cost or free veterinary services for shelter animals
Low cost or free services for adopters
Organizational advocates
Relief / emergency support



Benefits of partnership

Benefits to veterinarians

- New clients/patients (adopters, volunteers, staff)
- Help with strays / abandoned pets
- Direct line of communication with shelter
- Tax benefits (for goods and monetary donations)
- Good image in community

Building relationships

Step 1:
Consider your shelter’s mission with respect to the veterinary community.

Goals? Long term plans?

How do your goals require the help of vets?

How do your goals affect the community vets?

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Building relationships

Step 2:
What does the shelter hope to achieve through these partnerships?

- Free post adoption exams for adopters?
- Free or discounted veterinary care for shelter animals?
- Financial support?
- Reduction in returns due to illness/injury?
- Prestige of relationship (ex: TAMU)?

What does the veterinarian hope to achieve?

- Clientele
- Community goodwill
- Public recognition

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Building relationships


Step 3:
Explore feelings of community vets about the shelter

Identify vets/shelters who have common goals/ideals

- Open house?
- Anonymous survey to local VMA?
- Visits to vet clinics/shelters near your facility?
- CE meeting at the shelter?

Start with personal relationships rather than organizational.

- Vets of staff/volunteers
- Connections to your staff vet
- Shelter nearby



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Building relationships

Step 4:
Set up meetings with potential partners.

- Start with one!
- Discussion points:
 - Ideas and goals
 - What they hope to get from partnering
 - How they plan to cope with adopted animals from your shelter that are sick/injured.
- Any concerns!

Stay calm and open to feedback. Respectfully consider the viewpoints of others. Be reassuring and avoid focusing on only your needs.

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Building relationships

Step 5:
Consider the goals of the shelter and the potential partner clinic- are they compatible? Is there a way to make them compatible, if not?

Give the partner a way to help and offer options for recognition.

Signed agreements outlining terms

- Start/end date
- Point of contact for each
- Amount /type of services to be provided
- List of partner perks

Building relationships

Step 6:
Agree on a start date and get started!

Maintain ongoing communication (FYI about outbreak, shelter vets attend local VMA meetings, add local vets to shelter newsletter distribution list)

Start with one! Vets talk and will compare notes about the groups they work with. Shelters quickly learn which vet clinics are open to working with shelters. Become a great partner to one vet/shelter first!

Making it last

Make it easy to work with you!

What can the shelter do to make it easier for the vet to help?

- Direct point of contact at shelter with decision making authority
- Billing arrangements
- Scheduling appointments vs. drop-offs
- Providing records from the shelter
- Pace requests and rotate partners
- Adapt to feedback



Making it last

Make your partners feel needed!

- Keep track of each partner's account
 - VIPs (clinic owner, manager, POC)
 - Contact information
 - Preferences (prefers drop-offs, etc)
 - Services available
 - Amount donated, thank you sent, etc

Rotate partners and use the gift they've given!


 

Making it last

Core values of partnership

- Common vision
- Honesty
- Open communication
- Mutual respect





Making it last

Conflict resolution

- (Re)establish communication**
- Find common ground**
- Listen to the other party's needs, concerns, and goals**
- Keep cool!**
- Work together to find a solution**



Making it last

Importance of graciousness

- Hand written thank you notes - mention specific cases/animals, make it personal!**
- Certificates/plaques**
- Recognition on website, newsletter, social media**
- List veterinary partners in adoption packets**
- VIP invitations to events**

Never underestimate the power of a thank you.

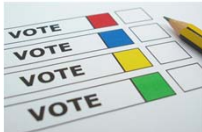
An Idea of Truth



Wrapping up

- **Correct misunderstanding**
- **Identify common ground**
- **Explore goals of each party**
- **Communicate!**
- **Be thankful and kind!**
- **Maintain**

Enjoy the benefits of great partnership



Poll question!

Are you a member of:

- ***HSVMA***
- ***ASV***
- ***Both***
- ***Neither***




**Association of
Shelter Veterinarians**


The Association of Shelter Veterinarians seeks to advance and support the practice of shelter medicine in order to improve community animal health and well-being.

Join us!
www.shelternvet.org

Membership open to veterinarians, veterinary students, and non-veterinary affiliates.



Questions?



“ALONE WE CAN
DO SO LITTLE;
TOGETHER WE
CAN DO SO MUCH.”
- Helen Keller