

Minimizing Veterinary Visit Stress Across Species

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Small Animal

- Exam rooms that allow animals to feel safe and have different choices (vertical and hiding spots, calm environment, soft music, comfortable surfaces)
- **Cats:** Anti-scruffing, wrapped with a towel, cat-only rooms/waiting areas, separate kennel area, spraying Feliway pheromones or suggesting bringing a familiar scent to the exam room from home
- **Dogs:** low-stress handling, happy visits, and high-value treats in the waiting room
- Use treats to distract animals during treatment which will help facilitate a positive association with the clinic and veterinary staff
- When necessary, provide pre-exam sedation medication to facilitate a low-stress hospital experience
- Owner should seek out Fear Free certified practices for their animals



PetVet365 Exam Room in Denver, CO

Small Exotics/Zoo

Stress Free Techniques

- Communicate with owners to transport animals in familiar bedding with hide boxes, maintaining appropriate temperature
 - Schedule quiet appointment times
 - While waiting in the clinic, avoid contact with predators (dogs/cats) and loud noises
 - Cover carrier with towels
 - Warm exam rooms dependent on animal, dim lighting and pheromone sprays
 - Use experienced assistants and keep handling sessions short
 - Allow the animal to explore the room and establish comfort before handling
 - Avoid sudden movements, grabbing from above, and loud noises
- **Rabbits** - hindlimb support to avoid kicking and back injury. Protecting the back by holding them in a “C” formation. Examine on the ground to prevent jumping
 - **Chelonians**- (i.e., turtles, tortoises, and terrapins) can be held with both hands between their front and rear legs on either side of the shell. They should always be kept upright. Make shift muzzles may also be used
 - **Lizards**- Larger lizards may require gentle tail restraint to prevent whipping, but to prevent tail autotomy, never grab just the tail. A perch to grip may be helpful
 - **Snakes**- Avoid firm restraint as rough handling can result in struggling or injury to the snake. Large snakes require 1 handler for every 4 ft of snake
 - **Avian**-Low-stress handling techniques include minimizing change, moving slowly, offering a perch or treats, towel, and sedation if needed. Signs of stress include refusal to engage, defecation, vocalization, and escape attempts. They can also have an increased heart rate, respiratory rates and blood glucose, and/or reduced cognitive ability leading to death
 - **Zoo species:** Use positive reinforcement-based target training practices to minimize sedation and restraint for routine procedures based on AZA protocol by species

Equine

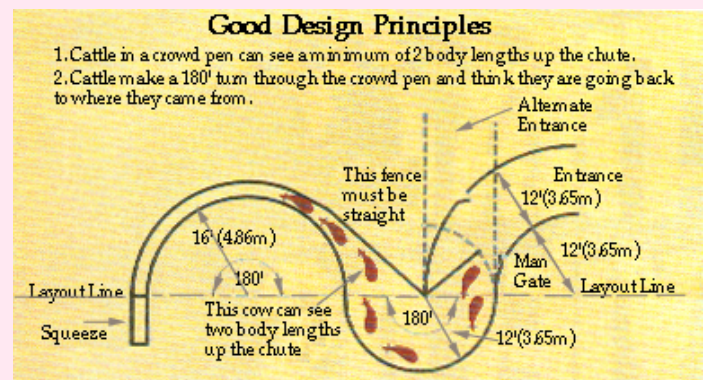
- Have owners/caretakers practice routine handling (hooves, ears, injection locations, etc.) prior to visit
- Familiarize patient with equipment (stethoscope, thermometer, clippers, etc.)
 - Calm, confident handler with slow movements
- Select as quiet of an environment as possible when on site at farms but still allow horse to see/hear other horses
- Utilize treats and praise to create positive experiences
 - Provide good footing to minimize risk of slipping
 - Minimize number of onlookers present
- Begin with as limited restraint as possible and provide the horse with intermittent breaks



Livestock

- Livestock handling revolves around working animals in chutes and getting them in to squeezes and chutes
- By having a properly set up chute system you can prevent a lot of stress
- The walls of the chute should be solid in order to prevent shadows
- If the chute is circular it allows cows to follow their herdmates without fear from seeing what their herdmates are having done to them at the end of the chute
- Non-slip flooring should be installed to encourage ease of mobility and decrease stress
 - All of these things will also help animals to move through the chute with ease to eliminate the use of cattle prods and other stressful stimuli

Temple Grandin's Shute Technique



AZA Animal Care Manuals by Species: Animal Care Manuals | Association of Zoos & Aquariums

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Pamela Clark, C. V. T. Low-Stress Veterinary Visits for Avian Patients. 2023.

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