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Low Stress Handling of Small Animal Patients

Julia Albright
jalbrig1@utk.edu

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Managing Aggressive Animal in the Vet Clinic

Julie Albright MA DVM DACVB
Assistant Professor
PetSafe Chair Small Animal Behavioral Research

What causes aggression in clinic?
• Instinct to escape and avoid pain or injury
• Defensive aggression

Probably not:
• Dominance
• Protecting the owner (more likely dog hoping the owner will protect him)
• Territorial
• Training issue

Identify and address sources of stress
• Fearful of car, car ride, carriers?
• Reception or kennel area
• Staff interactions

DECREASE STRESS
DECREASE AGGRESSION

Car/Carrier
• Good association with crate and car ride
• Important with cats since strong association with these and vet visit
• Rule out nausea
• Pheromones
• Antianxiety medications
• Acepromazine?
Use appropriate carriers and classical condition

Reception area

- Visual blocks
- Cat-only area
- Reactive dog areas (or straight to room)

Staff interactions

- Don’t invade space
- Don’t corner
- Don’t lean over
- Don’t reach out
- Do ask dog to approach
- Do approach sideways, backwards, eyes averted

Handling for difficult dogs

- Have owner distract with commands and treats
- Less-is-more restraint
- Head halters – decrease movement, decrease bite risk

- “Rapid fire” treats
- Squeeze nozzle bottles
- Large treat you allow animal to nibble
• Muzzles – basket preferred
• Calming Cap (Thunder Cap)
• E-collar +/- towel
• Towel wraps

Medications
• Sedating keeps staff and animal safe, prevents pet from forming poor(er) association
• Oral sedatives
  • Acepromazine
  • Trazodone
  • Benzodiazepine (alprazolam, diazepam)
  • Combo (trazodone, diazepam)
  • High-end of the dose range
  • Benzos, trazodone anxiolytic vs. just “knocking out”
• Owners should try at home first!
• Give at least 60 min to take effect

Medications
• Injectable medications TRANSMUCOSALLY
  • Squirt in mouth
  • Rub in small amount lubricant, then rub on gums
  • Use gloves
  • Acepromazine
  • Dexmedetomidine
  • Telazol

Medications
• Common scenario for known aggressive dog:
  • Oral meds (7 mg/kg trazodone) hour before car ride
  • (owner/tech transmucosal (10 mics/kg dexmed) immediately upon arrival)
  • IM (5 mics/kg demed) → IV
  • Quiet, dark room very important
Difficult cats

- Lots and lots of towels
- Avoid cat tongs and gloves (don’t control flailing – priority to help cat feel secure)
- Sedation
  - Ace/torb or buprenex; midazolam/torb or buprenex
  - Ketamine/midazolam; ketamine/ace; dexmedetomidine
  - Trazodone

Counterconditioning

Basic towel wrap

Changing tactics

Conclusion

Attempt #1

Attempt #2

Keep calm and leave it to the vet