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Low Stress Handling of Small Animal Patients

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UT College of Veterinary Medicine

Managing Aggressive Animal in the Vet Clinic

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Resources



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

DECREASE STRESS

DECREASE AGGRESSION

Identify and address sources of stress

- Fearful of car, car ride, carriers?
- Reception or kennel area
- Staff interactions



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

 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muzzles – basket preferred • Calming Cap (Thunder Cap) • E-collar +/- towel • Towel wraps 	
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<h3>Medications</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedating keeps staff and animal safe, prevents pet from forming poor(er) association • Oral sedatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	
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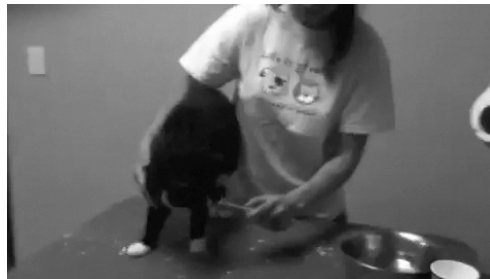
<h3>Medications</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injectable medications TRANSMUCOSALLY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squirt in mouth • Rub in small amount lubricant, then rub on gums • Use gloves • Acepromazine • Dexmedetomidine • Telazol 	
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<h3>Medications</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 dexmed) → IV • Quiet, dark room very important 	
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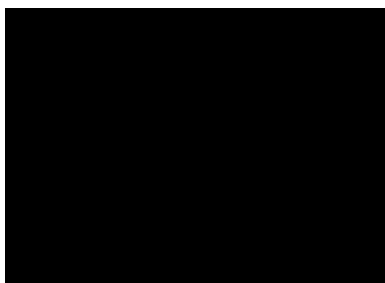
Difficult cats

- 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

Attempt #1



Attempt #2



Conclusion

