

Mention “no-shows” to clinic directors and be prepared for responses ranging from mild concern to aggravated expletives. No-shows are a part of running a non-profit clinic and each organization must find its own balanced policy.

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider your target audience. Would deposits or requirements to pre-pay/complete paperwork ahead of time create a barrier for folks who do not have credit cards or who have limited access to transportation? Are you making it easy for people to do what we are asking of them?
- If you take deposits via a credit card, you have to factor in the administrative time to manage that process, credit card fees if you do refunds to the card or fees to process two transactions (upfront deposit and balance at time of surgery). Is there still a financial benefit vs. just overbooking?
- Are you making reminder contacts two-to-three days in advance? Calling the day before does not give you enough time to re-book appointments. Reminder calls are a great task for volunteers and many clinic software options have auto-dial, text message or email reminders.
- Are you tracking your no-show rate to look for patterns? Most clinics report a higher no-show rate when they are booking more than two weeks out. This makes sense since people want to get their animal fixed when they have the funds and are thinking about it. Are your no-shows higher when you are running reduced-price promotions or during certain times or weather conditions?
- Are you requiring appointments for community cats? Is this policy adding to your no-show rate? Many clinics find that accepting community cats as walk-ins helps to balance their no-show rate.
- Do you have a shelter/rescue partner that often has puppies or kittens to be altered? Can you develop a stand-by system to call this partner to back-fill for no-shows.

## SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

- Using your historical no-show rate, overbook your appointments by that %. We typically overbook by 10%. On the days when everyone shows up, have a “plan B” to bring in help for laundry, packs & cleaning. Buy lunch for your staff. Offer a per-animal bonus or incentive for every animal over the daily goal.
- Book to your desired capacity using only female dogs, male dogs and female cats. Add male cats appointments into the schedule whenever possible but don’t count them in the daily goal.
- Ask for a deposit or pre-payment only when the owner has two or more animals at a time or has been a no-show in the past. Be sure your software can track no-show history.
- Don’t allow people to book more than three-to-five animals at a time. If one person is booking multiple animals and doesn't show-up this can greatly impact your no-show rate. A similar consideration is multiple animals from one home. If one of the animals is sick (such as upper respiratory infection), chances are many or all of them would be declined for surgery and leave gaps in your surgery schedule for the day.
- If someone has been a no-show or cancelled more than 2-3 times consider telling them to just walk in when they can make it so that you aren’t holding an appointment but are making it as easy as possible for them to get their animal fixed. Be sure they are aware of the fasting requirements for their pet.
- Request a credit card number to hold an appointment deposit but don’t make it 100% mandatory so as not to exclude potential clients. Overbook only based on the number of appointments that are without a card and only charge the card if the person is a no-show.
- If you do have cancellations for the next day, offer your shelter partners a discounted price or a free surgery if they bring in animals. It’s better to get some revenue than none and your partners will appreciate the break!
- Track your slow times of the year. If you notice trends such as slow appointment volume or no-shows around the holidays, right before schools start, or at end of the month before federal assistant checks come out, consider offering promotions during this time to boost your numbers.

- Have volunteers call the clients that did not show-up to determine the reason for the no-show. Arm the volunteers with resources to problem-solve. If transport is an issue, a clinic in Minnesota has a creative solution by partnering with a taxicab company for free rides. If money is an issue, many other clinics develop an internal fund to help defray costs when the client doesn't qualify for subsidies (or subsidies aren't available). Ideas for the internal fund are as easy as a donation jar on your front counter, using credit card rebates or recycling/selling of used cell phones.

### TEMPORARILY EXPANDING YOUR CAPACITY

Appointments for female dogs are often the most in demand and booked-out the longest. You can minimize this backlog with relief staff on a day the clinic is closed:

12 Female Dogs @ \$70.00	\$840
Additional Services Sold	<u>\$100</u>
Gross revenue	\$940
Veterinarian (pay by the hour or by the day)	\$350-\$400
Vet Tech @ 12.00/hr for 8 hours	\$96
Vet Assistant @ \$9.00/hr for 8 hours	\$72
Consumables \$15.00/animal x 12 dogs	<u>\$180</u>
Expenses	\$698 - \$748

If you are able to add the relief vet and additional 12 dogs during your normal business days, you may only need one additional medical support person instead of two.