

Many animals are more stressed at the veterinary clinic when unaccompanied by their owners. Now more than ever, it is critical to be sensitive to your patient's emotional state. Pay close attention to both [canine](#) and [feline](#) body language. Unless it is contraindicated for a specific patient, offer plenty of tasty treats throughout the visit.

Under veterinary direction, consider the use of [trazodone](#) and/or [gabapentin](#) for anxious or stressed patients. Whenever possible, provide the medication to the owner to administer to the patient before arriving to the clinic. Once the patient is stressed, the medications are less likely to be as effective.

Masks & Animals

- Wear plain masks of pale colors: grey, green, red, blue or purple. Avoid masks with patterns that include faces, eyes or mouths.
- Smile even when masked, as your eyes will convey friendliness (*smizing*).
- If the face covering appears to exacerbate animal stress, consider lowering your mask to normalize the situation if there are no other people around and it is otherwise safe to do so. The CDC provides [recommendations for PPE](#), including face coverings, dependent upon animal history and type of procedure.



Treating Patients with Limited Staff

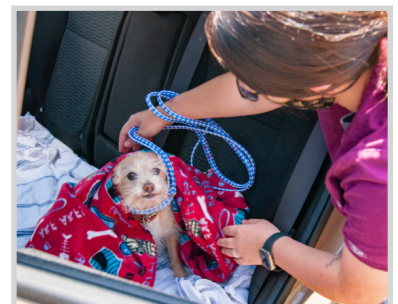
- If working on patients by yourself:
 - ▶ Only work solo with a patient if you are comfortable and confident doing so.
 - ▶ Pay close attention to [canine](#) and [feline](#) body language; animals will tell you when it is time to back off.
 - ▶ Utilize lick mats, spreadable food and other tasty treats to keep the patient pleasantly distracted.
 - ▶ If a muzzle is needed, choose the type of muzzle that is most appropriate for the patient. Some dogs will be more comfortable with a basket muzzle because they can easily breathe, pant and chew treats, while others will do best with a cloth muzzle because it is easier to get on and off. Consideration should be given to choosing a restraint method that will minimize the stress response but also allow you to complete the needed procedure quickly.
- Many treatments require two people. Do not compromise a patient's safety and stress level by working solo when it is not appropriate.
- If possible, when performing venipuncture, puncture the medial or lateral saphenous vein to avoid being too close to the patient's face and to maintain distance from the handler.



Further resources available at: aspcapro.org/covid

Retrieving Patients Curbside

- Ask owners to bring small dogs and cats in carriers.
 - ▶ When retrieving a pet in a carrier, cover the carrier with a towel sprayed with a pheromone product, then fully support it while carrying it inside.
- If a cat is loose in a car, take a pillowcase to gently place over the cat and securely carry her/him inside. Alternatively, loan a carrier to the owner and let them place the cat inside.
- Ask owners of dogs not in carriers to wait inside their car with their dog leashed and their window cracked open. As you approach the car, lower your mask, smile and speak in a friendly manner. Stand at least six feet away and assess the dog's response to your presence.
 - ▶ If the dog appears comfortable or if the owner is reluctant to get out, preferring that you retrieve the dog from the car, raise your mask, continue to talk, open the door and leash the dog while offering treats. Stand to the side while encouraging the dog to come out of the car.
 - ▶ If the dog appears nervous, ask the owner to bring the dog out of the car, kneel down, turn sideways, avert your gaze and toss a few treats on the ground in front of the dog. Raise your mask, continue talking to the dog, calmly stand up and, if safe to do so, place the slip leash on. Avoid looming over the dog. Back away, then ask the owner to approach and remove their leash. Then entice the dog to come with you by offering more treats.
 - ▶ If the dog refuses to walk with you, you may need the owner to accompany you toward the clinic door, walking laterally six feet away. As the dog gains momentum walking, the owner can break off and return to their car.
 - ▶ When retrieving a small dog not in a carrier, offer treats, leash, gently place a blanket over the dog and then carry her/him inside.
 - ▶ If the dog is too frightened to walk or too aggressive for you to leash, bring a crate to the car and have the owner place the dog in the crate. Two staff are needed to fully support the crate to carry inside or place onto a wheeled cart to roll inside.



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