

THE REFERRAL PROCESS

A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF WHAT HAPPENS
IF YOUR PET NEEDS TO BE REFERRED



WHY IS MY PET BEING REFERRED?

Your vet may be concerned that your pet has a persistent or serious problem and needs to be examined by a specialist, in the same way your GP might refer you to a consultant at a hospital.

Referring your pet to a colleague or practice with particular skills, knowledge, experience and/or equipment may be the best option for continuing your pet's treatment. This leaflet is designed to inform you about the choice of veterinary **PRACTICES** and **CLINICIANS** available to treat your pet. Please ask your vet for advice. From their personal experience they will be able to recommend the most suitable options, as well as provide any on-going liaison and care needed.

OTHER FACTORS YOU MIGHT NEED TO CONSIDER:

- THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM
- HOW MUCH TIME AND TRAVELLING IS INVOLVED
- YOUR PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS
- AND, SOMETIMES, FINANCIAL CONCERNS

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WHAT TYPE OF PRACTICE COULD MY PET BE REFERRED TO...

As with general practice, there are different types of referral practice, which include single-man / single discipline concerns, referral practices associated with first-opinion practices and large, multi-specialist, multi-discipline hospital practices. In addition, most of the veterinary schools run teaching hospitals with referral clinics.

...AND THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CLINICIAN. WHO IS BEST SUITED TO TREAT MY PET?

SOMEONE WHO HAS A 'SPECIAL INTEREST'

Not every discipline is covered by post-graduate

qualifications. Veterinary surgeons are allowed to state that they have a 'special interest' in a subject, whatever their level of qualification.

SOMEONE WHO IS A 'CERTIFICATE HOLDER'

This is the first level of postgraduate qualification awarded by the

RCVS, and indicates that the holder is a competent clinician who has proved their experience and expertise by examination in their chosen subject.

SOMEONE WHO IS A 'DIPLOMA HOLDER'

A Diploma holder is someone who has achieved a high standard of

academic and professional expertise in his or her chosen subject, passed an appropriate examination, and is therefore entitled to place the appropriate letters after their name to indicate this achievement. Those who have passed a European college Diploma may call themselves a 'European Veterinary Specialist'.

SOMEONE WHO IS A 'ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS RECOGNISED SPECIALIST'

RCVS Recognised Specialist status is one of the highest levels of achievement for a practising vet and is similar to a consultant in the NHS.

To be included on the List of Recognised Specialists, an individual must have achieved a postgraduate qualification at Diploma level at the very least. In addition the individual must make an active contribution to their specialty, have national and international acclaim and publish widely in their field, to the recognised satisfaction of the RCVS. Recognised Specialist status is time-bound, and the individual must reapply for recognition every five years (or earlier in certain cases) to maintain their name on the list.



HOW DO I DECIDE?

Your vet will be able to discuss all the options available to help you make the best choice for your pet's needs and the best suited to your circumstances. It would also be reasonable to expect reassurances about the level of client care, as well as the quality of patient care.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Costs can vary and are not always a good determinant of value, so it is important to compare like with like services. It is reasonable to expect an approximate cost estimate to include both initial consultation costs and a range of possible further investigation and/or treatment costs. Payment terms may be significantly different to your usual practice and these should be understood before the beginning the referral process.



HOW DOES PET INSURANCE WORK?

Insurance cover, where applicable, may require you to contact the insurer prior to embarking on referral treatment. All policies differ and whilst able to give general advice, neither your vet nor the referral vet can guarantee whether a policy will cover treatment. If an insurer judges a claim to be invalid it remains the responsibility of the client to settle all outstanding bills. Consequently it is wise to seek any clarification as to the terms and limitations of your policy from your insurer before incurring costs you may not be able to afford independently.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

In the absence of an informed recommendation it is possible to gather some helpful information from a referral clinic's website which should indicate the level and breadth of expertise and equipment.

In some cases a multi-disciplined centre has the ability to consider, evaluate and treat the whole patient – especially valuable in more complex cases where several body systems may be involved, requiring more than one specialist discipline.