

The Cat Friendly Practice Program

The Cat Friendly Practice (CFP) program was created by the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) to improve the treatment, handling, and overall healthcare of cats. Its purpose is to equip veterinary practices with the tools, resources, and information to elevate the standard of care for cats.

How Does The CFP Program Work?

Any practice with an AAFP member can join the CFP. There are ten topic areas and each has a video that discusses the importance of implementing these criteria in the practice. The practice is assessed with the CFP Checklist Criteria; items on the checklist are supported by the manual, *A Guide to Creating a Cat Friendly Practice*, as well as supplemental educational resources and photos.

There are two levels a practice may obtain: Silver or Gold. Silver Standard status is for practices that meet the essential standard criteria for a Cat Friendly Practice. The Gold Standard status is for practices that have incorporated the optimum level of Cat Friendly Criteria.

Once a practice meets the criteria, the submission will be evaluated for approval. If approved, the practice will become a Cat Friendly Practice and receive a complete CFP toolkit that includes a status certificate, poster, and numerous marketing pieces that will give the practice the tools, printed documents, and knowledge to make the most of your CFP status. You will also be listed in the Cat Friendly Practice online database so clients can search and find your practice.

Why CFP?

The Cat Friendly Practice Program allows veterinary practices to systematically and effectively address the needs of the feline patient to provide the highest quality care. The program aims to help increase feline visits by providing practitioners with the guidelines and resources to become a Cat Friendly Practice.

The program was first introduced in February 2012. Participating practices that have become cat friendly have noticed a considerable difference.

Participating practices will complete a self-assessment checklist that guides the practice to incorporate the essential criteria by using the educational resources provided. Many of the techniques contained in the checklist are readily achievable because they focus on approach and organization. The program does not require remodeling your practice but provides creative solutions for you to help decrease the stress during the visit. The most important step is to recognize that there is a need to make these adaptations to provide a higher quality of care to cats.

When a practice takes the steps to become a Cat Friendly Practice, it creates a practice environment that values the

feline patient's needs. At the heart of the Cat Friendly Practice is the potential for building productive relationships with cat owners, which will result in improved care of the feline patient.

As applicants go through the assessment process, they will have the opportunity to:

- Evaluate attitudes and care provided to feline patients.
- Examine the practice environment and equipment by considering the specific needs of cats.
- Assess and implement practice skills, training and education.
- Understand the importance of becoming recognized as a Cat Friendly Practice.

The time it takes to complete varies by practice. It can depend on how many cat friendly initiatives that you have already implemented and how much time you have to dedicate to assessing your practice and implementing new items.

Research & Trends

In the United States, there are millions more owned cats than owned dogs, yet cats visit veterinarians less frequently than dogs. Contributing to the decrease in cat visits is the stress associated with getting the cat to the veterinary practice and the owner's lack of understanding of the need for wellness and preventive care.

Studies have also shown that older cats visit the veterinarian less often than younger cats and that owners of indoor cats are less likely to place a priority on veterinary care than owners of outdoor cats.

The Cat Friendly Practice program provides a solution to these trends and provides an opportunity to increase feline veterinary visits and improve the health and quality of life of cats.

Three key strategies for increasing veterinary visits among felines are to:

- Provide education to cat owners to increase their understanding of feline behavior, the value of veterinary care, and the need to actively participate in their cats' individual healthcare plan.
- Minimize the stress the veterinary visit places on both clients and feline patients.
- Provide techniques for the practice to address the distinct needs of cats, including facility environment, equipment, staff knowledge, and feline friendly handling.

Visit <http://catfriendlypractice.catvets.com> for more information or to sign up to be a Cat Friendly Practice! 🐾