

## **Picking A Veterinarian Is Like Choosing A Physician**

You've just moved to a town and need to find a veterinarian for your pet. WHERE DO YOU BEGIN? Sue Hall, D.V.M, community practice veterinarian at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine at Urbana, says choosing a veterinarian for your pet is as important as choosing a physician for your own health care. With a little research you can find the appropriate veterinarian.

Dr. Hall noted that many pet owners select a veterinarian who is knowledgeable about the type of pet you have, especially if you own an exotic animal like a ferret, fish or snake.

“Your veterinarian should be someone you feel comfortable being with” she said. “This person should be someone you can develop a personal client/veterinarian relationship with. Your veterinarian should take the time to answer your questions about your pet and its health.”

Veterinary services should also be considered. Determine which services are most important to you, such as emergency care, grooming, boarding, or extended hours. Cost is another big factor to many pet owners.

How do you find this individual? Dr. Hall suggested that pet owners ask their neighbours or co-workers about their veterinarians. Ask them who they would recommend and why. Local dog and cat clubs, breeders, and pet shops may also be another good source of information. Dr. Hall says another way to locate a veterinarian is to “phone shop”. Veterinarians are usually listed in the local phone directory. Call around to your local veterinary clinics and ask them about their staff, service, fees, and hours.

After you've narrowed down your choices, it's time to visit the clinics that interest you. She recommends that you ask for a tour of the facilities, but make sure you call ahead. If they are not too busy, most clinics will give you a tour and introduce you to the veterinarian.

What should you look for? Look for a clean, well-organized facility. “A hospital should not only be clean to the eye, but to the nose as well” said Dr. Hall. “A clinic should smell clean.” The veterinary technician, the receptionist and other staff members should be friendly and professional. She notes that the staff usually reflects the quality of the clinic.

This is a good time to find out approximately what a veterinarian will charge. This gives the owner a chance to decide whether the cost is too high. Ask the veterinarian in advance what billing procedures are followed when charging a client.

Remember, that routine veterinary examinations and vaccinations are a form of insurance to prevent your pet from encountering avoidable health problems.

It's always a good idea to find a veterinarian that you are satisfied with and trust before you pet need emergency assistance.