



How to choose a veterinary practice

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How practices work

Some veterinary practices operate with just one veterinary surgeon and one member of staff. Others may have 15 or more vets with a similar number of nursing and support staff.

Practices may operate on more than one site—the main practice being supported by three or more branch surgeries. The branch surgeries may have limited on-site facilities and equipment, but they allow you to see a vet without having to travel long distances.

Facilities do vary between practices. Some may have extensive equipment and facilities on-site, while others contract some services out to specialist firms or laboratories. Similarly veterinary surgeons may refer unusual or difficult cases to veterinary surgeons who specialise in a particular species or discipline.

24-hour cover

Whatever the size of the premises, veterinary surgeons have to make sure that 24-hour emergency cover is available for their clients every day of the week. They can do this in several ways; a practice may provide this themselves, or some practices get together locally to provide this service which may mean that you have to travel to a different practice for an emergency call. Other practices choose to use a dedicated out-of-hours service (similar to the ones that we are familiar with from GPs).

Choosing a practice

When choosing a veterinary practice, you should look for clean, well-maintained premises with adequate consulting and waiting areas. All staff should be friendly, approachable, neat and efficient. The practice is a business and should appear well-organised with consultation times clearly displayed.

It may be sensible for you to have a look round any veterinary practice you may want to use before registering your pet. Most veterinary practices will be happy to show you round at an agreed time.

While you might not be allowed into an operating theatre, you should be able to see through the door.

Wards for inpatients should be clean, warm and comfortable.

Any good vet will be happy to discuss any of the above factors with you. At the end of the day you must ask yourself—‘Will this practice team give my pet the best of care?’

How do I find a practice?

There are several websites dedicated to finding you a vet in your area. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons has one called ‘Find a Vet’.

You can find the practices closest to you according to town or postcode, or search by practice name. You can also find practices that treat a specific species or are accredited under the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme. For more information, or to find a vet, visit www.findavet.org.uk

You can also speak to other pet owners to get recommendations and advice and use pet owner websites to see how others have rated practices in your area.

About the BVA

The BVA is the national representative body for the UK veterinary profession. We support our members to fulfil their roles for the benefit of animals and the public.

This is one of a series of leaflets for animal owners produced by the BVA, you can find more at www.bva.co.uk/public