

Immediate Ways to Improve Compliance at the Front Desk

By Wendy S. Myers

A tight economy is weakening compliance at practices nationwide. Some clients are questioning recommendations for diagnostic testing, year-round preventatives, and dentistry. A 2009 AAHA study found overall compliance was 73%. That's a letter grade of C minus.

Compliance starts and stops at the front desk. Here's how receptionists can tutor clients and help them graduate from a C minus to an A:

Make appointment confirmation calls. Phone calls encourage compliance because you prepare clients for wellness exams. Call one or two days before appointments and say, "This is Wendy calling from Your Veterinary Hospital to confirm Mason's appointment with Dr. Smith tomorrow at 10 am. Please remember to bring a teaspoon-sized stool sample that's fresh within four hours, as well as any medications and supplements you're currently giving Mason. If you have questions or need to reschedule, please call us at 555-555-5555."

This script significantly increases compliance for intestinal parasite testing. You'll also uncover compliance gaps when clients bring "extra" preventative doses because they've missed several months. You may discover aspirin and supplements that clients are giving for self-diagnosed problems in their pets.



Audit records for compliance before clients arrive. Search for specific services and products that will be due tomorrow. Besides identifying needed vaccines and diagnostic testing, also note the date of last preventative purchase, products sold, and number of doses sold. Although your recommendation is year-round protection from fleas and ticks, you may find a client who bought a six pack of flea preventative and split it between two dogs last year. Note the compliance gap in the record so the doctor and technician can revisit the importance of 12 months of protection for each pet.

Create a price reference sheet. Give clients a financial incentive to protect pets year-round from parasites. As a consultant, I recommend 80% markups on 12 packs and 100% on six packs. Make a price reference sheet to show clients the savings. If a client asks for a six pack of heartworm preventative, the receptionist would reply, "I'm happy to get Max's medication for you. A six pack costs

\$9 per dose. With a 12 pack, you get a \$5 rebate plus save 20%. This chart shows the cost per dose and savings. Would you like to save more today and get a 12 pack?"

Here is a sample savings chart:

Product	6 pack cost per dose	6 pack total	12 pack cost per dose	12 pack total
Heartworm preventative 1-25 lbs.	\$5.80	\$34.80	\$4.83	\$63.00 - \$5 rebate = \$58.00
Heartworm preventative 26-50 lbs.	\$7.60	\$45.60	\$6.33	\$81.00 - \$5 rebate = \$76.00
Heartworm preventative 51-100 lbs.	\$9.00	\$54.00	\$7.50	\$95.00 - \$5 rebate = \$90.00

Include heartworm, flea and tick preventatives on your price reference sheet. Promote the “buy six, get one free” bonus for topicals. Ask clients, “Would you like to get a free dose of flea control valued at \$22 when you buy a six pack?” These subtle sales techniques will significantly improve year-round compliance.

Update reminders at checkout. Wellness services generate 38% of practice revenue. Be sure reminders for future services and products are accurately entered in computer records at checkout. Also look for other pets in the family that may be overdue. Besides driving future income, you’ll increase client satisfaction.

With declining transaction numbers in today’s economy, staff members must maximize compliance every patient visit. By following these strategies, your front-desk team can immediately impact compliance.



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