



5 tips for talking with clients about preventive care.

IDEXX



Preventive care starts with a conversation.

As a veterinarian, you understand the value of wellness testing. Whether it's screening for asymptomatic illness or establishing a baseline for patient health, the benefits are endless.

But while it might feel like a no-brainer for us, pet owners are often hesitant or unwilling to run tests on a pet who is seemingly in perfect health. So how do we broach the subject? And how do we get pet owners onboard with wellness testing?

It's actually not as difficult as you might think; like anything in medicine, you just need to have a plan for action. So with all that in mind, here are 5 tips to help you start the conversation with your clients.



1

Explain the benefits of early detection.

Many pet owners don't understand how important it is to detect abnormalities as early as possible – no matter how old their pet may be.

Young pets

Pet owners are often reluctant to test young pets because they are so vibrant and full of life. And that's precisely why it's a good time to establish a diagnostic baseline. Knowing what is normal for a specific pet, and assessing trends as time goes on, makes decisions so much easier if the patient becomes ill or experiences vague symptoms down the road.

Adult pets

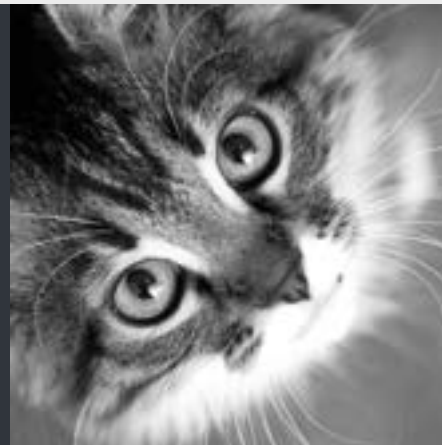
When a pet has reached adulthood, they are better able to handle symptoms in the face of medical conditions or disease. Analysing results and assessing trends during this life phase can help detect abnormalities before the patient is older and any condition is potentially more difficult to treat.

Senior pets

During later phases of a pet's life, wellness testing can help detect emerging issues that threaten both quality of life and longevity. Consider sharing a stat like this with your clients: In a recent IDEXX study, wellness testing uncovered significant problems in 2 in 5 senior dogs (aged 9 years or older) and 3 in 5 senior cats (aged 10 years or older).¹ By detecting these problems before they escalate, we are able to create treatment plans that can prevent further deterioration of health and potentially prolong life.

Reference

1. Data based on analyses of 167,593 canine wellness profiles (a complete chemistry profile [including the IDEXX SDMA* Test and electrolytes], IDEXX CBC testing, urinalysis) and 54,211 feline wellness profiles (a complete chemistry profile [including the IDEXX SDMA Test and electrolytes], IDEXX CBC testing, urinalysis, total T₄ [\geq 7 years of age]) associated with wellness visits; testing performed at IDEXX Reference Laboratories in North America on January 1, 2021–June 1, 2022. Data on file at IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. Westbrook, Maine USA: Study #014_Preventive-Care-Findings_220908090729.



No matter what age a pet may be, wellness testing gives us a huge advantage. The sooner we detect abnormalities, the sooner they can be treated. Preventive care allows us to offer options that can give pets happier, healthier lives and more quality time with their families.

2

Preventive care saves money, time and stress.

Many pet owners think of wellness testing as a waste of money. But perhaps a better way to look at it is as an investment in the future.

Try telling your clients, 'Investing in your pet's health now will make them easier to treat in the future'. Establishing baselines and applying those values for trends can save both money and time when it counts; it can prevent you from having to run additional diagnostics if symptoms arise down the line.





3

Normal results are the best results.

We all know the adage that ‘no news is good news’, but that’s not entirely true when it comes to successful pet owner relationships. If we want pet owners to take an active role in a preventive care plan for their pet, we need to consider how we communicate test results with them – even the normal results.

When delivering results, make sure to personalise the delivery for the patient and pet owner, and compliment the pet owner for moving forward with preventive care. By taking time to deliver normal test results respectfully, we model that behaviour for our clients – inspiring them to take preventive care more seriously.

4

Practise at the practice makes perfect.

Now that we have a good foundation for what to say, it's time to practise how to say it. Discussing preventive care with your clients won't come naturally at first, so it's important to help your team get comfortable having the conversation.

Role-playing can be a beneficial technique for building veterinary team confidence and communication skills. Through rehearsal in a safe environment, team members can practice new strategies, helping each other discover their own authentic approach.



Tips for effective role-play

Role-play takes courage, and team members may feel vulnerable, so always start by creating a positive and supportive learning environment. Although no two role-playing scenarios are alike, follow these tips to ensure an effective experience:

Set a clear goal. Keep the topic narrow and avoid using too many talking points. Some simple goals include recommending a wellness plan, explaining the importance of annual diagnostic testing or reviewing reasons for annual parasite screening.

Model action. You and an experienced team member should first model a scenario for the group. This will help to create a welcoming atmosphere and may inspire team members to try new ideas or techniques.

Minimise performance anxiety. To avoid putting any one team member on the 'hot seat', conduct the role-play in three-person groups. Two team members role-play while the third observes the interaction and provides feedback.

Encourage mistakes. Remind each team that they always have the option to start over or pause the role-play to brainstorm alternatives. Make sure they know it's OK if they lose their train of thought or misspeak; mistakes are an integral part of the process.

Suggest techniques. Invite groups to try different approaches to stimulate client conversation. For instance, you might suggest sharing anecdotes about their own pets' wellness care, asking questions about a patient's lifestyle or providing a preventive care statistic.

Encourage feedback, self-analysis and reflection. Invite teams to share the strategies that worked and those that need improvement. Then, ask teams how they'll approach the topic next time.

Raise the challenge level. To simulate real-life resistance, as team members' proficiency grows, have the role-play client ask more challenging questions. Consider these: 'Why does my pet need pre-anaesthetic testing?' or 'Why does my healthy pet need diagnostic testing?'



5

It's not just what you say, but where you say it.

In today's constantly connected world, you have many options for connecting with pet owners. But with so many choices literally at your fingertips, how can you ensure you're using the best communication channel for your targeted audience, message and desired outcome?

The key is to strike a balance. Employing multiple channels ensures inclusion and creates a comprehensive educational experience. Try to be mindful about the strengths and weaknesses of each channel. For example, your omnichannel strategy might look like this:

Texting. Automated text messages are a great way to remind clients about upcoming visits and testing schedules.

Social media. Regularly posting on social media can keep pet owners engaged with your practice throughout the year. Try a mix of feel-good pet content with quick facts about the benefits of wellness testing.

Email. Email is a great channel for following up after an annual exam. Many practice information management systems have client-friendly test results summaries that can be emailed to the pet owner. These summaries offer something tangible that the pet owner can show their family, increasing the perception of value.

Printed materials. Brochures, articles and instructions are still an important part of the client education experience, with tailored materials resulting in better outcomes.

Preventive care is a process.

Remember that preventive care is not a conversation every pet owner wants to have. Every situation is unique. But with the right tools and practice, you can help your clients get closer to yes.

Learn more about IDEXX Preventive Care.

IDEXX is here to help. Our preventive care experts can provide the communication tools, training and rollout protocols to help your staff get started.

+ Visit the resource centre: [/](#)

Note: This e-book is intended for use by veterinarians in Australia and New Zealand.

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