



Vet Visits: Helping Your Dog Feel Confident at the Vet

Before the Vet Visit: Preparation Is Key

- **Practice Handling at Home**
Get your dog used to gentle handling of paws, ears, mouth, and tail. Make it part of a daily routine with treats and praise.
 - **Visit the Vet for “Happy Visits”**
When your dog is ready, take them into the lobby for a few minutes, give them some treats, see if any staff would like to give them some pets and treats, and leave. No exams—just a fun outing.
 - **Desensitization to Vet Tools**
Use mock tools or real items like stethoscopes or nail clippers at home. Let your dog explore them while pairing with treats.
 - **Carrier or Car Training**
Make the car or crate a happy place through short, treat-filled rides and calm experiences. Car anxiety is common in dogs of all sizes, so this applies to everyone!
 - **Build a Foundation with Obedience Training**
The work you do at home and in everyday life carries directly into the vet’s office. Dogs that have solid obedience training communicate better with their owners, handle stress more calmly, and trust their handler more deeply—all of which makes a big difference when the environment is unfamiliar or uncomfortable. If your dog struggles with anxiety or confidence, structured training is one of the most effective things you can do to help.
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For Nervous, Fearful, or Anxious Dogs

- **Contact Your Vet Before Field Trips**
Before showing up for a training visit without an appointment, give your vet's office a quick call. Let them know what you're working on and ask when the quietest times of day are to stop by. Many vet teams are happy to help—they may even have staff willing to greet your dog or offer a treat. A quick heads-up goes a long way and makes the experience better for everyone.
- **Play Confidence-Boosting Games Near the Vet**
If your dog is nervous or fearful, don't go inside right away. Instead, visit the area around the vet office. Play games like tug, fetch, treat chasing, or go on a walk nearby. Let your dog build confidence just being in that environment before ever stepping inside. Take multiple field trips if needed—go at your dog's pace.
- **Use High-Value Treats**
Bring out the special rewards—chicken, cheese, liver—things your dog only gets during vet visits or training.
- **Muzzle Training (Proactively!)**
Teach your dog to love a basket muzzle before it's ever needed. Think of it like a seatbelt—just in case.
- **Choose Vet Timing Wisely**
Request early or quiet appointment times, or ask to wait outside or in your car until your dog is called in.

During the Visit

- **Be Calm Yourself**
Your dog picks up on your energy. Stay upbeat and relaxed to help them stay chill, too.
- **Bring a Familiar Item**
A toy, blanket, or your shirt with your scent can offer comfort during exams.
- **Advocate for Your Dog**
Let the staff know if your dog prefers being examined standing, or if they need breaks. It's okay to speak up.
- **Reward Every Step**
Reinforce small wins: stepping on the scale, staying calm while being touched, etc. Treats make everything better.

After the Visit

- **Chill-Out Time**
Give your dog space to decompress. Some dogs might want to play, others may just nap—follow their lead.
- **End on a Positive Note**
Once you're home, run through a couple of easy, familiar commands your dog knows well—sit, down, place. It's a quick way to close out the outing on a win and reinforce that good things happen around you.
- **Reflect & Adjust**
Think about what worked and what didn't. Keep a simple log—even a few notes on your phone—so you can track progress over time. Training is a process, and each experience builds toward the next.

📞 Call or Text: **(317) 721-3349**

✉ Email: hello@unleashthegooddog.com

🌐 Visit: unleashthegooddog.com

