



## Program in Action



## CASE STUDY

### Care Animal Hospital Arvada, CO

*“There are creative, non-expensive solutions for modifying your practice waiting room, exam room, etc. so it’s feline-friendly, but still works for seeing dog patients.”*



Dr. Paige Garnett  
Care Animal Hospital  
Arvada, CO

## Dog/Cat Practices Have Everything to Gain in Becoming Designated a Cat Friendly Practice®

*Cat Friendly Practice® Designation Announces to Community that Cats are Important*

When Dr. Paige Garnett, founder of Care Animal Hospital in Arvada, Colorado, heard about the **Cat Friendly Program®** (CFP) in 2011, she was convinced this was a path she wanted her hospital to follow. She decided to lead her team through the requirements to become designated by the AAFP as a CFP, convinced that any changes the hospital would need to make would be worth the time and effort in the long run. Up until that time, Care Animal Hospital had seen approximately 30% cats and 70% dogs, and Dr. Garnett, the staff “Cat Addict,” thought this would be a great way to attract more cat owners, as well as dog/cat owners, to the practice. She was also certain that her staff and clients would benefit from the CFP program’s many informational resources to help veterinary professionals become more knowledgeable about cats’ unique needs, behaviors, and understanding the veterinary visit from a cat’s perspective.

As Dr. Garnett worked through the CFP checklist of requirements, she was pleased to see that her hospital was doing many things “right,” but she was also intrigued by some of the recommendations made to improve the overall hospital experience for all cats who come through the door. One of the most persistent obstacles the hospital faced was the lack of a way to separate cats and dogs in the reception area. How could cats be easily separated from dogs and stay calm, cool, and collected once they entered the hospital?

The CFP Program doesn’t require you to have a completely separate cat-only waiting room. It does recommend some creative solutions to reduce waiting room stress for cats such as taking a cat directly into an exam room or creating a physical separation with items such as a bookshelf, room divider, or counters that could separate the space and avoid visual contact with dogs. Where are people finding this elusive piece of dividing furniture? Would it really work to help cats and their owners feel more secure? In 2012, Dr. Garnett attended the AAFP’s annual conference in Seattle so she could talk to other professionals that had successfully completed the CFP requirements. What kind of physical separation were other people using? How much were they spending?



## Program in Action



### CASE STUDY continued

### Care Animal Hospital Arvada, CO

Dr. Garnett attended a seminar for those interested in completing the CFP designation. It was there that she heard the wonderful word “IKEA” – and was directed to see if the store had anything appropriate to solve her reception room dilemma. Dr. Garnett traveled to IKEA and found the EXACT piece of furniture that would work (priced under \$100.00). It is not only just the right height (to keep cats above the line of vision of most dogs), but very easy to clean (plastic) and has cubbies that holds children’s toys and books along with clean towels to cover the cat carriers once placed on top of the unit. Dr. Garnett dubbed this new sectioned off space the hospital’s “KITTY PARKING AREA.” When the hospital’s Client Care Specialists see cat owners coming in with their carriers, they are immediately directed to the KITTY PARKING AREA to place their carriers on top of the IKEA unit. Cat owners then retrieve a clean towel from the cubby and cover the carrier, helping their cat to feel protected and lowering their stress. The KITTY PARKING AREA has been well received by cat owners, who can sit right beside their cats in their carriers, and the height of the dividing furniture has ensured that dogs don’t sniff the carriers or in any other way disturb the cat who is waiting to be seen.

“Even if you’re a dog/cat practice, the CFP designation really says ‘I focus on cats.’”

Dr. Paige Garnett  
Care Animal Hospital  
Arvada, CO



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**Cat Friendly Program®** Program,  
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