



## Program in Action



## CASE STUDY

### Oz Animal Hospital Chicago, IL

*“We’re in this profession for our feline patients—ultimately if our patients and their owners are more comfortable when seeing us, we’ve improved their quality-of-life.”*



Dr. Tracey Hlede  
Oz Animal Hospital  
Chicago, IL

## Cat-Friendly Doesn't Equal a Construction Project

*AAFP's Cat Friendly Practice Program Increases Client Compliance & Retention*

### Overview/Challenges

#### New Ownership

Chicago-based Oz Animal Hospital came under new ownership in December 2014. The practice shifted from hospice-focus to a wellness and preventive care clinic. With the desire to grow the practice in the neighborhood to a premiere clinic for advanced wellness care, it became apparent that executing these appointments well would be vital to keeping clients and patients coming back to the practice on a regular basis.

#### No Separate Waiting Area for Cats

It is a major misconception that in order to be an AAFP Cat Friendly Practice (CFP), a practice must have a completely separate waiting room/area for cats. A separate waiting room may be unrealistic due to a clinic's size or budget restrictions. This was in fact the case for Oz Animal Hospital—the small overall size of the clinic didn't lend itself to creating a separate cat-only waiting room.

#### Training Staff

Once Oz Animal Hospital made the commitment to obtaining CFP status, ensuring that all staff were equally educated and trained to follow the new feline-friendly protocols was essential to achieving CFP status. Staff members were used to doing things one way for so long.

### How the CFP Program Helped

#### New Ownership & Executing Appointments Well

The CFP Program supplied Oz Animal Hospital the tools to train staff on all aspects of being feline-friendly from the phone call, to walking in the door, to the actual exam, and the follow-up.

#### No Separate Waiting Area for Cats

Instead of undergoing a costly construction project to create two separate waiting areas for cats and dogs, Oz Animal Hospital opted to think out-of-the-box and solved this problem by immediately placing cats directly into their feline designated examination room upon check-in. Cats and dogs avoid direct contact using this simple, cost-free technique.



## Program in Action



### CASE STUDY continued

#### Oz Animal Hospital Chicago, IL

#### Training Staff

The educational resources the AAFP continues to expand on aided in Oz's staff education process. Veterinary team members watched videos on low stress handling, closed the practice for staff meetings to discuss implementing cat-friendly changes, and scheduled "Lunch and Learn" sessions that focused on different aspects of feline health and wellness. The education and reinforcement at these meetings helped overcome any initial staff resistance.

"Becoming a CFP has definitely changed the way we care for our cat patients and clients. The CFP protocols not only reduce the stress of the visit for the cat but the owner as well. I enjoy being able to educate owners about the stress reducing techniques we use to keep cats and owners calm during the visit. I think taking the extra steps we do as a CFP to reduce our patients' stress makes owners feel more confident in the level of care their cat is receiving" — Ashley, receptionist.

*"Cats are easier to handle since applying the Cat Friendly Practice Program's low stress techniques."*

Byron  
Veterinary Technician for  
last 17 years

#### Results & ROI

##### Clients' Reactions to Feline-Friendly Handling and Lower Stress Environment

Oz Animal Hospital has been showered with positive comments from clients about how much easier and less stressful wellness visits have been for their cat as well as themselves. The stress associated with the visit was a major reason clients hesitated to bring their cats in for regular visits. Oz Animal Hospital gives our feline pheromone wipes to clients to help cats acclimate to their carriers and lower stress during exams. In addition, Oz has wireless speakers placed throughout the hospital that play light classical music and have noticed that it has not just had a calming effect of cats, but their owners as well.

##### Increase in Feline Visits

After becoming CFP designated, Oz Animal Hospital has had a noticeable improvement in having many clients come back for follow-up lab work and coming in for 6-month wellness exams, which wasn't happening prior because owners felt the visit was too stressful for their cat. In addition to better client compliance, Oz Animal Hospital credits the CFP Program for helping to retain clients and increase loyalty because clients appreciate that Oz Animal Hospital's staff handles using feline-friendly techniques and makes an effort to have a more calming environment. **Oz Animal Hospital has seen nearly a 15% increase in feline visits since becoming a CFP.**



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