

Creating Comfort Rooms

Almost daily, veterinary team members have the unfortunate but necessary task of delivering bad news to clients. The physical environment selected for such discussions is truly important. A Comfort Room is a specifically designed room or a converted standard exam room modified to provide clients with a private, comfortable area for their veterinary visit, where they can grieve or reflect on a difficult diagnosis. This room can also serve as a location to take an angry or disgruntled client and communicate one-on-one on how to solve a problem or a place to have a client visit with a hospitalized pet.

Comfort Rooms provide for the needs of patients and clients simultaneously. By providing privacy, comfortable seating, plush floor mats, lowered non-florescent lighting, and other furnishings and materials, both the patient and clients are in a soothing, less threatening environment. With such privacy as a Comfort Room may provide, clients may feel less embarrassed by any emotional response, be more likely to ask questions, and be more responsive to the prognosis and treatment options. Client comfort rooms should be in a low traffic area of the hospital and when possible have access to a separate exit. This exit will allow clients to leave the hospital without walking through the reception area.

Suggested items include:

1. Comfortable seating
2. Large mats with washable covers that can be placed on the floor. This allows pets and their owners to sit or lay comfortably near one another.
3. The option of lowered, non-florescent lighting (lamps, simple wall units with standard 40 watt bulbs, or overhead lights with dimmer)
4. Curtains or blinds for any windows to ensure privacy
5. Facial tissue
6. Animal supplies including: pet food/treats, a bowl for water, towels
7. Telephone (cordless phone or close access to a phone that can be used in privacy)
8. "Do Not Disturb" signs for Comfort Room doors
9. A dry-erase board on the outside of the door to enable staff to reserve the room.
10. Pet loss books and support handouts