



**Veterinary Specialty
and Emergency Center**

THOUSAND OAKS

Open 24/7

Every Day  **Care Made Special**

An Open Letter to The Community

Thoughts about caring for your beloved pets during COVID-19 and beyond.

Dear Friends,

We all know that life has been tough this past year. What you may not know, however, is that during that time, more people became pet owners than ever before, and the veterinary industry was turned upside down. Many clinics reduced hours due to their own staffing challenges, further exacerbating a backlog of needed care. Circumstances demanded that we respond to emergencies at two to three times our normal rate practically overnight. That's similar to having a natural or man-made disaster every single day for a year. There were times we simply did not have enough qualified team members to serve the needs of our clients and their animals.

Providing compassionate, around-the-clock, advanced care is why we are here. Unfortunately, since the start of the pandemic, our team has been met with feedback in person, on the phone, and through social media, that has been not just inappropriate or rude, but at times, verbally abusive and downright vicious. And sadly, we are not alone – this is the case at nearly every veterinary clinic in North America.

The purpose of this letter to help you, our pet-loving community, understand what we have been doing to meet the challenge of providing 24-hour, quality emergency and specialty care during a year-long global pandemic:

- We did everything we could to care for every case that came through our door even though we were overwhelmed with patients, stress, and emotional exhaustion – and we **never** closed our doors
- We continually searched high and low to hire additional qualified people while working hard to provide professional and courteous service (the staff shortage is real, the unemployment rate in veterinary medicine is at an all-time low)
- We worked to make curbside service as effective as possible even though there were days we ran out of parking spaces
- We did everything we could to be efficient without sacrificing quality care, knowing the long wait was at times, horribly frustrating
- When the power went out for days, we were here
- When other practices closed, we stayed open
- When you told us that we were horrible human beings, we still cared for your pets as if they were our own

Some people say we're only about money. That is unfortunate and not true. It takes a lot to run a 24-hour animal hospital with all the latest state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment and a team of exceptionally qualified staff, including board-certified specialists. And during this time of over-worked, over-burdened staff, we had to up the game even further with additional benefits to encourage them to stay. We charge only what it takes to properly diagnose and treat the specialty and emergency cases that come through our door 24 hours a day. And we highly encourage all clients to have pet health insurance to help cover the cost of care.

Some people say we take too long to treat their animals. We understand and share your frustration. However, we stayed open every day during the pandemic when others were closed or had limited hours of care. We triage and prioritize patients upon arrival. Like a busy emergency room for humans, the number and severity of cases will frequently change throughout the day. This is no different from when you visit an emergency room for a cold, and you wonder why the person in a bad car accident is being treated before you. Those patients that are stable will have longer wait times.

Some people say we're not nice. Our team is comprised of kindhearted and dedicated individuals who have chosen a career in animal health because they deeply care. We did everything we could to stay happy in the face of overwhelming caseload, verbal abuse, and immense stress. We apologize if our happy face wasn't always our normal 110%, the nastiness took its toll and took away our smiles during a moment here and there. We always treated your pets with the attention and compassion they deserved.

We're not looking for a participation trophy. And we don't want anything resembling acknowledgment that we did our jobs the best we could, given insurmountable obstacles, attitudes, and workload. All we want is to enjoy the day when patience, kindness, respect, and understanding are practiced and embraced by everyone.

We look forward to shaking your hand as a gesture of acknowledgment that life was tough for all of us, and it is in the past. Until then, we hope you know that the pets and people of this community mean everything to us, and our commitment to serving you remains as strong as ever.

Sincerely,

The Grateful Staff of VSEC

As always, we welcome your comments.

Please email John MacFadyen, VSEC-TO Business Manager at john@vsecto.com.

