

New Small Pet Veterinarian Questions

While looking for a veterinarian for your small pet, you should do some advance scouting by calling the offices and asking some questions.

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Hamsters and other small animal pets do best when treated by veterinarians who have experience treating such pets.

If you're looking for a veterinarian for your small pet, you should do some advance scouting by calling the offices and asking some questions. The answers will help you get a feel for the type of care you and your pet are likely to receive.

Important questions to ask include the following: "What species does the hospital treat?" Make sure the list you get includes your type of pet. "What special equipment do you have?" You'll want the office to have modern anesthetic equipment such as Isoflurothane anesthesia. (Isoflurothane is a very safe inhalant anesthetic for small animals. Pets wake up rapidly at the end of the procedure, there is less of a problem with adjusting the dose for smaller animals, and the anesthetic has very little negative effect on the internal organs.) Does the office have incubators, small surgical equipment and special scales to weigh the pet? "How is emergency care provided?" If you are to be referred to another practice for after-hours care, can your veterinarian be reached for consultation, or do the veterinarians at the referral center have the proper experience? "Do you have a staff member who can answer questions on behavior, diets and training?" If so, the doctor need not be disturbed for routine matters. One word of caution, however: Don't ever ask for a diagnosis over the phone, and if a staff member gives you one without consulting the doctor and without the doctor having seen your pet, be suspicious.

After speaking with the staff, you can ask to speak to the doctor or ask to have the doctor call you back when time permits.

Questions for the doctor include: "Why have you chosen to learn about this species?" Is there some particular aspect about this type of animal that interests the doctor? "How did you learn about them? What courses have you taken? How did you get your experience?" Asking about continuing education is important. There is always new information available on diseases, drugs and techniques. Any veterinarian who is not continuing to further his or her knowledge about small animals is rapidly falling behind.

Finally, visit the veterinarian's office.

Once there, look for the following: How do the vet and staff handle the animals? Do they seem confident and at ease with the pet? Are they gentle but still able to control a "squirrely" individual? Does the hospital offer complete care, including a diagnostic workup of laboratory tests and x-rays for every species? Do they treat your smaller creature with respect instead of just a "throw-away" pet? Do they try to establish a diagnosis? Your small animal may have a small purchase price, but this should not be an issue when it comes to providing good veterinary care. Is the pet weighed at every visit, and is the weight recorded in the medical record? How is the pet weighed? Body weight can reflect important trends in health status.