

Tips & Tools for an Efficient Spay/Neuter Clinic



The ASPCA Spay/Neuter Alliance has packaged fast, easy tips to help your clinic boost its efficiency, organization and communication.

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Chapter 1: Efficiency During Intake

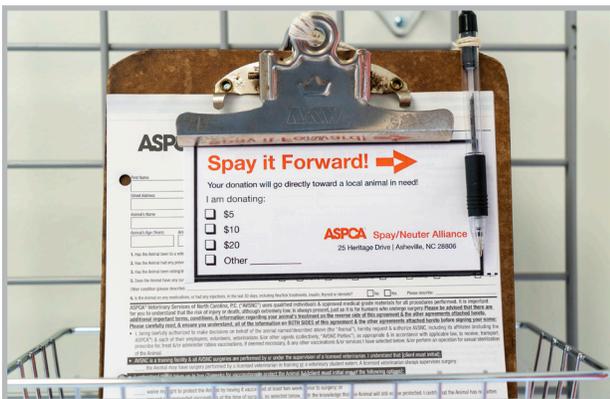
Improving overall clinic flow begins with the efficient intake of patients. A smooth beginning enhances the productivity throughout the entire patient experience.

Self-service Intake Forms



Give clients as much up-front information as possible during intake, so they can help themselves and begin completing paperwork without the need for one-on-one assistance.

Donation Requests



Soliciting for donations to subsidize services can be difficult. However, we have had success attaching individual donation slips to intake forms that mention directly helping other pets in need.

Post-operative Instructions Video



Help ensure that all clients, early or late, receive important information regarding their pet's surgery by playing a post-operative instructions video in the lobby. We offer a generic post-op video that all clinics can use in their lobby.

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Price Scanner



Eliminate mistakes and save time with an inexpensive price scanner that can scan microchip numbers directly into your software system.

Efficiency Cart



Having a stocked cart handy during intake means that staff members have often-used items in close proximity during a busy period of the day. It can also help decrease cross-contamination between patients and allow for quick clean-up of bladder or bowel accidents. Items to consider placing on the cart (according to clinics' specific needs) include:

1. Towels/blankets to pick up small pets and prevent the spread of disease
2. Pillow cases (for cats who arrive without carriers)
3. Sanitizer
4. Paper towels
5. Rubber gloves
6. One or two wet floor signs
7. Slip leads

Dental Aging Charts

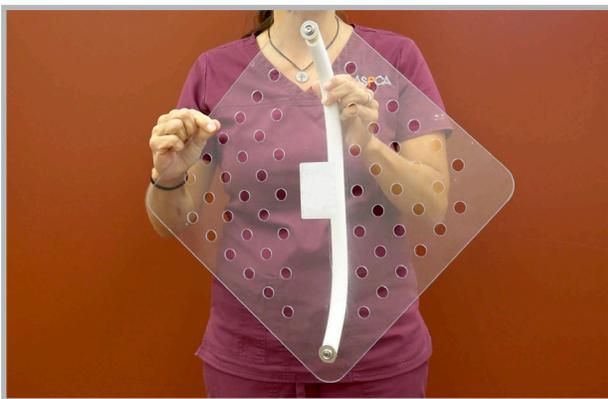


Use charts with pictures to help staff members determine ages of younger patients. Dog and cat charts can be placed in the prep area where patients are being aged and weighed before surgery.

Chapter 2: Reducing Patient Stress

Gentle handling is imperative in reducing a patient's overall anxiety. Decreased anxiety and stress will allow for a more uneventful pre-, intra- and post-operative period.

Cat & Small Animal Kennel Shield



Safely restrain patients in kennels with a custom-fitted Plexiglass shield. With it, the patient can be kept to the back of the kennel while an injection is safely administered through the holes.

Kitty City



Elevating cats off the floor is a proven method to help reduce their stress and anxiety during intake. It puts a buffer between them and any dogs who might be in the room. Although there are no specific guidelines for how far off the floor they should be elevated, our lowest shelf is 34 inches from the floor.

Community Cat Shelving



A shelving system is an efficient and low-stress method for housing community cats in traps. Ideal shelving would support the entire trap and be constructed from a non-porous material for ease of disinfection. Papering directly under the traps will allow for urine absorption, as well as warmth.

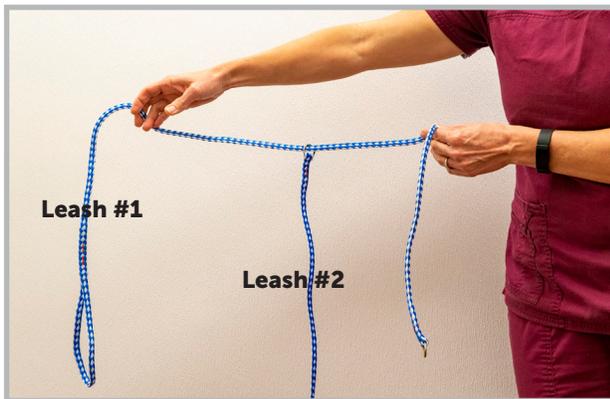
Removing Collars #1: Leash Hook



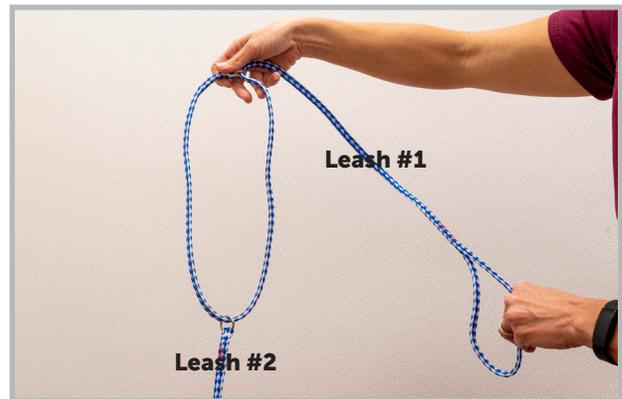
For fearful or fractious pets, a leash hook can help safely remove a leash *after* placing the pet in a cage. They can be created by simply bending a straight piece of metal, such as can be found in a large dog crate. They should be long enough (ours is approximately 24 inches long) to allow a staff member to reach into a cage or kennel without risking placing their hand too close to the dog's mouth. Keep one in each of your animal holding rooms.

Removing Collars #2: Two Slip Leashes

Some dogs do not like us reaching around their necks to remove leashes or become cage defensive after being placed in a cage. If you suspect a dog may react this way, try the following method to remove the leash once the animal is placed in the cage, using two slip leashes that each have an eyelet at the end.



1. Thread the handle of *leash #1* through the eyelet of *leash #2*.



2. *Leash #1* is used to make a loop to fasten around the animal's neck (take care not to pull on *leash #2* until the dog is secured in the cage).



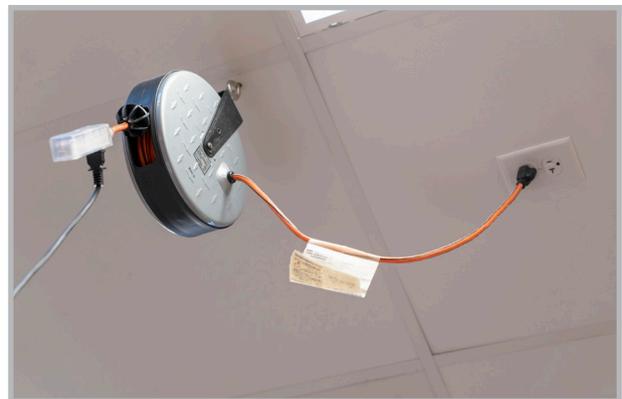
3. Once the dog is in cage, pull on *leash #2* to loosen *leash #1* from around the dog's neck and pull the leash off without having to reach in around her head.

Chapter 3:

Keeping an Organized Medical Area

An organized preparation area brings increased efficiency and patient safety by providing ease of access to all necessary equipment and supplies.

Mounting Clippers



Suspend clippers from the ceiling to prevent trip hazards, and give them additional protection, with a retractable ceiling extension cord.

Mounting Anesthesia Machines



By mounting anesthesia machines to a wall, you can provide your staff with a more efficient floor space. There will be less to clean around and fewer items to navigate during patient preparation and surgery.

Custom Cupboards for Vacuums



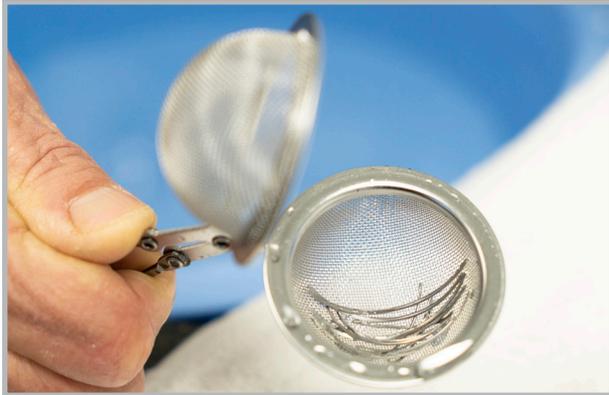
Provide even more floor space with simple cabinets to contain your wet/dry vacuum cleaners. Enclosed vacuums not only free up floor space but also reduce noise contamination, which can exacerbate patient stress.

Custom Endotracheal Tube Racks



Try this simple and inexpensive rack design to hang endotracheal tubes by size for drying and storage. These racks can be easily created with PVC pipe and a few simple tools.

Tea Strainer

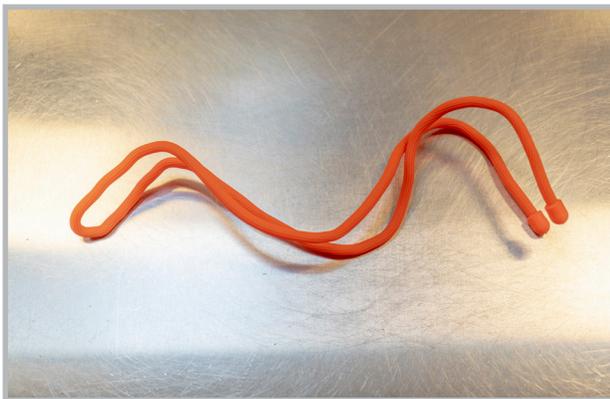


Use a tea strainer to contain needles during laundry to keep staff protected from those sharp edges.

Chapter 4: Preparing Animals for Surgery

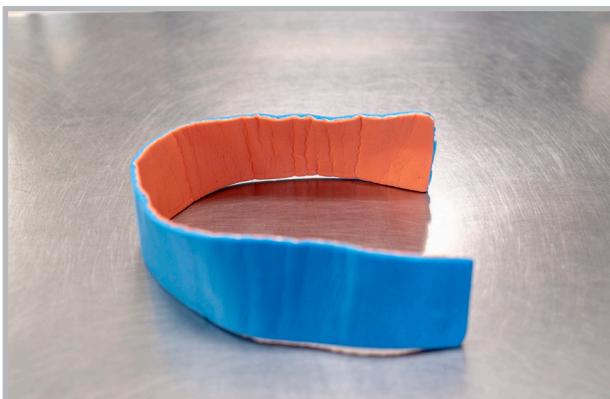
Patient preparation must be efficient and allow for careful attention to detail. Based on clinic protocols, all patients should be prepped in a manner that ensures both asepsis and thorough monitoring are maintained throughout the entire process.

Gear Tie



A gear tie can be used to hold the rear legs of a cat forward, in order to facilitate exposure for the approach. It is placed on the cat like a belt, right above the hips, then each leg is drawn forward and the “arm” of the restraint is wrapped around the leg just above the hock.

Sam Splint



A Sam splint is an alternative solution to the gear tie (although we prefer the gear tie, as it is extremely easy to disinfect). Cut a roll into thirds and use a 12-inch strip to hold up the rear legs of male cats for easy preparation and cleaner surgery.

Corn Oil as an Alternative Lubricant



Corn oil is an inexpensive and effective lubricant for protecting eyes of anesthetized patients and is used throughout veterinary medicine. In fact, it has been used with cyclosporine in the treatment of keratoconjunctivitis sicca. Place the oil in a lidded container to ensure the tip remains clean.

Protective Cornstarch



Cornstarch powder can be used as protection for patients with thin, delicate skin (e.g., male dogs, postpartum multiparous female dogs and older patients) during the shaving process. Although this will not prevent *all* nicking of the skin, it will make a considerable difference.

- Before shaving the patient, apply the powder over all areas that you are going to shave.
- Apply by sprinkling and rubbing in over areas you are going to shave.
- Once the powder is on and covering all areas, start shaving (using the same amount of light pressure as is normally given).
- Vacuum and prepare the patient as you normally would, and all the powder will be gone.

Chapter 5: Preventing Hypothermia

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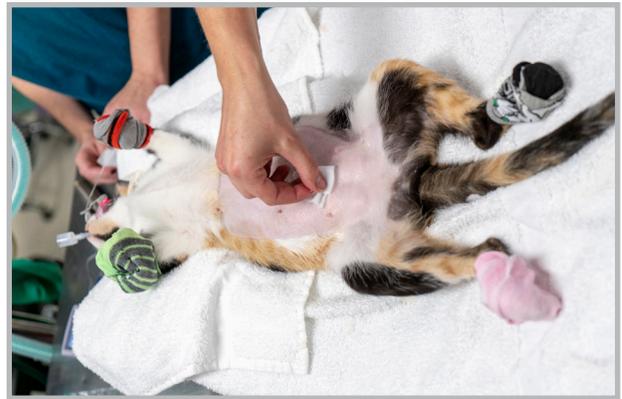
Hypothermia is a tremendous risk factor for post-operative complications in patients. Exhaustive efforts should be employed to combat it, and below are a few methods to aid you.

Warming Prep Solutions



Warming up prep solutions can help prevent hypothermia. Ideally, use a large crock pot with a *warm* setting, to keep multiple bottles of scrub and solution at an optimal temperature and readily available. Two to three inches of water in the base of the pot will suffice.

Baby Socks



Baby socks are a simple way to help prevent hypothermia by reducing heat loss through patient extremities. You can ask for donations or find them at your local thrift store. Ensure that all socks are laundered after every use to ensure no cross-contamination occurs between patients.

Circulating Hot Water Blanket



The circulating hot water blanket is a safe method of combating hypothermia, as it is able to maintain a constant temperature. We typically use a blanket or towel between the patient and the hot water blanket to reduce potential for cross contamination between patients and to maintain the longevity of the blanket.

We use the existing “patch kit” patches that come with the blankets for any repair work. They can also be ordered separately. Instead of the adhesive they provide, however, we use a waterproof polyurethane glue, as it bonds better and lasts longer. A flexible sealing tape is a quick alternative that will not last quite as long, but holds well for short periods.

Using Rice Socks to Warm Patients & Prevent Hypothermia



Tube socks filled with three to four cups of rice and knotted at the end (or eight to ten cups in a knotted pillow case) can be used to keep patients warm in the recovery area, without placing them at risk for burns. They can also be used in kennels during recovery, sheathed in a disposable glove to protect them from contamination. Heat them in a microwave on high for three minutes and keep warm throughout the day in a cooler by the recovery area. Always test the measurement/time/model combination to ensure a safe temperature before use and change out the rice periodically.

Recovery Area



Build a simple and inexpensive recovery area to keep patients comfortable and warm immediately following surgery with a layered blanket system, incorporating:

1. Exercise pads
2. Space blanket
3. Electric blanket in a waterproof mattress cover
4. Comforter

Keep patient care supplies (thermometer, lube, corn syrup, scanner, laminated signs) close by in a tote or carry tray.

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Chapter 6: Team Communication

During the busy day, communicating special patient needs can be challenging, yet thorough communication practices are essential to maintain patient safety. Every staff member needs to quickly and accurately have the same information on each patient at a glance. Also, providing easy ways for teams to understand instructions and goals will also help your clinic run smoother.

Improve Communication with Laminated Signs



These small, laminated signs placed on the patient during recovery provide easy signage and thorough communication to help ensure safe handling, closer monitoring and removal of wraps or catheters prior to patient release. Make sure to disinfect the signs between patients.

Pack Room Communication



Organize your pack room with lists and instruction on numbers needed for the day and provide trays to segregate instruments. Using lists and photos not only allows for accurate and efficient pack assembly, but it also allows for volunteers and new staff to be helpful in this task.