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Emergency and Critical Care Department – What to Expect

Veterinary Specialty Center's Emergency and Critical Care Department is open 24-hours a day, 365-days a year, to provide emergency care for your pet. As the first VetCot Certified Level 1 Trauma Center in the Chicagoland area, we're able to tackle emergencies on any level – from minor cases to severe traumas. VSC is staffed with highly trained Criticalists and Veterinarians along with a dedicated team of veterinary nurse specialists, veterinary nurses and assistants providing around-the-clock emergency and critical care support.

Triage process – After checking in with reception, your pet will be triaged by a veterinary nurse. This is an evaluation of your pet's body systems and a quick history used to facilitate identification of the most life-threatening problems. Patients in a life-threatening situation require timely intervention and will take priority over less critical patients. If you feel your pet's condition has worsened while you are waiting, please notify a member of our team immediately so they can reassess your pet. There can be an extensive wait depending on the number and types of emergencies presenting to the hospital. Please be patient as we are working diligently to have your pet seen in a timely manner. If you have questions regarding the status of your visit, please see a staff member for assistance.

Daily patient rounds – Doctor and patient rounds are scheduled twice daily between 8 and 9 in the morning and evenings. During rounds, your pet's case is presented to our team of doctors by the doctor currently in charge of your pet's care. This multidisciplinary approach allows our specialists and emergency doctor time to discuss each patient's presenting problem(s), diagnosis, care and treatment plan. Your doctor will be in contact with a daily update as soon as they are able, typically after 11 am. We realize it is difficult to wait for information regarding your pet. We will call immediately in the event of an emergency or change in status.

Updates on your pet – You may call in to obtain patient updates from a veterinary technician at any time. Please understand that veterinary technicians are not able to discuss test results or a diagnosis with you. Veterinary technician rounds are scheduled between 7 and 8 in the morning and evenings so calling during this time may result in the client service team taking a message.

Assigning a primary communication contact – Diagnostic testing and treatment plans can be complicated and time sensitive and talking to multiple family members can slow down this process. To help expedite communication, please designate one family member as a primary contact person to receive updates and authorize treatments and diagnostics for your pet. This individual should be in charge of communicating updates to the rest of your family. Please leave all necessary phone numbers for your designated family member with our client service representatives.

Updating your veterinarian – VSC communicates with your primary veterinarian to make sure your pet is receiving the best possible care. While your pet is in hospital, daily updates will be sent to your veterinarian and upon release, a final summary of your pet's care along with discharge instructions will be provided.

Discharge information – When your pet is ready to leave the hospital, a veterinary nurse will review discharge information with you. While the doctors would prefer to discuss all discharges in person, communicating in this manner allows us to serve a greater number of patients, minimize wait times and focus doctor attention on medical care. If you have additional questions and/or concerns after reviewing discharge information, please do not hesitate to ask or call us anytime. If you need to speak directly to a doctor, please inform us and the doctor can either speak to you in person or call you when they become available. Per FDA regulations, dispensed medications may not be returned to VSC (CPG sec. 460.300).

Visitation Hours – Pet visitation occurs daily between 12 noon and 11 pm. We will make every attempt to arrange for you to visit your pet in a private room once daily. If your pet requires continuous monitoring or oxygen therapy, visits will have to be done in the treatment area. Visitations should be kept to 20 minutes in order to assure your pet gets the rest and care that is needed. Private visits are dependent upon room availability, hospitalized patients' needs and incoming emergent patients' needs.

- ❖ During our busier times, the doctor may not be available to discuss your pet with you while you are visiting but you will be able to speak with the veterinary nurse overseeing your pet.
- ❖ For your safety and to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases, please refrain from touching other animals while visiting.
- ❖ To respect the privacy of our clients, our staff is not allowed to discuss the medical problems of other patients.
- ❖ Photographing other patients is prohibited.
- ❖ Cell phones may not be used in the treatment area and should be turned off or in silent mode.
- ❖ In the event of an emergency, you may be asked to vacate the treatment area.

Diets and medication – If your pet is on a special diet or you would prefer that we serve him or her their regular diet, you may leave food with your pet. A few treats are acceptable. All food must be cooked so we do not risk exposing any pet that may already have a compromised immune system to bacteria. We do not accept raw diets. We recommend that you bring your pet's medication(s) in the original bottle(s) when your pet is admitted to the hospital. This allows for verification of dosages.

Personal items – It is suggested that any personal items such as blankets, towels, toys, collars and leashes be left at home. Due to the active flow of the hospital, items may accidentally be lost in the laundry and/or during cage transitions and we cannot guarantee their return. Rest assured, we have plenty of towels and blankets for all patients to rest and snuggle on.

Patient care plan – After examining your pet and discussing your case, you and your pet's attending doctor will discuss the various options available. Once you agree on a course of treatment, you will be presented with a patient care plan that includes an approximate range for the cost of care and gives your authorization for treatment. You are required to leave 100% of the low end of the patient care plan when your pet is admitted to the hospital or at the time of service.

Financial updates – We respect that finances can play an important part in your decision for treatment. While your pet is hospitalized, a client service coordinator will continue to provide updates on costs for continued care. This may require you to make additional payments. Typically, you will receive financial updates every 24-48 hours unless there is a change to your pet's care plan.

Payment options – Accepted payment options include cash, check and credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express). Financing options are available through CareCredit for qualifying individuals. If you are interested in applying CareCredit, please let a member of our team know or apply online at www.carecredit.com.

Veterinary Specialty Center is guided by the belief that companion animals deserve state-of-the-art medical care in a kind and comforting environment. The courage of our patients, the loyalty of their human families, and the devotion of our referral veterinarians inspire our vision. It is sustained by the contributions of our compassionate, knowledgeable and dedicated staff and built upon a tradition of providing unsurpassed healthcare for animals.
