

# morley vetcentre

## PREPARING FOR THE VET

### TRIGGER STACKING:

Many dog owners report that they can handle their dog at home easily...but we need to be mindful of trigger stacking. A dog who simply 'tolerates' being handled by the owner at home may not be so tolerant if faced with potential triggers during veterinary visits.

With all of these potential triggers we may now have a dog who is over-threshold and no longer tolerates being handled. Instead they show signs of fear/anxiety/stress—which can then unfortunately limit how well the veterinarian can examine, handle, diagnose and treat your pet.

Instead we need to be aware of potential triggers in our dog's environment and invest time in training husbandry and handling skills.

Potential triggers check list:

- Travel in the car
- New environment
- Previous negative association
- In pain/feeling unwell
- Owner nervous/stressed
- Smells
- Noises
- Surfaces
- Other animals
- Veterinary staff
- Owner not present
- Restraint
- Procedures
- Wearing a muzzle



### BODY LANGUAGE & RESPONSES TO STRESS:

A dog showing signs of fear/anxiety/stress (FAS) will attempt to cope with FAS in four possible ways:

**FIGHT:** Growling, lunging, barking

**FLIGHT:** Pulling away, moving around attempting to escape

**FREEZE:** Cowering, hiding, still but tense

**FIDDLE:** Hypervigilant, pacing, jumping up

### Body Language and signs of FAS in Dogs

Relaxed	Anatomy	Stressed
Soft; loose	Face	Skin taut; wrinkled brow; lips pulled back; tense jaw
Almond shape; normal pupils; soft eye	Eyes	Dilated pupils; prolonged staring or avoiding eye contact; whale eye
Neutral; back, but not flattened; loose	Ears	Out to the side; flat against head
Flexible neck to tail	Spine/posture	Rigid and/or stiff
Level with topline; slightly above or below; wagging	Tail*	High above topline; tucked; wagging
Mouth open or closed; lips—long, soft, commissures relaxed	Mouth	Mouth closed; lips—short, tense; snarl; lip lift; bite



## REDUCING TRIGGERS

Although we may not be able to completely eliminate all triggers related to visiting the vet, we can absolutely reduce many triggers and implement simple training exercises to create positive experiences!

TRIGGER	TRAINING
Car travel	Take dog on plenty of FUN outings so that CAR doesn't = vet! Use a car harness or crate to securely transport your dog.
New environment	Bring your dog to the vet clinic for FUN visits. On the way to the park pop in and give your dog lot's of yummy treats for alking around the reception area and sitting calmly on the scales
Noises	Sound Proof Puppy Training APP (for iphone & android) is a great tool to desenistise your dog to a variety of noises
Smells	Adaptil Spray (Dog Appeasement Pheromone) on a bandana can assist in helping your dog feel calmer
Surfaces	Train your dog to be comfortable lying on their own mat (a math mat works really well) and bring it with you to the vet for your dog to lie on
Veterinary staff	Visit the vet clinic on a regular basis—veterinary staff are always happy to offer treats and become a friendly/familiar face to your dog
Owner stressed	In a medical emergency it is hard to stay calm, but, make a conscious effort to stay as calm as possible for your dog
Restraint	Incorporate simple handling exercises in to your daily routine (give plenty of yummy treats to teach a strong positive association with being picked up, carried, held etc)
Procedures	Incorporate simple handling exercises in to your daily routine (give plenty of yummy treats to teach a strong positive association.
Wearing a muzzle	Teach your dog that earing a muzzle is a positive experience using lots of yummy food treats (baby squeeze tubes work really well!)

## TRAINING TOOLS

Simple and fun handling tools involve giving your dog yummy food whilst being handled.

Licky mat (silicone pot holder) smeared with peanut butter or baby food keeps your dog busy licking while you trim nails, clean out ears, clip, brush, bathe and handle your dog. There is a strong positive association established as handling = yummy food to lick!

A snuffle mat (scattered with dry yummy treats) works in the same way as a licky mat.

A baby food satchet can be gently squeezed and the dog can lick the food as it is released (great option for a dog wearing a muzzle)



For further advice please contact us at  
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