

4. Less Stress for Pets at the Vets

Lloyd, J. James Cook University

The importance of low stress handling (LSH) in the veterinary hospital is becoming increasingly recognised around the world. Stressed animals undergo physiological changes, which can have adverse effects on immunity, health, and behaviour, and can delay recovery. Stressed animals can be difficult to handle, and dog/cat bites and scratches are common causes of injury in the veterinary hospital. Understanding how to handle animals in a less stressful manner benefits patients, owners, staff, and hospitals alike.

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) advocates that stress minimisation must be a standard of care. A James Cook University (JCU) initiative is to incorporate the principles and practicalities of LSH into undergraduate veterinary education to produce graduates who are skilled in creating low stress environments for their patients, and to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

This workshop will describe how final year (Year 5) students at JCU mitigate patient stress through (1) environmental enrichment (to improve the pets' experience in the University hospital), and (2) training patients to participate in their own health care, for example, by willingly proffering body parts for examination. Games/audience participation will be used to illustrate training concepts.

Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of the workshop, delegates will be able to:

- Describe how animals learn.
- Understand why LSH is important in the veterinary hospital.
- Create key activities and processes to incorporate LSH principles and practicalities into undergraduate veterinary education.