

**COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE**

Welcome to the North Carolina State College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) and the Veterinary Health Complex (VHC) **ORTHOPAEDICS SERVICE**. The CVM has the breadth and depth of experts in the field that has this College ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the country for Colleges of Veterinary Medicine so you are in good hands.

We are aware that learning that your pet is ill or injured is a very difficult experience and going to a new hospital, seeing a new doctor, and making decisions about treatment options can be overwhelming. It is our goal to make your experience with us positive. Toward that goal, we want to provide you with some additional information about what you should expect from the **ORTHOPAEDIC SERVICE** regarding service and communication. Effective communication is accomplished when both parties take an active role in the process. Thus, we wanted to outline what you should expect from us as well as what we ask of you.

***What you should expect from us:***

**EXCELLENT PATIENT CARE:** Your pet will receive excellent patient care and you will receive accurate information about the medical status of your pet so that you know all of the diagnostic and therapeutic options available. Unfortunately, medicine is not an exact science and sometimes the reason for the illness of your pet cannot always be determined immediately. However, you can rest assured that the clinicians and staff have your pet's best interest at heart and are doing everything possible for a positive outcome.

**LONGER, MORE INDEPTH VISIT:** Because we are a teaching facility providing clinical education to students, interns and residents, your visit here may take longer than you have experienced at your primary care veterinarians office. In contrast to a general veterinary practice, the VHC is a large hospital, with many departments that provide high quality care in their specific area. If your pet needs input from a number of areas during their visit, this will lengthen the time needed.

**HIGH QUALITY RESEARCH:** The missions of the CVM include patient care, education, and research, but we do not experiment on our patients. The care of your pet comes first. However, many of our clinicians are leaders in their field and are involved in the development of new diagnostic or treatment approaches to real clinical problems. You may be asked if you and your pet would like to participate in a clinical research study. These are always voluntary, and you will be fully informed regarding the risks and benefits prior to any participation.

**AN ESTIMATE OF COSTS:** You will receive an initial estimate of the cost for services. Because it is not always possible to predict what diagnostics or treatments might be needed as your pets' care progresses, if there are significant changes that alter our estimate, this will be discussed, and an updated estimate will be provided.

**SPECIALIST-LEVEL DIAGNOSTICS AND TREATMENTS:** You will receive information regarding benefits and risks of various medical procedures and treatments so that you can make an informed decision about your options.

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:** Our goal is to provide you with excellent communication regarding the status of your pet. If your pet is hospitalized, we will make every effort to contact you at least daily, and after any significant procedure, or if your pet's the medical status changes.

**OPTIONS FOR VISITATION:** We know how important family support is to the healing of our patients. If you feel that visiting your pet while they are in the VHC will be a benefit to them, please discuss this with the clinicians in charge of your pets' care.

**UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR NEEDS AS AN OWNER:** While our focus is on providing the best care possible for your pet, we will take into consideration your needs as the owner. We will demonstrate compassion and always behave in a professional manner.

**ACCURATE BILLING:** We will make every effort to provide you with a complete bill at the time of discharge. However, this is a large and complex hospital, and some fees may not be posted to your account prior to discharge. This may result in you getting a bill in the mail.

**AVAILABLE FACULTY:** You will always be able to speak with the senior clinician in charge of your pets' medical team if you have concerns with the care, the communication, or the process which you have experienced.

***What we ask of you:***

**PROVIDE AN ACCURATE PATIENT HISTORY:** Please provide the clinicians with all relevant information including medical history, current signs of disease and current medications so that an effective diagnostic and treatment plan can be developed.

**MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS:** We encourage you to ask questions regarding the treatment plan and associated cost so that you are informed when you make a decision regarding the medical care of your pet.

**INVOLVEMENT OF YOUR PRIMARY VETERINARIAN:** We will contact your primary care veterinarian so that we are able to share with them the medical status of your pet to facilitate the on-going care of your pet.

**FOLLOW THE DISCHARGE PLAN:** In order to optimize your pets' recovery, we will ask you to follow the treatment plan that is provided to you at discharge. If you feel you can't do what is asked, please discuss this with the clinicians in charge of your case. If you feel the home care plan is not working, please contact the ORTHOPAEDIC SERVICE.

**PRACTICE SAFETY:** We ask that you comply with the VHC's policies and procedures which are designed to create a safe working environment for our staff and an excellent medical care for all our patients.

**EXPRESS CONCERNS:** If you have any concerns regarding patient care, communication, or cost of treatment, then we encourage you to discuss these with the senior clinician on the team.

**FOLLOW OUR BILLING POLICIES:** We ask that you comply with our financial policy. We will provide you with an estimate for services to be rendered, will ask you to pay a deposit to cover the minimum expected cost, and will ask that you pay the balance of your bill at the time of discharge. If the cost of treatment is likely to exceed the upper level of the estimate, we will discuss this with you, and will ask that you increase the deposit to cover the new minimum expected cost.

**PROVIDE FEEDBACK:** We encourage you to complete the on-line client satisfaction survey so that you can provide us with feedback that helps us in determining how well we are meeting our client and patient needs.

***Frequently Asked Questions:***

**Why does everything seem to take so long?**

The VHC is a tertiary care teaching facility that has some of the most respected clinicians overseeing patient care. However, because we are a teaching facility, time is spent teaching our students, interns and residents the art of veterinary medicine which sometimes slows the process as compared to a private practice.

**You are State facility so why are your fees so high?**

While the VHC does receive some financial support from the State of North Carolina, the majority of the operating costs of the hospital must be paid from client fees. The fees are constantly reviewed to ensure that we cover our operating costs. Many of the tests and treatments that enable us to provide state-of-the-art care are expensive, and we must pass these costs on to those that benefit from them.

**How come I am not able to see the same clinician every time I come to a specific specialty service?**

As we have described, the mission of the CVM is patient care, education, and research and so the senior faculty members not only work in the clinic but they also participate in classroom teaching along with work on their research programs. Thus, when they are not on clinics, they are advancing the training of veterinary students by teaching or advancing the field of veterinary medicine through research. Similarly, the clinicians in training have periods of time away from their primary specialty service to receive training in other specialty services as well as to participate in research projects.

**Will students be working on my pet?**

Students will be involved in your pets care, but will always be closely supervised by the clinicians on the Service. The extent of involvement will depend on the skills of the individual student and the complexity of the task. Most Services will also have interns and residents learning the skills of their specialty area. These clinicians are supervised by the senior clinician, who is ultimately responsible for your pets care.