



BELLA MOSS
FOUNDATION

Is your Veterinary Practice following proper Infection Control measures



As a pet owner, ensuring that your veterinary practice is following proper infection control measures is crucial to safeguarding your pet's health and minimizing the risk of hospital-acquired (nosocomial) infections. Veterinary facilities should have clear protocols in place to prevent the spread of infections and create a clean, safe environment for both animals and staff. Here are some key signs that your pet's veterinary practice is taking infection control appropriately.



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INFECTION CONTROL EDUCATION FOR VETS NURSES AND OWNERS



Cleanliness of the Facility

> ANY FACILITY TAKING INFECTION CONTROL SERIOUSLY

Will be proud of the fact they are doing this and will not mind a genuine concerned client asking to see their 'Practice Biosecurity and Infection Control Policy', sharing with you who their 'Infection Control Champion' is, or their latest infection control audit. In fact many concerned practices now place their audit results on their websites and their infection control external assessment on their front door etc. A responsible practice is likely to ask for your assistance in conducting 'positive surveillance for nosocomial infection', by asking you to monitor for and inform them if your pet shows any signs of a hospital-acquired infection. Indeed, they use their infection control commitment and status as a marketing tool.

> GENERAL CLEANLINESS

The veterinary clinic should appear clean, well-maintained, and free from visible dirt or clutter. Floors, counters, waiting rooms, and examination rooms should be regularly cleaned and disinfected. A clean practice is an important first indicator that hygiene and infection control are prioritised.

> STERILE AREAS

If you can see areas where sterile procedures occur, like the surgery room or treatment areas, they should look well-maintained and free of contamination. Surfaces and surgical equipment should be disinfected regularly, and the area should not show signs of poor cleanliness or disorganisation.



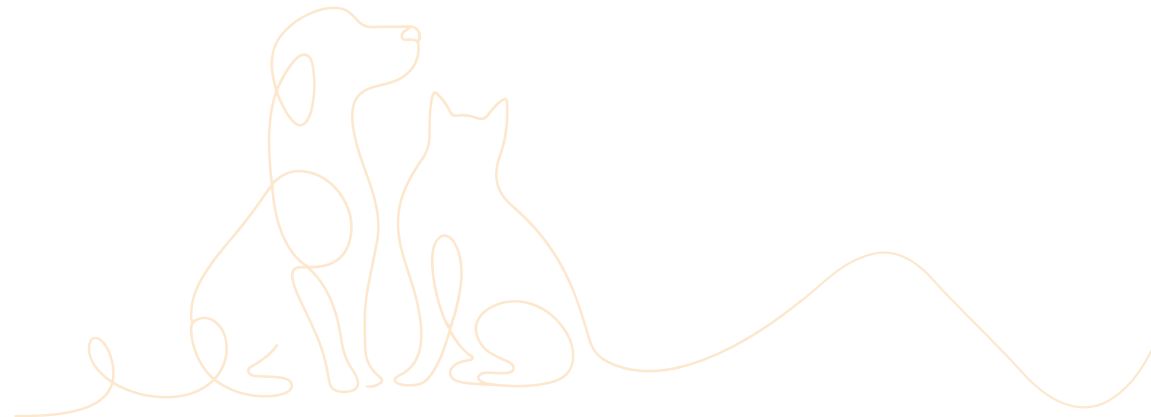
Proper Handling of Animals

> SEPARATION OF SICK AND HEALTHY ANIMALS

A responsible veterinary practice will keep sick or contagious animals separated from healthy ones. They should be asking what your pets presenting signs are prior to your arrival at the practice. There should be distinct, designated areas for animals with infectious diseases (e.g., isolation rooms). Ask how the clinic separates animals with infectious conditions or those being treated for contagious diseases.

> ISOLATION PROTOCOLS

If your pet needs to be hospitalised or stay for an extended period, check whether there are specific isolation protocols in place for animals with contagious conditions. This ensures that infection doesn't spread to other animals.





Staff Hygiene and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

> VISIBLE USE OF PPE

Staff should be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, gowns, masks, and face shields when necessary. For instance, when performing surgeries, treating infectious animals, or handling biological materials (e.g., blood, bodily fluids), veterinarians and technicians should use PPE to prevent cross-contamination.

> HAND HYGIENE

Staff should be regularly washing their hands or using hand sanitisers, especially between animal consultations or after handling potentially contaminated materials. It's also a positive sign if they change gloves between handling animals or after touching dirty surfaces.



Infection Control Protocols

> CLEAR INFECTION CONTROL POLICIES

Ask about the clinic's infection control protocols. A responsible practice will have documented guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting exam tables, cages and other equipment. They should also be able to explain how they sterilise surgical instruments and handle medical waste.

> DISINFECTION OF EQUIPMENT AND SURFACES

Ensure that the clinic regularly disinfects high-touch surfaces such as door handles, countertops, examination tables and waiting room chairs. Veterinary practices should use hospital-grade disinfectants on surfaces where animals are treated, and equipment should be sterilised after each use.



Visible Cleaning and Sterilisation Procedures

> STERILISATION OF INSTRUMENTS

Ask how instruments used in surgery or diagnostics are cleaned. Veterinary practices should have an autoclave or similar sterilisation equipment to properly sterilise surgical instruments, and this process should be done after every use.

> SEPARATE CLEANING AREAS

Ideally, veterinary facilities should have designated areas for cleaning soiled items (e.g., a "dirty utility" room for disposing of waste, washing bedding, and cleaning soiled equipment). These areas should be separate from where clean items or animals are handled.





Waste Disposal Procedures

> PROPER WASTE DISPOSAL

Ensure that the clinic has an appropriate waste management system in place. Biohazardous materials such as used needles, surgical gloves, soiled bandages, or contaminated items should be disposed of in clearly labelled, secure containers. Check for biohazard waste disposal signs and make sure the facility follows regulations for waste handling.

> SOILED LAUNDRY

Ask about how the clinic handles soiled towels, bedding, or surgical drapes. These items should be handled in a controlled manner to prevent contamination and washed using appropriate disinfecting laundry practices.



Handling of Contaminated Animals and Materials

> CONTAMINATION PROTOCOLS

Ask how the clinic handles animals with known or suspected contagious diseases. There should be clear protocols to prevent the spread of infection between animals, including the use of separate isolation areas and protective barriers for both animals and humans.

> SEPARATE EXAMINATION AREAS

Check if the clinic has separate examination rooms or areas for animals with respiratory, gastrointestinal, or other infectious conditions. If an animal is sick, it should be handled in a dedicated area away from healthy animals to reduce the risk of transmission.



Monitoring of Infections

> POSITIVE SURVEILLANCE

A veterinary practice should monitor infection rates within its facility. If you ask, they should be able to describe how they track and handle nosocomial (hospital-acquired) infections. Regular audits of infection control practices help identify and mitigate risks early.

> STAFF TRAINING ON INFECTION CONTROL

The clinic should provide regular training for staff on infection prevention and control measures. This includes training in the proper use of PPE, sterilisation procedures, and handling of hazardous materials.





Communication with Pet Owners

> TRANSPARENCY IN INFECTION CONTROL

Ask the practice about its infection control procedures, and a professional clinic should be open about how they keep animals safe from infections. If they seem defensive or unclear about their practices, this might be a red flag.

> GUIDANCE FOR POST-VISIT CARE

For surgical or post-procedure cases, the clinic should provide clear instructions on how to care for your pet at home, particularly to prevent infections (e.g., keeping wounds clean, preventing licking, monitoring for signs of infection).



Certifications and Accreditation

> ACCREDITATION

Some veterinary clinics are accredited by recognised bodies like the **American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA)**, or the **Bella Moss Foundation (BMF)**. These practices are required to meet specific hygiene and infection control standards. You can ask whether the clinic is AAHA or BMF-accredited or holds other relevant certifications.

> REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

A veterinary clinic should comply with local or regional regulations for infection control and hygiene. Practices that comply with or exceed these standards demonstrate a commitment to maintaining high levels of hygiene.



Monitoring and Reporting

> INFECTION TRACKING AND AUDITING

A well-managed veterinary facility should regularly monitor infection control effectiveness through audits and incident reports. If you ask about recent infection rates or what steps the clinic is taking in response to an outbreak, they should be able to provide specific answers.

To ensure that your pet's veterinary practice is following appropriate infection control measures, pay attention to the overall cleanliness of the facility, the use of proper PPE, the segregation of clean and dirty areas, and the transparency of the staff about their hygiene protocols. Don't hesitate to ask questions about how the clinic handles infection control, sterilisation, waste disposal, and cleaning procedures. A well-run veterinary practice will be open and thorough in explaining how they prevent infections and safeguard the health of both animals and humans.

