



 **Staff Training Material**

Why are Barrier Nursing Protocols important in the Veterinary Care of Pet Animal



Barrier nursing protocols in veterinary care are a set of infection control practices designed to prevent the spread of infectious diseases between animals, people and the environment within a veterinary clinic or hospital. These protocols are particularly important in preventing the transmission of zoonotic diseases (those that can pass from animals to humans) and nosocomial infections (infections acquired infections in the hospital setting).





Key Components of Barrier Nursing Protocols

> WHEN SHOULD BARRIER NURSING CARE BE PROVIDED FOR VETERINARY PATIENTS

- > If your pet is demonstrating any signs consistent with infectious disease, (contagious to other patients or humans), then barrier nursing is advised in order to minimise the risk of infection being passed on.
- > If your pet is immune-compromised or, for any other reason, particularly susceptible to the deleterious effects of any infectious disease, they may also be 'barrier nursed' for their own protection.

> PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- > **Gloves:** Veterinary staff should wear gloves when handling animals or items that may be contaminated, such as bedding, cages, or equipment.
- > **Masks:** Surgical masks or respiratory protection should be worn to prevent the spread of airborne pathogens, especially when handling animals with respiratory infections or during procedures. Mask **MUST** always be worn by any human entering an operating theatre at anytime.
- > **Gowns/Aprons:** Protective clothing should be worn to prevent contamination of the veterinary staff's clothes and to reduce the risk of cross-contamination between animals and the clinic.
- > **Eye protection:** In certain situations, such as when dealing with contagious diseases transmitted through body fluids, goggles or face shields may be used.

> ISOLATION AND SEGREGATION

- > **Isolation of infected patients:** Animals that have contagious diseases, or are suspected of carrying infectious pathogens, should be isolated from healthy animals to prevent transmission.
- > **Designated isolation rooms:** Clinics should have separate rooms for animals with contagious diseases, with restricted access to minimise the risk of infection.
- > **Clear signage:** Signs should be posted to indicate isolation areas and to remind staff of the protocols required for entry and exit.

> STRICT HYGIENE PRACTICES

- > **Hand hygiene:** Handwashing with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitisers should be done after each patient interaction, especially if gloves have been worn.
- > **Cleaning and disinfection:** All surfaces, equipment, cages and tools should be disinfected between uses to prevent the spread of pathogens. High-touch areas like doorknobs, counters and waiting areas should be cleaned regularly.
- > **Working surfaces and frequent touch surfaces:** Should be regularly monitored for evidence of contamination to prove efficacy of sanitisation.
- > **Footwear protection:** Disposable shoe-covers or dedicated footwear may be worn when entering isolation areas to prevent contamination from spreading between areas of the clinic.





Key Components of Barrier Nursing Protocols

> ANIMAL HANDLING AND CARE

- > **Limit contact:** Limit handling of infected or contagious animals to essential personnel only. This reduces the risk of transferring infectious material to other animals or areas of the clinic. For reasons of minimising the risk of transfer or spread of disease, but also to minimise the risk of human (zoonotic) infection, there may be occasions when you are advised not to visit your pet, or to visit them in a consulting or alternate area, where the potential spread of infection can be mitigated.
- > **Use of dedicated equipment:** Instruments, bedding, and other items used for infected animals should be kept separate and sterilised or disposed of after use.
- > **Minimise cross-contact:** If possible, avoid transferring animals between rooms and ensure that any necessary movements are done with the utmost care and hygiene, to avoid contaminating common areas or other patients.

> STAFF TRAINING AND PROTOCOL ADHERENCE

- > **Ongoing education:** All clinic staff should be trained in infection control practices, including the proper use of PPE, the importance of hand hygiene, and the need for segregation of infected animals.
- > **Clear policies:** The clinic should have written guidelines and policies for barrier nursing practices, and staff should adhere to them consistently.





Why Barrier Nursing Protocols Are Important for Veterinary Patients

> PREVENTION OF NOSOCOMIAL INFECTIONS

Barrier nursing protocols are vital in preventing nosocomial (hospital-acquired) infections in veterinary clinics. When animals undergo procedures or are hospitalised, they are at risk of acquiring infections from other animals or from contaminated surfaces. Adhering to barrier nursing practices helps prevent these secondary infections.

> PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE PATIENTS

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> REDUCTION OF DISEASE TRANSMISSION

Contagious diseases can spread quickly within a veterinary clinic if proper isolation and hygiene protocols are not followed. By implementing barrier nursing, clinics can prevent cross-contamination between patients and minimise the spread of diseases such as kennel cough, feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), or parvovirus.

> IMPROVED PATIENT OUTCOMES

By minimising the risk of infections, barrier nursing contributes to quicker recoveries for patients and reduces the overall length of hospital stays. This is especially important for patients with serious conditions who may have a weakened immune system.

> PROTECTING VETERINARY STAFF

Barrier nursing protocols protect veterinary staff from potential infections, including zoonotic diseases that could be transmitted during treatment. This is especially important for veterinarians and technicians who work closely with animals and are at higher risk of exposure.

Barrier nursing protocols are essential in maintaining a safe and clean environment in veterinary clinics. They help prevent the spread of infections, protect both animals and humans from potential diseases, and ensure the best possible care for all patients. By minimising cross-contamination, ensuring proper hygiene, and implementing isolation procedures, barrier nursing protocols play a crucial role in safeguarding the health of animals and the people who care for them.

