

Why should cats go to a cat only hospital?

There are over 2600 feline-only hospitals in North America and not a single dog-only hospital. The numbers are dramatic and really speak to the unique needs of the feline patient. Although plenty of cats do fine with dogs, and will always be comfortable around dogs, many cats are significantly more stressed in the presence of dogs. As we all know, cats are already stressed at the hospital, so any reduction in that stress level can become significant. This is especially true for the ill cat.

Cats have also been compared to dogs for too long. The two species have less in common than the marked differences that are readily apparent. Cats are not little dogs and their medicine differs greatly from canine medicine. Fortunately, feline medicine has come a long way since my career began in the mid 1990's. Nowadays, we have a feline medical association called the AAFP (American Association of Feline Practitioners) with a very informative website called, catvets.com. We can also reference the Healthy Cats for Life website geared toward the cat owner (healthycatsforlife.com). Again, there is no canine-only association, nor do they have their own website discussing their care. Dogs are often easier to handle and much easier to understand, especially when going to the veterinary hospital.

I do like dogs and have a wonderful pet dog of my own. I only mean to emphasize the unique needs of the pet cat; dogs are also very interesting in their own ways. On the other hand, much can be said about the numbers at my house. I love my one dog, but I have 8 pet cats! Even as a veterinarian, I do appreciate the more difficult time an owner has in taking the cat to the doctor versus taking the dog to the doctor. The last thing my cats need is to be intimidated by a barking dog. Some cats will be terrified with just the smell of a dog. Cats do appreciate smells much more acutely than humans. They often smell the dogs, even in a well-cleaned and very professional dog and cat hospital. At the Cat Clinic of Roswell, we do not allow dogs in our building, even when we are closed. Again, our primary focus is the comfort of our unique species of interest. Cats do appreciate our efforts. Almost every cat will do better in a feline only hospital. For some, it may be the difference that makes a doctor visit tolerable!

We are also given the benefit of being able to concentrate on only feline medicine. My technicians can focus their training and continuing education on the cat only. Even when I did see dogs as patients, I preferred cats. However, nowadays, I am able to focus all my efforts on the cat literature and feline only continuing education. In focusing my practice solely on cats, I have definitely become a better cat doctor.

I have spent 7 of my 11 years in practice in feline only hospitals. However, the first two years in a feline only hospital were the most interesting of those seven years. Going into working in a cat only hospital, I did not foresee a big improvement in my abilities as a cat doctor because I thought that my cat knowledge was already very strong. Much to my surprise, about 2 years in to cat-only practice, I was able to reflect on how much my skills and diagnostic ability had improved. I realized that whenever one focuses on a single task, they will inevitably become more skilled at that craft.

Our love for cats is obvious when you visit us at the Cat Clinic of Roswell. Please also understand that we are dedicating our hospital and our careers to this one species. As a result, we are engaged in a life-long pursuit of learning more about this unique animal. Please come by and see us if you need some insight in to your cat, or preferably cats!