**Choosing a Vet**

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| A healthy dog is a happy dog, and having a good veterinarian plays a key part in keeping your canine companion in the best health possible. In fact, choosing your veterinarian may possible be the most important decision you will make for your dog.  Even if you don't yet have a dog, it's a good idea to select a veterinarian before you bring a dog into your home. This is because you new pet will most likely require a physical examination and vaccinations.  Before you can actually decide what vet to take your dog to you must have some possible vets to choose from. You can start finding some out about some clinics by asking your friends, family and neighbours about their vet. Breed clubs, private rescue organization and local animal service agencies may also be able to provide you with valuable information.  Once you have narrowed down your options, you will want to begin visiting the clinics (or simply calling them on the phone) and assessing some things:  **Communication Skills** Be sure that you are comfortable talking with the veterinarian you will be working with. A veterinarian should not talk down to you, but should treat you with respect. They should be able to explain your dog's situations to you in plain English listen carefully to what you have to say. Remember it's very important that you tell your veterinarian everything you know about your dog's health as you are the one who spends time with him/her the most.  **Competence** Learn as much about a vet's background as you can. What training have they had? Do they know what to look for and when they need more information? Do they stay up to date on the latest in veterinary science? Are they willing to refer you to a specialist if necessary?  **Convenience** How convenient is it for you to take your dog to the vet? Pay special attention to a clinic's hours of operation and whether or not they can handle emergency situations. You should also include parking and the distance from your house into the equation.  **Facility** Is the facility clean? Does it smell nice? Do they have the type of equipment necessary to care for you dog and assess certain situations? This factor is very important.  **Fees** Ah yes! You were thinking of this one all along weren't you? It's true, this is also a very important factor in any decision that you make. It is generally true that a higher price is a reflection of the services offered (you get what you pay for), however there are some exceptions to the rule. You may also wish to know when you must pay for care and how you can pay for it -- Some veterinary clinics may not accepts checks, some may take credit cards, you get the idea. It is always fair to expect one things however; honest estimates of projected cost and updated figures as care continues.  **Good Record Keeping** It is very important for a vet to be aware of your dog's past health. Also, if you ever switch veterinarians or see a specialist your records will be essential to that individual.  **Policies** You should be aware of policies that certain clinics may have. Some we have already gone over, -- emergency policies, fees - however you should also find out if you can request a certain veterinarian otherwise you may find that your dog is being seen by someone different every time he or she attend the clinic.  **Services** Be aware of services offered by a vet or clinic. Do they specialize in diabetic dogs? Do they give dental cleanings? Be sure to ask about anything that might be specific to your dog's needs. **Staff** Staff should be friendly and courteous. Also it might be nice to know if they are actually answering the phone when you call or if you are going to get a machine or answering service. After you have selected a veterinarian it is important that try to create a positive long term relationship with that individual. It's okay to switch vet's if you honestly think thatthere is a better alternative. However, remember that you are going to want your vet to recognize your pets and know them almost as well as you do.   |