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Forward Booking WORKS! Submission:

At Animal Family Veterinary Care Center, our practice believes forward booking preventive healthcare visits is critical for the health and well-being of our patients. This protocol fits into our practice culture...which is *enriching lives through healthy pets*. Regularly scheduled wellness visits help us keep our patients healthy, and allow us to notice any changes in health or behavior early enough to treat successfully.

The entire staff regularly communicates the message to our clients that forward booking wellness care visits is just what we do. Therefore, we have to get our clients in a mindset that this is important and it's something our practice does yearly, or whenever a patient's next wellness visit should be scheduled. It's just like a person pre-booking their next doctor or dentist appointments!

When clients book these appointments for their pets, it's already on the calendar and it's done! They feel good because they know they are doing what's best for their pets and following up as directed by our practice. We tell clients (and remind ourselves) that it is a lot easier to reschedule an existing appointment than to have clients remember to call to make the appointment. Our clients are busy people, and these sorts of things are the things people tend to put off—not because they don't care about their pets, but because they have a lot going on in their lives.

When our practice first started implementing our forward booking protocol for preventive healthcare visits, we worked together to figure out the best way to have conversations with clients in a “non-apologetic way.” Part of staff education was practicing what a conversation with a client could look like.

During staff meetings, we role-played, and while role-playing is often dreaded, it remains the most effective tool in practicing client interactions. There is really no pressure when working out these scenarios with your team, as everyone wants to do well, and whatever we can do to help them do that, is worth the time and effort. We noted which team members were more successful, and had them share what communication techniques worked for them. It ended up being a confidence-builder, especially for those who were less skilled in interacting with clients.

To ensure client compliance, our practice sends reminder cards to clients about six weeks prior to their scheduled appointment that's on the books. We do that because often times, vaccinations are part of that visit. If the appointed time needs to be

rescheduled, it gives us enough leeway to move the appointment without resulting in overdue vaccinations.

Lastly, our practice tracks our pre-appointment scheduling. We look at the number of exams generated from forward booking and track the percentages on a weekly basis. We post the tracking results for everyone to see, to keep forward booking on the forefront and so we can keep achieving our goals! Remember, the more appointments that are pre-appointed, the fewer overdue reminder calls staff need to make and that is a win for everyone!