

Purdue Veterinary Nursing Campus Program (VNRS) Aggressive Animal Policy

The purpose of this Aggressive Animal Policy is to ensure the safety and well-being of our veterinary nursing students, faculty, staff, clients, and the animals under our care. It outlines the protocols for managing and handling animals that display aggressive behavior within our veterinary facility. Recognizing that exposure to a variety of animal behaviors, including aggression, is essential for the comprehensive education and training of veterinary and veterinary nursing students, this policy also emphasizes the importance of cautious and informed interactions with aggressive animals to ensure that such experiences are educational and not hazardous.

Small Animal Management of Aggressive Animals

Getting the Animal Out of the Kennel/Cage:

- Always work in teams for added safety.
- For small dogs or cats, use a large towel to cover their head gently.
- Employ a loop leash, doubling it as necessary for added control.
- Chemical restraints may be used at the veterinarian's discretion.
- Use protective gear like Elizabethan collars, baskets, or nylon muzzles when necessary.
- In situations of uncertainty, seek immediate assistance from an experienced animal handler, veterinary nurse, or veterinarian.

Muzzling and Chemical Restraint:

- Prioritize muzzling the animal before any procedure if aggression is shown. If muzzling is not feasible, defer to the animal handler, veterinary nurse, or veterinarian to decide on the best course of action, including the possibility of having the client apply the muzzle.
- Opt for chemical restraint over physical struggle to prevent stress and negative experiences that could have long-lasting effects on the animal's behavior.

Specific Guidelines for Handling Aggressive Animals

General Approach:

- Handle aggressive animals with care, recognizing that aggression often stems from fear or anxiety. Use a calm, gentle, yet firm approach.
- If you are uncomfortable or unsure about handling an aggressive animal, communicate this to the animal handler, veterinary nurse, or veterinarian. It may be necessary to reschedule the appointment with proper preparatory measures.

Encountering Aggressive Dogs:

- Be vigilant of non-vocal cues, such as a tense or "frozen" posture, indicating potential aggression.
- Understand that a dog's behavior can rapidly change, especially when fearful or in pain. Maintain a safe distance and avoid direct face-to-face contact.
- Always be prepared for quick retreats to ensure safety when opening kennels or removing leashes.

Managing Aggressive Cats:

- Be aware of the dual threat posed by teeth and claws. Never underestimate a cat's ability to jump or climb.
- Utilize carriers or netting to control movements in uncertain situations and place them strategically in the clinic to minimize stress.
- Employ the least amount of restraint necessary, opting for chemical restraint when needed to ensure the safety of all parties involved.

Exposure and Education: While it is crucial to maintain a safe environment, it is equally important for veterinary nursing students to gain experience with aggressive animals. Such exposure should be carefully managed, ensuring students proceed with caution under the supervision of experienced staff. This exposure is vital for developing the skills and confidence needed to handle a wide range of animal behaviors in their future careers.

Large Animal Management of Aggressive Animals

- Always require two people and one must be a full-time employee.
- Bulls and Stallions should always be considered "aggressive" and do not house them next to or across from females.
- Signage must be placed on the stall entry to signify an aggressive animal and that two people are required to handle or enter the stall.
- Aggressive cattle must be in the head catch or the squeeze chute for treatment or handling.
- Pig Boards are available for protection from aggressive pigs and small ruminants.
- You may use a twitch or chain shank as needed for aggressive equine.
- Sedation may be necessary for safe handling of aggressive large animals, to be determined by the clinician.
- Please announce to the hospital if you are moving an aggressive animal through the hospital and clear the area of people and other animals if possible.

Safe Equine Handling

- **Recognizing equine expressions and body language**
 - aggression
 - anxiety
 - fear
 - depression
- **Entering and exiting a stall**
 - take a moment to observe
 - encourage the horse to bring its head to the front of the stall
 - have your halter and lead rope organized and ready to place
 - always lead the way through gates and doors
 - open gates and doors fully
- **Haltering**
 - have your halter organized and ready to place
 - approach the left shoulder, never straight at the head
 - be efficient in your movements
 - fit the halter correctly
 - place a chain if you feel you need extra control
- **Leading the horse**
 - always from the left
 - place yourself between the ear and the point of shoulder
 - never pull, rather you want to encourage from behind for forward motion
 - if the horse spooks, pulls back or rears, turn to face the horse and follow them until they stop. Do NOT pull.
 - the horse will go where you look, look straight, go straight
 - always turn a horse away from you
 - never coil the lead rope in your hand, fold it in half to avoid injury
 - keep your lead rope off the ground and away from your feet
 - give the horse enough lead rope slack to move naturally while maintaining control
- **Holding for an exam**
 - Keep the horse focused, do NOT play with its muzzle or allow anyone else
 - use the straight arm technique to avoid being bitten
 - work from the same side as your clinician
 - keep the horse as straight, square and balanced as possible
 - keep your exit clear of people and keep all parties on the same side of the horse
 - use distracting techniques if needed (head tapping, skin twitch, scratching neck etc.)
- **Entering an exam room and stocks**
 - invite the horse to follow you into the exam room, never pull
 - If they will not walk in with encouragement from behind, try backing the into the room
 - if they are super nervous or fractious, they may need sedation to enter the room/stocks

- enter the stocks and invite the horse to follow you, they may need time to look at/smell the stocks before the enter, be patient and do not pull
- once the horse is in the stocks, close the hind gate/rope first, then the chest rope
- never stand directly in front of the horse, always stand to the side of the upright bar
- never place your arm between a bar and the horse
- encourage the horse to stand as square as possible
- you may place the head of a sedate horse on a trash can with no wheels, place a clean towel on top
- continue to hold from the same side as those working on the horse
- be aware of behavior and sedation level and let those on the team know of changes
- never stand inside the stocks or allow anyone else to stand inside the stocks with the horse
- when exiting the stocks be certain to walk straight and do not turn the horse until its hips are clear of the uprights to avoid injury