

Fundamentals of Restraining Dogs and Cats/Kristi Smith, RVT

I. Why is proper restraint important?

- A. Protects all personal (staff and clients) and patients from injury.
- B. Makes procedures go smoothly and in a timely manner.
- C. Keeps everyone's stress levels to a minimum.

II. Basic restraint Principles:

A. What should be done first?

Introduce yourself to the owner and the pet. Allow the pet to start to trust you. Animals need reassurance that no one is going to harm them. Squat down and offer your hand or fist for the patient to smell. Also, talk to the animal in soothing steady tones, high pitched tones and over excitement can cause the dog to become impossible to handle. Usually, this will give you the first indication of aggression. Learning to read animals takes time and practice. NEVER grab an animal's collar or halter until reassurance is given!

B. Ideally one should get a pulse and respiration measurement before taking the patient's temperature. This approach will ensure more accurate measurements as once the patient becomes agitated, the values will increase.

C. Important points to keep in mind:

1. An animal will hurt you before you will hurt the animal.
2. You are (usually) bigger and stronger.
3. Staying calm and collected keeps everyone's stress at a minimum.
4. Take the time to read your patients.

III. How do I hold Dogs Properly?

A. Standing position (employing the "half-nelson" technique)

1. Hold the dog firmly with one arm under and around the animal's neck close to their head. Place opposite arm over and around the dogs abdomen. This technique, similar to a "half-nelson" wrestling position, gives one better control over the entire animal's body. If restraining for temperature or fecal collection, it is sometimes beneficial to place an arm under (rather than over) the dog's abdomen to make them stand.

2. This technique is useful for the following procedures:

- a. Obtaining TPR
- b. Fecal Collection
- c. Nail Trim
- d. Cephalic blood collection
- e. Administration of vaccines
- f. Other procedures

B. Sternal or sitting position

1. If the dog is in sternal recumbency, place one arm around the animal's neck close to their head and hold firmly. Place opposite arm around the dog's abdomen and slightly lean on the patient, this technique gives a small amount of leverage and is useful in the event the animal becomes difficult to

handle.

2. If the dog is sitting, follow the same procedure as above; however, place one arm closer to the dog's hindquarter's to help support the dog and provide leverage.

3. The above techniques are useful for the following procedures:

- a. Obtaining TPR
- b. Nail Trim
- c. Cephalic blood collection
- d. Fecal collection (sternal)
- e. Administration of vaccines
- f. Other procedures

C. Lateral recumbency

1. This position is often helpful when performing a nail trim or examining the animal's abdomen. It usually takes two people to place an animal in lateral recumbency. The first person should take the dog's head in one arm and the feet in the other. The second person should take the dog's hindquarters and both back legs in each arm. Together both persons should lay the dog on it's side, feet facing away from the restrainer. Place one arm over the dog's neck and hold the leg that is closer to the exam table or ground. Take the other arm and place it over the dog's flank and grasp the rear leg that is closer to the exam table or ground. Holding both down legs gives one more leverage and control over the patient.

2. This technique is useful for the following procedures:

- a. Obtaining TPR
- b. Nail Trim
- c. Cephalic blood collection
- d. Fecal collection
- e. Administration of vaccines
- f. Other procedures

D. When is it okay to restrain a dog on the floor?

The following are guidelines only -- floor restraint often puts the handler at risk and should a decision to restrain a patient on the floor should be made with careful consideration using goof judgment.

1. The dog is over 50 pounds, friendly and you feel you can properly restrain the animal for TPR, and lab sample collection.

2. The dog is very timid or nervous and is over 50 pounds.

3. The owner informs you the animal is afraid of heights and does better on the ground.

4. The dog is too tall for you to comfortably/properly restrain on the table.

5. The dog is over 50 pounds and has severe arthritis.

6. The dog is aggressive and too large for you to safely and effectively hold on the exam table.

7. The dog is over 50 pounds and is a "lunger" -- the patient repeatedly attempts to leap from the table without warning.

8. The dog is over 50 pounds, friendly and you feel you can properly restrain the animal for TPR, and lab sample collection.

IV. How do I hold Cats Properly?

A. Sternal Recumbency

1. Cats accept sternal recumbency best when taking their temperature , pulse, and respiration and

obtaining fecal samples. One should place a hand over the dorsal cervical region and be prepared to grasp the "scruff" if needed. When "scruffing," take one hand and grip the skin overlaying the dorsal cervical region. The opposite hand should be placed on the cat's back to prohibit arching or rolling over.

2. This technique is useful when you are performing the following:

- a. Obtaining TPR
- b. Nail Trims
- c. Administration of vaccines
- e. Fecal Collection
- f. Jugular venipuncture
- g. Other procedures

B. Lateral Recumbency

1. Scruff the cat's neck while hold the animal's rear legs and place the cat on it's side. Place one's forearm against the cat's back giving greater control of the animal.

2. Lateral restraint is useful for the following:

- a. Obtaining TPR
- b. Nail Trims
- c. Administration of vaccines
- d. Fecal Collection
- e. Lateral saphenous venipuncture
- f. Other procedures

C. Dorsal Recumbency

Dorsal Recumbency is used primarily for urine collection by cystocentesis. Use one had to scruff the cat's neck and the other to hold the cat's rear legs while the animal is on it's back.