



EVERYDAY INNOVATIONS

5 In-Clinic Hacks That Will Make Your Life Easier

BY ELIZABETH KOWALSKI, CVT, FFCP

Long days, busy schedules and unpredictable patient needs keep veterinary teams on their toes. A range of tools exists to improve workflows, but some of the simplest innovations can have the greatest impact on clinic efficiency. Here are five in-clinic hacks that can solve everyday problems, help team members feel grounded and make daily life easier.



Post QR code-linked training resources.

Training new team members and keeping existing staff on the same page can be difficult, especially in teams experiencing high turnover. Over time, individuals may stray from once-agreed-upon protocols. Or, you may end up with only one person who knows how to perform specific tasks.

A digital training and reference library can help eliminate these problems by empowering team members to take the initiative. Start by creating videos or digital documents with detailed instructions for common tasks. Then, place QR codes around the clinic that link to these references. When team members need help, they can scan the QR code instead of tracking

Clockwise from top left: Sergey Eremin/shutterstock; MooNoi_Amphol/shutterstock; Rozhnovskaya Tanya/shutterstock; rizalfaridz71/shutterstock.com. Opposite: Courtesy Nicole Clausen

down another team member or flipping through a training manual.

Where to Start:

There are many options available to generate QR codes. Services like Bitly allow you to organize and track your links. A free Bitly account allows you to create two new QR codes per month.



SCAN THE QR CODE
to open a free Bitly account.

2 Use cheat sheets and checklists.

Instead of asking your busy team to remember — or look up — critical information at the end of a long day or during an adrenaline-spiking emergency, use quick reference guides, cheat sheets and checklists to prevent errors.

Examples that can improve efficiency and alleviate stress include:

- Emergency or anesthetic drug dose charts
- Constant-rate infusion calculations
- Normal anesthesia monitoring values
- Procedure set-up checklists

Where to Start:

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons offers free checklist resources and templates.



SCAN THE QR CODE
to download the free checklist.

Laminate your cheat sheets and post them inside or outside cabinets, in the surgery suite, near the drug box and on the crash cart. Ensure the information is readily available so team members don't have to hastily research when minutes count.

Ernie Ward, DVM, has owned many successful practices in his career and heartily endorses checklists. “One of our best and most frequently-used checklists was posted in the surgical suites,” he said. “The attending veterinary technician would use the preanesthesia and surgery list to ensure the integrity of the anesthesia machine, availability of necessary equipment, etc. The checklist wasn't complicated, but it was important.”

3 Institute inventory order-point tags.

Reorder tags are effective tools that help ease the pain of inventory management. According to Nicole Clausen, founder of Veterinary Care Logistics, order-point tags take your practice from reactive to proactive ordering. “Reorder tags are truly one of my favorite inventory management tools — they're an absolute game-changer,” she said.



SCAN THE QR CODE
to learn more about reorder tags.



SCAN THE QR CODE
to use the reorder tag template.

Order-point tags are paper or laminated tags attached to stock items that trigger a reorder. For example, you might tag the second-to-last vaccine tray, signaling that it should be reordered when the tray is opened. When a team member opens the tagged item, they pull the tag and place it in a designated bin.

“One of the great things about reorder tags is that they don't require a lot of upkeep in your practice management system,” said Clausen. Start with only a few items, label tags with names and order quantities



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Where to Start:

Veterinary Care Logistics offers a reorder tag template and online training course on implementing them in your practice.



Organize creatively.

Veterinary clinics require a large volume of supplies, and an unorganized workspace can make even slow days feel chaotic. On the other hand, a well-organized space creates soothing, efficient workflows.

Finding creative ways to organize supplies that clutter countertops, clog up drawers or get tangled or lost can help create a calmer workspace. For example, Debbie Boone, BS, CVPM, owner of Debbie Boone Consulting, recommends using over-the-door shoe organizers to store splints by type and size. The items can be seen through the clear pockets, and removing them from drawers and cabinets frees up space. She also likes using paper towel holders or towel racks to sort muzzles by size and keep them from tangling.

Use wall hooks, drawer dividers, magnetic tool bars, countertop drawer units and glass jars to create a “home” for everything. Then, go crazy with the label-maker so new employees — and relief staff — can easily find what they need.

Where to Start:

Take a walk-through of your clinic and note areas where you can utilize

space more efficiently and where items get easily tangled and messy.



Add sound machines to exam rooms.

While you may be used to your clinic's constant background noise, patients and clients may find barking dogs and yowling cats unsettling. A sound machine set on low volume can help muffle noises from hallways, treatment areas and kennels so pets are more relaxed and clients can focus on your recommendations.

Most clients won't object to the soothing sounds, but you can easily switch off the speaker for individuals who prefer the “clinic concerto.” For a personal touch, ask clients at check-in whether they'd prefer white noise, nature sounds or instrumental music in their pet's room.

Where to Start:

Identify a cost-friendly sound machine with a variety of sound options. Start by offering two to three sound options for clients and solicit their feedback after the experience. Evaluate the results after two weeks.

Hacking Clinic Life

These simple hacks prove that you don't have to make sweeping changes to see benefits. Minor tweaks to existing workflows and spaces can make a meaningful difference in team morale, patient comfort and client satisfaction. Tap into your team's creativity to solve nagging problems and make life easier in your practice. ■

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Elizabeth is a writer with Rumpus Writing and Editing, a veterinary copywriting company. Before transitioning to her current full-time role in 2022, Elizabeth spent 11 years in clinical practice. Unwilling to leave “the floor” entirely, she can still be found in the clinic weekly. To contact Elizabeth, visit rumpuswriting.com.

