



Game-Changing Trends in Veterinary Hospital Design: A One Health Perspective

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Innovation in animal care design comes from an eyes-wide-open perspective, similar to One Health, that “encourages a holistic, ecosystem-based approach to human, animal and environmental health.”¹ While the idea of One Health has been around for decades, the COVID-19 pandemic, along with a growing understanding of how

animals, people and the environment rely on each other, has recently amplified the focus of these concepts.² The benefits of the relationships between humans, animals and the environment continue to evolve and show themselves in new ways in the world of animal care design.

Many recent studies illustrate the benefits of the bond between

humans and animals. This bond has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety and loneliness and promote physical well-being. Many innovations in the design of veterinary hospitals are anchored to this knowledge.

This article explores five ways an understanding of the human–animal bond can help innovate the design of animal care facilities.

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1 Focus on keeping animals and pet owners together longer.

Designs that encourage clients to join the medical team in the treatment/care areas like the Veterinary Emergency Group's model, or create transparency with open views by using glass on interior walls in exam and treatment areas, such as The PARC Vet in Fort Worth, Texas ([VIDEO 1](#)), are becoming more prevalent.

The PARC takes its commitment to the human-animal bond one step further in its hospital by providing full-service care for pets, including overnight boarding and daycare, grooming and emergency and wellness veterinary services. Its mission is to make people and pets "feel better, play more, and love longer."

2 Implement Fear Free design and introduce lower-stress environments.

Lowering both human and animal stress can lead to better patient outcomes and client satisfaction. There are many ways to innovate in the hospital to help lower stress, including introducing Fear Free concepts into the design of the hospital.² For example, separate species as much as possible, rely on exam rooms to perform small procedures with pet owners present and separate critical patient care from well patients to help in the healing process. Sometimes implementing these innovations is relatively simple, like adding an

exterior door to allow direct outside access into an exam room to avoid the chaos of the lobby.

3 Design to promote emotional well-being for people.

Working in a veterinary setting can bring a lot of emotional and physical stress. Thoughtfully designed staff spaces like personal care rooms, varied break spaces and charting areas can help bring stress levels down and create a more pleasant work environment. Designing a quiet computer work zone that allows team members to chart off the busy treatment room floor can allow for a few minutes of quiet to regroup and reenergize. Consider bringing natural light into this area with a bonus exterior patio so staff can get a breath of fresh air.

Designing for people also includes the clients that visit the hospital. Focusing on the experience of clients will lead to more inspiring lobby and waiting areas.

4 Bring in the natural environment.

The natural environment is the third pillar of One Health, and the desire

for a greater connection to nature is also sparking innovations in biophilic design. In veterinary hospitals, this includes sustainability practices, from selecting healthier building materials to designing proper traffic flow to help mitigate biological risk. Bridging the gap between the natural environment and animal care facilities also means bringing those elements, colors and materials inside to connect humans and animals back to nature. Including plants in the lobby or animal spaces or bringing in natural light from windows and skylights connects people and animals back to nature and can help with the healing process.

5 Prioritize veterinary health and limit zoonotic diseases.

Each day we learn more about the importance of zoonotic disease transmission through the connection between companion animals and wildlife, as well as between humans and wildlife. Veterinary medicine

The ARISE Veterinary Center comfort exam room features an exit to a covered, outdoor exam space. Opposite: The PARC Vet treatment area opens to the exam rooms on the perimeter.



VIDEO 1

See the innovative design elements and veterinary offerings at The PARC.





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can and should continue to advocate for both animal health and future pandemic preparedness. In veterinary hospital design in recent years, we have seen the adoption of new technologies and service models to decrease traffic in the hospital. Virtual office visits and new diagnostic tools, some powered by AI, are examples. There has also been an increase in mobile veterinary services, which decreases animal movement, limits potential transmission vectors and can provide a lower-stress environment for care.

Looking into the future, it's easy to predict that One Health will continue to be a focus for innovation in veterinary medicine. This focus will lead to the realization of a One Health wellness center that

incorporates the care of both humans and animals in the same facility while integrating biophilic and sustainable building practices, embracing, reinforcing and strengthening the fact that we are all in this world together. ■

References

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2. Lewis HE. Design solutions to tackle stress in treatment areas. Fear Free. Accessed May 14, 2025. <https://fearfreepets.com/design-solutions-to-tackle-stress>

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As an Animal Arts partner, Vicki brings unique experience to animal care design as both an architect and a certified veterinary technician. These combined skills give Vicki the perspective to design interior spaces that work on every level from complex veterinary hospital function to specific equipment layout. Vicki focuses on designing spaces that support the welfare and well-being of both the hospital team and the animals in their care. She has designed hospitals for clients across the U.S. and Canada including flagship facilities for NVA - ARISE in Queen Creek, Arizona, and VCA - West Los Angeles Animal Hospital in California, along with dozens of hospitals for privately owned veterinary practices. Vicki is the co-author of *Practical Guide to Veterinary Hospital Design*.



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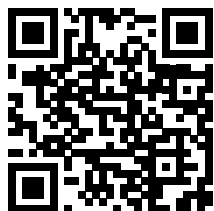
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