

Boarded Dogs Get a Bit of Luxury

New vet hospital boarding area to feature suites with plush pet beds, a TV, and Internet cameras.

By Marissa Heflin

Posted: December 20, 2008, 5 a.m. EST

Construction for a new 27,000-square-foot animal hospital in Sacramento complete with luxury boarding is set to begin in spring.

Ken Schenck, DVM, who has run Mueller Pet Medical Center for the past 30 years, said he began the planning process about seven years ago when he realized that they had outgrown the 5,000-square-foot area.

"It's been a labor of love," he says.

Schenck evaluated about 50 hospitals from around the country to see what features he wanted to incorporate as well as which ones to leave out.

For instance, the new hospital's boarding will accommodate pet guests in luxury suites, equipped with plush pet beds, a television, and Internet cameras so pet owners can see their dogs and cats from afar.

The hospital will also incorporate a bereavement room where select owners can spend the night with their sick pets. Staff will be on site to check pets throughout the night.

"We are striving for things that will strengthen the human-animal bond, things that will create ease of the client and comfort for the pet," Schenck says.

Clients will also handle all check-out procedures while still in the exam room so they don't have to wrestle with their pet – and sometimes children – at the front desk, he says.

Schenck noticed that many of the hospitals he visited had multiple portioned off treatment rooms, an aspect he didn't want to incorporate in his new building. This arrangement can often spread staff too thin or even require excess staffing to adequately accommodate animals in each room, he says.

Instead, Schenck prefers one moderately large room where veterinarians and technicians have easy access and a visual to all portions of the hospital.

"The treatment area will be the hub of the animal hospital," he said.

Within a short walking distance, there will be the doctor's office, staff lounge, X-ray area, surgery room, ICU, laboratory, and exam rooms. There will also be an easily accessible airlock isolation ward with clear glass doors so patients can be seen at all times.

Everything is aimed at making the building functional, which in turn will increase the hospital's efficiency, he says.

Schenck notes that although the veterinary industry doesn't seem to be hit as hard as other markets during this recession, he has seen a change within his practice. Specifically, Schenck said that while his clientele has increased from 2007, each visit is producing a little less income.

"I think clients are still seeking out veterinary services but they are being a little more discriminatory in what they can afford," he said.

In light of this, Schenck said he is working with clients to accommodate various financial situations.

"As the case with most veterinarians, we are trying to work with the clients to make sure we get the best care for their pets while trying to be a little more selective and see if there's something we can forego without creating a challenge for the pet," Schenck says.



“We have to work with each client and make sure it’s within their budget.”

Schenck said he expects the new digs to be open by next fall or winter.