

Finding a Vet for Your Dog

Visit and ask questions before you choose a vet for your dog.

Jean Fogle

One of the things I look for in a veterinarian is a good bedside manner," says dog owner Diane Seidel of Calif. "We have moved twice, and each time I have to start all over finding the right vet for my 8-year-old Labrador Retriever, Darcy. When we first met our current vet, he ignored me to get down and greet Darcy, making him a winner in my book."

Leaving behind a veterinarian you trust and with whom you have a good relationship can make providing quality, consistent healthcare for your dog difficult. To find a new veterinarian (and one you'll have good chances of being happy with) when you relocate, follow these suggestions: Watch for opportunities to meet other dog owners in your neighborhood, and ask them for recommendations.

Do the same with dog owners at your workplace.

If you have a purebred dog, contact the local breed club for information about veterinarians in the area.

If you are involved in a dog sport, ask other participants whom they recommend.

Once you have a few names, narrow down the choices: Make an appointment to meet each veterinarian with your dog in tow.

Observe the clinic's cleanliness and organization.

Meet the staff and assess its efficiency and compassion.

Ask about fees, available services, emergency care, boarding, and other associates in the clinic.

Observe how the veterinarian relates to your dog and vice versa.

Consider whether the veterinarian welcomes your questions and answers them completely.

After you have found a veterinarian, building a good relationship will help make the transition to a new healthcare situation easier. The groundwork you lay now will help you in the event something happens to your dog. Ensure that you and your veterinarian communicate well. Although the veterinarian has education, experience, and skills, you have the knowledge of your dog and his personality. Your veterinarian should take your observations seriously and willingly listen to your concerns. Remember that you and your veterinarian form a partnership that works to keep your dog healthy.