



Making Great Videos for Social Media:

A Guide for Veterinary Practices



Additional resources and info about our videos
for veterinary practices can be found at:
veteos.com

Video is an important part of a healthy social media presence.

While it's usually best to hire professionals for your most visible videos (promotional videos, landing page videos, etc.), it often makes more practical (and financial) sense to produce ongoing social media videos in-house. This allows you to create videos that are relevant and timely on a regular basis.

But before you go running for your camera, it's important to remember that your videos should represent the same quality and attention to detail customers have come to expect from your practice.

This guide will help you create videos for social media that have a strong balance between casual and professional so that your practice is well represented at all times.

Perfection Isn't Necessary, but Quality Is Important

Poorly produced videos can hurt your practice's brand. However, everything you put out doesn't have to have a high polish.

Here are some practical tips to help you up your casual video quality.

- **Phones Are Just Fine** - Don't worry about getting a "nice" camera. Smart phones often have great cameras on them, plus a good portion of your staff will have one...making everyone a potential camera operator.
- **Shoot Horizontally** - Hold your phone horizontally. Vertical videos scream "amateur" and they're often hard to watch in traditional video formats.
- **Keep it Steady** - Reduce camera shake by using two hands or consider purchasing a phone stabilizer ([like this one](#)).
- **Clean that Lens** - If your phone is anything like ours, the lens get all kinds of gunk on it. Use a lens cloth or cotton t-shirt to gently clean it.
- **Get Close** - Fill the frame with your subject rather than using the zoom which causes a loss of quality and makes footage shakier. Nothing says amateur like a shaky shot.
- **Audio Quality** - You may be able to tune out the barking dogs, but your viewers won't. Ambient audio is ok, just be aware it can be distracting when too loud. Move closer to get clearer audio.
- **Lighting** - Evenly lit areas are best for faces. Take a moment before pressing record to look for unpleasant shadows. Repositioning just a foot or two can make a big difference - for example, instead of standing directly beneath a ceiling light, position yourself so that the light is shining in front of the talent. Be careful in front of windows, which can make the subject silhouetted.
- **Use Filters Sparingly** - Black and white and sepia tone have their place...mostly in old westerns and home movies. Use them sparingly.
- **Remember Upload Limitations** - Some social media sites have upload limitations. As of this writing, Instagram limits video length to one minute. That said, requirements change all the time, so be sure to check before posting.

Balancing “Good Enough” and “Too Good”

Social media can be an equalizer in the world of marketing. It makes it possible for small businesses to reach larger audiences (when they do it well) on a small budget, putting you on par with large corporations (who often come across as inauthentic.)

While it's important that your social media videos meet some standards for quality, it's equally important that they don't feel rehearsed or fake.

Here are some suggestions for finding middle ground.

- **Be Imperfect** - It's better to be yourself than to say exactly the right words...people will trust you more if you feel approachable and relatable.
- **Don't Overdo It** - Don't worry about adding titles or graphics - they will likely feel templated or cheap.
- **Use Music Sparingly** - Unless critical to your video's concept, avoid using music as it will likely result in your video feeling more produced than helpful. Plus, it's illegal to use popular music in videos...and stock music often sounds cheesy.
- **Shoot Handheld** - You could put your camera on a tripod, but that could make your footage feel sterile and unnatural. Stick to handheld for most purposes (but be careful of being too shaky!). Consider purchasing an [inexpensive stabilizer](#) made specifically for smart phones.

To GoPro or Not to GoPro?

GoPros (and other similar miniature sports cameras) can be great toys tools, but because of their limitations, they will likely be most helpful if thought of as a “special purpose” camera rather than primary camera.

Here are a couple things to keep in mind when using these types of cameras:

- **Camera Shake** - GoPro's are so small that they can be difficult to keep steady. The extremely wide angle helps minimize this, but not if you turn off the wide angle feature (see the next bullet). There are [stabilization tools](#) made specifically for GoPros that you might consider using too.
- **Turn off the Wide Angle** - An extremely wide angle might be helpful in some situations, but for regular use, consider using a mode other than “wide” so that all your videos don't look like they were shot with a fisheye lens.
- **Editing** - Keep in mind that you won't be able to edit and post clips as easily from your GoPro as you can from a smartphone. You'll need to first load footage onto a computer with editing software installed (GoPro has their own free software).
- **Audio** - Audio isn't great on a GoPro, especially when using a waterproof case. Consider purchasing and using GoPro's “The Frame” accessory when using your camera in situations not prone to water damage (you'll get better audio).
- **Under Water** - One of the great things about a GoPro is its ability to be used underwater. This is great for vets clinics that have an underwater treadmill, swimming pool, or other water activities at doggy day care.

Recruit Your Clients

Social media works best when it's a two-way conversation. Encourage clients to post their videos on your page. Not only is this free content, but it's more likely to be shared as clients will want to show off their pets with family and friends.

Here are some ideas for how to encourage clients to post videos:

- **Make it a Contest** - Offer something like a free day at doggie daycare or grooming as a prize. This also gives you an opportunity to do a couple extra social media posts (announcing the contest and a few "best of" posts).
- **Tricks, Games & Oddities** - encourage clients to posts videos of their pets playing their favorite game, most unusual sleeping positions, best tricks, etc.
- **Seasonal Videos** - encourage clients to posts videos of their pets in halloween costumes, doing their favorite Christmas pastime (opening presents, etc.), enjoying summer/winter (water activities, reactions to snow, etc.).
- **BFF Videos** - encourage clients to posts videos of their pet interacting with their best friends (furry and human). Maybe they are cuddling together, playing around the yard, or stopping to meet a friend on the street.

Legal Considerations*

In the United States it is legal to take/use images of most animals, as legally they are considered "property." However, pet owners and staff generally appreciate the courtesy of being asked first.

- Some practices choose to include a statement in their New Client Form notifying the practice's usage of photos/video and giving an opportunity to opt out.
- Similarly, a video release for staff could be included with hiring documents.
- When videotaping clients (and patients in the presence of clients), ask "Is it ok if I take some video for social media?" Keep this simple and don't make it a big deal.
- Be especially careful with show dogs, race horses, etc. These clients are especially sensitive to how images of their animal are used. In some cases their likeness may be trademarked (like Lassie)...in which case a more formal talent release would be advised.

* It goes without saying, we're not lawyers. Laws vary state-to-state, so please check with a trusted legal advisor.

Make the Camera Normal

Having a camera around can be weird at first, but it's something your staff will get used to with time. The more routine you make it, the less weird it will feel.

- When recording staff and patients, don't announce yourself (assuming they've already granted permission in advance). Just start shooting. Don't make the camera a big deal and it eventually won't be.
- Dogs will be very interested in your camera at first, making it difficult to get good shots. Be patient, they'll usually get bored and let you take great video within a couple minutes.
- Encourage your entire staff to shoot video rather than just making one person responsible (though a point person for posting is usually helpful).

Tips for Posting on Social Media

You'll get more views if you consider the following when posting video on social media:

- **Editing** - A single shot is just fine for social media, but if your clip is long or if you need to group several clips together, you might consider using editing software.
- **Length** - Keep your videos short and engaging, under 1 minute.
- **Limit Audio** - Most social media sites auto-play videos without audio while scrolling through a feed. If your video contains talking, consider starting the video with action shots of animals to draw people in.
- **Thumbnail Images** - Some sites will let you pick the image to be shown when the video isn't playing. Pick a shot that will encourage people to click play (faces work well).
- **Titles, descriptions, categories and keywords** - Be sure to fill in all the options with accurate information about your video - this will help people find your video later.
- **Upload to All Accounts** - Upload to each of your social media accounts individually. A video posted on Facebook that's hosted on Facebook will get preferential treatment over a video hosted on YouTube.

Include Video as Part of a Larger Strategy

Video thrives when it's a part of a larger social media and marketing strategy. But it's just one aspect of a healthy social media presence.

Here are a few other general social media tips:

- **Be Consistent** - Posting videos regularly alongside your other social media content will help build interest and set ongoing expectations (if they like them, they'll watch more).
- **Consider Boosting Posts** - Even just \$5-10 per post will help expand your videos' audience. Select "friend and friends of friends" as the target audience unless your video would work well with people who don't know you. Limiting target location to your state/city will ensure you are reaching potential customers.
- **Evaluate Your Efforts** - After you've been posting videos for a while, see which ones are getting the most views and shares. This might help give you insight into which videos connect best with your audience.
- **Shoot videos together, but release them over time** - Sometimes it makes sense to record a handful of videos all at once. But instead of overloading your fans with a bunch of videos released all at once, try releasing them once a week.

Conclusion

Learning camera basics can be a bit overwhelming. Try to keep in mind that you don't need to "get it right" the first time. Put one foot in front of the other and keep practicing. Some videos will be great, other won't.

The great thing about digital video is it doesn't cost you anything but time. So get out there and start shooting some great video!

About Veteos

Our team consists of experts in the video and veterinary industries.

In 2008, Ben Spinks (a practice manager) called up his cousin, Craig Spinks (a videographer), to see if he'd be interested in producing a video for his practice. At the time, neither of them realized the significance of that video. They soon discovered it was being used as a teaching tool by several industry experts as an example of what veterinary marketing should look like. That led to additional opportunities for Craig to work with more veterinary practices. This is when Craig realized the challenge he was up against. Veterinary practices love to talk about their services, fancy equipment and impressive buildings – but none of these things are good for marketing. By this point he'd become passionate about the industry and wanted to make a difference. This time Craig called Ben asking for help. Together they decided to form a new company that would forever change the way veterinary professionals would communicate with pet owners.

In addition to our work with individual veterinary practices, we also work with other companies within the veterinary industry such as Fear Free, VetSuccess, Veterinary Study Groups (VMG Groups) and Trupanion.

For More Information:

To learn more about our video production for veterinary practices or to browse our videos for ideas, visit veteos.com