

# Small Animal Terms and Conditions of Business

January 2012



In order to avoid misunderstanding and place our transactions on a proper footing, we have summarised the terms and conditions of service under which treatments and sales are made by Avondale Veterinary Group. Only the proprietors of Avondale Veterinary Group have the authority to alter these conditions and by registering and attending the practice you agree to be bound by them.

**1. Registering with Avondale Veterinary Group** - To allow us to fully comply with the various regulatory authorities we have decided to ask new clients to sign a registration form. The form will detail that you have received these notes. It also includes consent for the occasions in our canine and feline patients where we have to prescribe commonly used (usually human) medicines that have not been specifically licensed for cats and dogs. We might ask for further informed consent if we consider the use of these medicines might be potentially dangerous to your pet e.g. cancer treatment drugs. In the case of small mammals, almost none of the medicines we use are licensed in these species as there is little financial gain for the drug companies for doing so and you must accept this is the case for us to provide meaningful treatment.

**2. Payment for veterinary services** - Unfortunately, there is no National Health Service for pets and as a result you are responsible for the payment of your pet's veterinary bills. Payment for all work will be expected at the time the work is carried out.

Avondale Veterinary Group provides caring, conscientious modern treatment for your pets but there is no escaping, that in order to be here next year and beyond, we rely on you to pay us for the service we provide. Drugs and supplies together with staff salaries account for the majority or your account. We need your prompt payment to meet our obligations to our staff and suppliers.

We have set our fees on the basis that the work is paid for at the time of consultation or collection after operation.

When you register with this practice you agree to settle fees at the time of consultation or on collection for your pet after an operation or hospitalisation. We accept cash and for your convenience, most credit and debit cards. We make no surcharges for the use of credit cards.

We are sorry we can no longer accept payments by cheque.

With regard to insured pets, it is our policy that the clients settle their bills in full at the time of treatment, and claim reimbursement from their insurers directly. In order to make a claim, you must submit a completed and signed claims form to us, to which we will add the veterinary information before posting to the insurance company on your behalf. We will also ask you to sign a disclosure form giving Avondale Veterinary Group the authority to discuss your animal's claim with the insurance company

Unpaid Fees- Any special, quantity or off peak discount will be lost and a revised invoice issued which will supersede any original. Any subsequent costs required to secure your payment will be charged in full, together with the interest on the outstanding amount.

**3. Estimates** - We will happily provide you with a written estimate of the probable costs of a course of treatment. Please bear in mind that any estimate given can only be approximate- often an illness will not follow a conventional course. We will always try to keep you informed of costs as they arise.

**4. Consultations & Check ups** - When we take on a case, it becomes our responsibility to attend the patient as dictated by the clinical opinion of the veterinary surgeon in charge of the case, and an appropriate consultation fee is charged on each occasion to cover the veterinary surgeon's and nurse's time and the use of our facility.

The first examination for a particular problem attracts a routine consultation fee. Where a more complex problem is present an extended consultation fee might be charged. A consultation fee, usually at a reduced level, is charged for each subsequent examination concerning the particular problem dependent on the amount of time required to review your pet's condition, perform any treatments, produce reports or letter and outline treatment options.

We offer a free puppy or free kitten check for newly acquired healthy animals that are under vaccination age and where the pet is to attend the practice for the vaccinations. Where an animal is reported ill, or is obviously ill on presentation, or the client does not attend for the recommended vaccines for their pet, we reserve the right to charge the normal practice fees.

Generally, planned, brief post operative examinations up to and including stitch removal are included in the operation fee but extra worked caused by neglect or failure to follow instructions are chargeable. All bandage changes are chargeable.

All medicines and materials used are chargeable, in addition to the appropriate consultation fee.

**5. Late and Missed Appointments** - When you make an appointment with us, we set aside time exclusively for you and your pet and if you miss your appointment, this time is wasted. If you are late, we may not be able to give you the full time originally set aside for you in consideration of the schedule of following clients. If you arrive after the end of your scheduled time, we may not be able to see you at all at that time and you shall in addition be liable for missing your appointment. In 2008 we commenced a token charge for each appointment missed or cancelled. The charge in 2012 for a missed appointment is £10.50 and the charge for a missed operation is £20.

**6. Prepayment** - We are able to organise prepayment facilities for planned work such as bitch spays so that by the day of the operation the fee is already paid. We can also provide treatment vouchers to be given as presents to friends or relatives who are registered with the practice.

**7. Ownership of Records** - The treatment of your animal may involve making specific investigations, for example, taking of radiographs or performing ultrasound scans. Even though we make a charge for carrying out these investigations and interpreting the results, the ownership of the resulting record, for example, a radiograph, remains with us.

**8. Uncollected animals** - If we treat an animal in the surgery and you do not pay for the treatment or if you fail to collect the animal when we tell you that it is ready for collection, we may dispose of it as your agents as we think fit. We will give you seven days written notice of this before we do so. We may rehome the animal. You will be liable to pay our charges for looking after the animal whilst it is in our care and for the costs of disposing of it.

If your animal dies whilst in our care, we will dispose of it in accordance with your instructions. If we do not receive your instructions within 3 working days of our telling you that your animal has died, we will be entitled to dispose of it as we think fit and you will be liable to pay our charges for doing so.

**9. Animal Insurance** - We recommend, strongly, that you consider insuring your pet for veterinary fees. This means that you can choose the very best and most complete course of treatment,

including expert referral if necessary, without having to worry about the cost. We are not agents for any company but provide information in the waiting room, for your convenience. The Financial Services Act forbids us to recommend or advise against taking out a particular policy. We consider this to be a slight on our reputation and have always given our advice freely without regard to our own benefit but there is nothing we can do about it. However we have a leaflet available which, without prejudice, gives general information as to how to select a good policy for your pet. As with all insurance, please survey a variety of companies to select the right cover for your circumstances at a reasonable cost. We shall complete the veterinary section of the form for you for whichever insurer you choose. All dog owners should ensure that they have third party cover as you are, in law, responsible for the actions of your dog. This could, at worst, involve compensating a family for the death of a person, if your dog causes them to crash their car. Pet insurance usually covers for this risk, as can some household insurance. It is definitely worthwhile checking that you are covered.

**10. Direct Claims to Pet Insurance Companies** – In exceptional circumstances, and at the partner's discretion, we may agree to a direct claim to an insurance company on your behalf, leaving you only the policy excess and any policy exclusions to be paid at the time of treatment. In order to do this, we will require the following at the time of treatment-

- a. We need to have sight, and take copy, of the original policy document.
- b. We need a signed claims form. Please obtain at least one at your earliest convenience and keep it with your insurance policy.
- c. We will ask you to sign a disclosure form which authorises Avondale Veterinary Group to discuss your claim with the insurance company. Your signature on this form also signifies your consent to pay Avondale Veterinary Group any outstanding balance after settlement of the claim.

You remain liable for the full amount of the account at all times. Where there is an unacceptable delay or where the insurance company refuses to pay, we shall ask you to make immediate settlement of the account. Should you be unable to produce a valid signed claim form within 14 days of request, you will settle your account with us in full.

**11. Returned Medicines** - Under the terms of the Medicines Act we are no longer able to give any credit for unused and returned medicines. However we shall, at our cost accept them and pay for their safe disposal, if we have provided them for you. Please bear this in mind when requesting a long term supply of medicines. We reserve the right to make a charge for the safe disposal of medicines not provided by us.

**12. Prescriptions and Supply of Medicines** - We can only supply veterinary medicines, worming tablets, flea treatments etc., to animals under our care. Please note that the law requires regular check-ups at least every 3-4 months but this may vary with individual circumstance. There is a charge for re-examination. Prescriptions are available from the practice. You may obtain prescription only medicine, category V(POM-V), from your veterinary surgeon or ask for a prescription (*the 2012 charge for this is £10.20*) and obtain these medicines from another veterinary surgeon or pharmacy.

**13. Repeat Prescriptions** - Please give us at least 24 hours by telephone or in person before collecting medication so we can ensure that it is ready for you. Requests made on a Friday may not be available until Monday afternoon due to our deliveries.

**14. Postage** - We shall be entitled to charge a reasonable postage to you to handle our time, material and postage costs, all of which are subject to VAT.

**15. Our Fees** - We set our fees on the basis of covering the costs of providing a service of the highest quality. In addition, we are constantly striving for improvements by investing in further education courses for our staff, and the development of the surgery in terms of our building, technology and facilities.