



## Pre-Visit Calming Therapy Medications:

### What are they and why you really should give them!

At Compassionate Veterinary Care, we are committed to helping your visit be as stress-free as possible, for you and for your pet! We are committed to this for a number of reasons, but the most important reason is simple: a stressed pet is not a healthy pet.

In recent years, veterinarians have learned the detrimental effects that fear, anxiety, and stress have on your pet's overall health and well-being. Our entire staff is trained to recognize when they are showing us the signs of fear, anxiety, and stress -- even when you may not be aware of them. Because we are here to help keep your pet as healthy and happy as possible, we cannot ignore the signs when your pet shows us these signs.

There are many methods that we utilize to reduce your pet's fear and anxiety during their visit, including calming pheromones, specific music, a cat-only exam room, treats, and medications.

- **Medications** are often a crucial part, but it is important to realize that any medication we prescribe may not completely eliminate your pet's anxiety. It is also important to acknowledge that your pet feeling fearful or anxious at the doctor can be normal and expected! (Yes, your pet can have White Coat Syndrome as well!) However, when left unaddressed, their fearful response can worsen with each visit and/or each procedure.

### What should you expect with the prescribed medications?

*Many of our pet owners express that they are hesitant to give the medications because of unwanted side effects, concerns about sedation, or simply that they don't want to medicate them. As a pet owner myself, I completely understand these reasons!*

It is very important for you to understand a few things about your pet's mental health and why we prescribe the medications we do:

1. The medications we prescribe (such as trazodone and gabapentin) for your anxious pet are very safe medications. Even if your pet has an underlying health condition such as heart disease or chronic kidney disease, or even metabolic disease such as diabetes, these medications are very safe when administered correctly.
2. We often prescribe a combination of medications because this allows us to use lower doses of the prescribed medications, with a more consistent and positive effect for the patient, while reducing possible unwanted side effects.
3. Our pets are able to feel fear and anxiety like humans do, however, they are not able to *process and understand* their fears. The medications we prescribe allow them to be less afraid or anxious, which then also allows them to have a more positive experience, which they will remember (just like they remember the scary situations).
4. When your pet is at home and relaxed, and they have these medications in their system, they will be extra sleepy, have droopy eyelids, be slow or reluctant to move, or even a little unstable on their feet. It is very important to realize that although these effects may be unsettling to you, they are temporary. Because your pet does not have their anxiety hormones (think: adrenaline!) coursing through their veins when relaxed at home, these effects are more noticeable. Yet, as soon as their stress or anxiety is triggered, these medications will be working at their optimal level to benefit your pet.



What if things don't go as planned?

Then we will change our plan! When working with animals and in medicine, things do not always go as we plan. This is one reason why maintaining open and trustworthy conversations is of utmost importance to us. It is important that you understand that we will not do anything that intentionally jeopardizes your pet's health and well-being or our safety.

Our entire staff is trained to answer any questions or concerns you may have, so do not hesitate to reach out to us.

For more information about our stress-free approach, visit our website by scanning here:

