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VETERINARY CENTER

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Rincon Vista Veterinary Center - Tucson, AZ

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Let's Get Historical

The story goes that two men were out drinking too late one night. The one says to his buddy, "I hate going home this late, my wife always gets all historical." His buddy says "don't you mean hysterical, ranting and raving at you?" and he says "No, she brings up everything I ever did wrong!"

History is pretty important stuff for me. Sometimes it the difference between a diagnosis and a guess. When it comes to your pet's medical care, what has happened in the past can be really useful, but it can also be a jumbled mess of useless data. So what matters and what doesn't?

Well, this will probably take a couple discussions, but let's start with 4 basic questions:

- * When did this start? or how long has this problem been going on?
- * Has it gotten better, worse, or stayed the same?
- * Do any other animals (those in your household or that have been around your pet) have the same symptoms?
- * Has your pet ever had this problem before?

This information is important for nearly every type of problem your pet can have.

So what kind of information isn't important? There probably isn't anything you could tell me that isn't likely to have some bearing on the case (except a description of your Aunt Bertha's wart removal) but here are a few guidelines that can help us help you.

* Resist the temptation to make a diagnosis and then only give us the history that supports your diagnosis. I recently had a client tell me everything about the things they had noticed regarding the dog's limp. I'm glad I didn't just accept that as truth though. The dog had a ligament injury in the knee.

* In a similar vein, resist the temptation to form an opinion about what something means. A very common problem in small dogs is luxating patella (the kneecap moves in and out of place). The dog will intermittently carry the leg but there is no residual pain associated with it. Because it isn't apparently painful, many owners think their dogs will "do that just to get attention".

* Focus mostly on this pet. Maybe you did have another dog with a problem just like this one does years ago. And I'm glad to know about it. But let's keep the details focused on this dog or cat.

* Don't tell me what you think I want to hear. Maybe you had a problem with a previous vet who scolded you for not doing something correctly. I won't do that (I will try to correct you, just not scold you). Tell me what the facts are.

* Try to know what kind of food you feed your pet. Not just "dry" or "canned". The brand or ingredients are really useful sometimes.

* We like your friend, spouse, sibling, or offspring who has little knowledge of your pet's problem but they can't replace you and your understanding of the situation. If you must send someone like this in your place, please ensure we have a way to get questions answered.



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