

Terms and Conditions of Business

Thank you for entrusting the care and attention of your pet to Astonlee Veterinary Hospital. We pride ourselves on three main values: excellence in care for our team, clients and patients. We hope that you can see all 3 of these values whenever you visit Astonlee. We hope that our aim of caring shines through in a transparent way.

This letter details our Practice Terms and Conditions. Some aspects of the Terms and Conditions may not be relevant to you, however please just ask for further explanation/clarification if required.

FEES

All fees, diets and drug charges are subject to VAT at the current rate. Fee levels are determined by expertise, time spent on a case, procedures, drugs, materials, consumables, diets etc. We provide a detailed invoice for every transaction that is made, and we are always happy to explain your invoice if required. Estimates can also be provided upon request.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

Accounts are due for settlement either at the end of the consultation, the discharge of your pet or upon collection of any medications or any other items.

Your account can be settled
by:

- Cash
- Credit/Debit Card – Switch, Solo, Mastercard, Visa and Delta*
- Cheque – with current Banker card
- BACS (please ask us for our bank details)

**Unfortunately, we cannot accept American Express*

Sometimes we will request that a portion of the costs are paid prior to consultation or treatment.

ESTIMATES OF TREATMENT COSTS

Upon request, we can happily provide an estimate as to the probable costs of a course of treatment. Please bear in mind that any estimate given can only be approximate – treatment costs can vary depending on how a patient responds to treatment, amongst various other factors.

CONSENT FORMS

Before performing any test or procedure(s) on your pet, we will ask you to sign a

consent form. This form is a record of an agreement made with us, for us to treat your pet and what is involved along with any likely consequences. The authorising signatory may be that of an agent if the client is unavailable to sign (providing the owners' permission has been given).

Any signatories MUST be over the age of 18. Along with authorising treatment, the signature also gives agreement to pay for the treatment within the agreed timescale. Estimates can be provided (please see above).

If you require a copy of your consent form, please ask a team member on admission to the practice.

SETTLEMENT TERMS

Payment is due at the time of consultation and if further reminders have to be sent, further charges will be incurred. Overdue accounts will be transferred to our Debts Collection Agency after due notice to you, and further charges will be levied in respect of costs incurred in collecting the debt. We also reserve the right to charge interest at 3% per month for non-payment.

Failure to pay may result in Astonlee Veterinary Hospital only providing first aid and pain relief under these circumstances. A letter giving 7 days' notice to find another Veterinary Practice to take care of your pet may also be sent if we feel that the trust between Astonlee Veterinary Hospital and the client has broken down.

INABILITY TO PAY

If, for any reason, you are unable to settle your account as specified, please discuss the matter as soon as possible with a member of our team, so that we can try to help. Please note that instalments or part-payments of any account may only be approved with the express permission of the Practice Owner or Practice Manager of Astonlee Veterinary Hospital.

MEDICATION

As a veterinary practice we have an obligation to use veterinary UK licensed medicines wherever possible. The dosage of all medications is carefully calculated and given in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines.

There are certain situations where the best treatment for your pet may require the use of medicines which do not hold an appropriate licence for the species concerned. In this case, we might therefore recommend using such a medication 'off licence' but these will be prescribed in accordance with the cascade. The cascade is a sequence that all veterinary surgeons must follow when treating animals.

Our use of off licence medications will be based upon our knowledge of the use in animals and an assessment of the risks and benefits involved. These medicines will only be used when they are indicated and deemed necessary and no licensed alternative exists. You will be asked to sign an off licence consent form to indicate your agreement to use the off licence medication.

We are unable to refund the cost of medication when returned but will be happy to dispose of any unused medications on your behalf.

PRESCRIPTIONS

If your pet is on long term medication and you require a repeat prescription, we request that wherever possible you contact us at least 5 working days prior to collecting the medication or prescription. This will enable the veterinary surgeon to authorise the prescription medicines and for them to be prepared and made ready for collection. In some cases, it is necessary for us to order certain medication from our veterinary wholesaler, in which case, plenty of notice is helpful.

You are able to make a medication request or place an order for food which you may require by giving us a call (01908 611637), or by popping into Astonlee Veterinary Hospital.

Please remember that by law, in order to comply with the RCVS legal requirements, it is necessary for us to re-examine your pet from time to time before issuing further medication. This enables us to review your pet's progress with you and make sure the treatment is effective. The time interval between these examinations will vary between 3-6 months, depending on the nature of the condition being treated and the medication prescribed. Please ask a member of our team for the current cost of a medication review. We apologise for any inconvenience this might cause, but the monitoring of any ongoing illness is essential for your pet's best health. We will inform you if we need to examine your pet or if we require a little more time to obtain the items required.

Written prescriptions for Prescription Only Medicines, Category V (POM-Vs) are available on request for patients under our care to enable you to obtain the medicines from another veterinary surgeon or pharmacy. Please ask a member of our team for the current cost of a written prescription and any additional items. We do however advise a written prescription may not be appropriate either if your pet is in hospital or it will delay treatment in certain cases. Please ask if you would like more information on the price of any of our medications.

PET INSURANCE

Astonlee Veterinary Hospital strongly advises insuring your pet against illness, accidents and taking out third party cover. Please feel free to ask any Astonlee team member for details about insurance. Please be aware that it is your responsibility to settle our account and then reclaim the fees from your Insurance Company. Direct claims can only be made following pre-authorisation in advance from the company via the practice and for no less than £100. Please ask our team for assistance with your insurance claim.

PRIVACY POLICY

We will occasionally send you emails or SMS messages to provide you with vaccination reminders and/or reminders for preventative treatment. If you would rather not receive these communications, then please do let us know and we will amend your communication preferences accordingly.

We work hard to make sure that we use any information you provide us with, in ways which you have approved. Any personal information collected from any Astonlee Veterinary Hospital forms is only used by Astonlee Veterinary Hospital and is not passed on to any third parties.

Any photos or videos submitted to Astonlee Veterinary Hospital will automatically be deemed the property of Astonlee Veterinary Hospital and must have permission from the pet owner and photographer, we can take no responsibility for copyright. Photos and videos may be used on our website, social media and other publications as we see fit. Occasionally photographs may be taken of your pet while visiting the practice and permission will always be sought before publicising them. For more extensive information on our online Privacy Policy please see our website.

OWNERSHIP OF RECORDS

Case records including radiographs and similar documents are the property of the practice and will normally be retained by the practice for a minimum period of 7 years. Copies with a summary of history will be passed on request to any Veterinary Surgeon taking over the case. Where any significant expense is involved in providing such copies, as there might be, for example, with the provision of radiographs, a charge will be made.

REFERRALS AND SECOND OPINIONS

On some occasions it may be necessary for us to refer your pet to another Veterinary Surgeon within the hospital, or occasionally, we may need to refer your pet to an outside specialist referral veterinary practice.

This is normally only necessary if your pet's condition requires specialist knowledge or facilities that are not available in the hospital. This sometimes happens for orthopaedic and neurological cases which require MRI facilities. Second opinion appointments can be requested either to see another Veterinary Surgeon within the hospital or to another veterinary practice. These are sometimes requested if a client wishes to confirm a diagnosis or a different veterinary opinion. In all cases we will on request provide a full clinical history to the requesting Veterinary Surgeon.

No addition or variation of these conditions may be made unless agreed in writing and signed by the Practice Owner.

We look forward to meeting you and your pets and if we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

COMPLAINTS AND STANDARDS

We endeavour to be an approachable caring service. We will provide the best care and attention possible for you and your pets. If any aspect of our service fails to meet your expectations or you have any suggestions as to how we can improve our service, please contact us via email – our email address is admin@astonlee.co.uk. A response to this will be sent within 14 days of receipt.

Our **complaints process** is simple:

We listen to the complaint.

If the complaint is simple our reception team can handle it without any need to escalate it.

If the reception team cannot resolve the complaint we ask for the complaint to be put in writing to our administrator who can usually handle it.

If it is still unresolved it can be escalated to a senior person or to our professional advisers who may take on dealing with the complaint on behalf of the practice. At this stage, we investigate and analyse it, we then respond to the complaint based on these investigations which can take some weeks.

If the complaint is still unresolved due to a dispute over the facts it may be necessary on rare occasions to go to court for the resolution

You may complain to the RCVS which is our governing body which deals with matters relating to professional; conduct referring to the RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct. RCVS does not deal with matters relating to fees or money, only in so far as the complaint involves an issue of professional conduct. They clearly state this in their complaints process should you wish to raise your complaint with them.

Please also bear with us.

Covid19 was starting to cause problems in the country and in the veterinary practice from about March 2020. We had started to look at protocols to implement safety measures for our staff, clients and patients, and later in the month we had the first of the 3 week lockdowns to deal with. All of this is illustrated on our website together with our terms and conditions. We are not living in 'normal' times and most clients have appreciated our efforts to stay open and provide a service for them.

April 2020