



## **Why does my pet need to see the vet before a behavioural referral?**

You might wonder why your vet needs to be involved before starting behavioural work — especially when the problem appears to be “just behavioural”.

The important thing to remember is that behaviour and physical health are closely connected. A sudden or ongoing change in behaviour can sometimes be caused, contributed to, or made worse by an underlying medical issue.

One of the most common considerations is pain. Dogs and other animals don't always show pain in an obvious way. Instead, pain or discomfort can sometimes present as changes in behaviour — such as increased irritability, reactivity, aggression, avoidance, restlessness, reluctance to be handled, changes in toileting, or becoming less tolerant of situations they previously coped with.

 Your vet can therefore assess your pet's physical health and consider whether there could be an underlying medical contribution to the behaviour. This may include an appropriate pain assessment and any further investigations they feel are necessary.

If your vet is satisfied that behavioural support is appropriate, they can then complete the veterinary referral, giving the behaviourist important medical

background and allowing everyone involved in your pet's care to work together.

For me, this isn't simply paperwork. As a CCAB-aligned behaviour professional, obtaining appropriate veterinary involvement and referral is an important part of following recognised professional protocols. It helps ensure that medical causes are considered before we begin modifying behaviour and means we can work alongside your veterinary team if medical support is needed alongside the behaviour plan.

 Behavioural support works best when we look at the whole animal — not just the behaviour we can see.

So if your pet has developed a behaviour that concerns you, your first step should be to speak to your vet. They can help determine whether there may be a medical component and, where appropriate, refer you for behavioural support.

And don't worry — a veterinary referral doesn't mean your vet thinks the behaviour is “all medical”. It simply means we are making sure we've considered your pet's physical health before deciding how best to address the behaviour.

## **How do you get a behavioural referral for your pet? 🤔**

### **1st) Your vet will refer your pet to me 🩺**

Your vet will refer your pet to me, allowing me to access their relevant medical history so I can carry out a complete behavioural assessment. Following your assessment, I can also work closely with your veterinary team where needed, ensuring any medical requirements are considered alongside the behavioural modifications I put in place.

### **2nd) You complete some paperwork for your pet 📝**

This provides me with important background information about the behaviour you're experiencing, as well as your pet's history and overall lifestyle. It helps me build a clearer picture of how and when the behaviour occurs, and allows

me to tailor any behavioural modifications around you, your pet and your family's needs.

**3rd) I book you in for a consultation** 

Once your referral and paperwork are complete, I'll arrange your consultation. I offer flexible appointments in your own home to accommodate different work schedules, including weekends and evenings. Please note that these appointments may have a longer waiting time due to demand.

**4th) We have your initial consultation**  

I'll come to your home, or another suitable location, to meet you, your family and your pet. I'll begin by discussing the behaviours you're concerned about and exploring the relevant areas of your pet's history. From there, I'll begin developing your individualised behavioural plan and introduce some practical skills to help you get started