

## TEACHING TARGET

USE SEO TO YOUR ADVANTAGE: COLLECT KEY TACTICS TO ENSURE THE PRACTICE BLOG IS EFFECTIVE, PERSONABLE, AND SUCCESSFUL.

# Using Blogs to Boost Your Brand

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Like fine wine, blogging has been maturing for 21 years. Originally stemming from online personal diaries, blogging has grown and adapted as the number of bloggers increased and used blogs differently. A blog is now defined as either a website where a writer or group of writers post observations and opinions, or a single entry or post on a website.<sup>1</sup>

**I**n veterinary medicine, blogging's key use is publishing unique, relevant content on a practice's website to engage clients and satisfy Google's Panda requirement.<sup>2</sup> For good search ranking placement, Google requires that fresh, unique content be posted on a business website on a regular basis. This is just one of many components of search engine optimization (SEO).

Every website also must have unique content that lives only on that website (ie, readers cannot copy and paste the content to their own website) and new content weekly or monthly depending on the practice location. For example, a rural practice will have less competition for its Google placement and typically will need to post new information only once a month, whereas a practice in a densely populated urban area will have to jockey harder for a top Google spot

### See handout

**BLOGGING CHECKLIST**, at [veterinaryteambrief.com/blogging-checklist-team-handout](http://veterinaryteambrief.com/blogging-checklist-team-handout)

and should provide new copy more frequently.

Websites that have fresh, unique content on a regular basis will more likely be awarded top placements because Google knows the website will provide new information for viewers.

Blogging is the solution for creating regular new content on a practice website; however, for it to count as new information, it must be part of the practice's domain (eg, [vtbanimalhospital.com/blog](http://vtbanimalhospital.com/blog)). If the blog lives at other sites (eg, Blogger, Blogspot) or is a subdomain of sites such as Wordpress (eg, [vtbhospital.wordpress.com](http://vtbhospital.wordpress.com)), Google will credit that website. It is important to ensure a blog is firmly entrenched with the practice's domain name.

**Follow these tips so the practice brand gets the maximum boost from the blog:**

### The Length

Six hundred to 800 words is typically a good length for a veterinary blog post.<sup>3</sup> It is best to write short paragraphs and use bullet points.

### The Frequency

Blogs should be written weekly or monthly. If such consistency is a problem, write multiple blogs at one time and schedule them to be published on

**Blogs should be 600 to 800 words and written weekly or monthly.**

different days. Most blogging software (eg, Wordpress) allows future scheduling.

### The Preparation

Create a calendar that covers topics relevant to the time of year, repeated problems seen in the practice, and important information clients should know. Such a calendar helps create an overall picture of themes covered in the blog, ensures a variety of topics, and avoids duplication. Be prepared with these items as well:

- **Photos:** Blogs should include photos the practice owns, has purchased (eg, from a company such as [istockphoto.com](http://istockphoto.com)), or has the owner's written permission to use. Clients *must* provide written permission for the use of any patient photos.
- **Keywords:** Jot down keywords used in the blog. The software will have an entry for keywords that will make the blog more friendly to search engines.
- **Abstract or overview:** This is a 2- to 3-sentence summary that can be inputted into the software.

### The Content

What to write? Here are some ideas:

- **Case of the month:** Blog about an unusual case seen in the practice along with a photo of the healthy patient. People like a happy ending.
- **Service of the month:** Highlight a service the practice provides (eg, boarding facilities, dental or orthopedics specialties) and include some cases. Spotlight the who, what, and why.
- **The team:** Blog about team members' accomplishments at the practice (eg,

new certification, promotion) or in the community (eg, completing a 5k race, holding a fundraiser). The personal touch connects with readers.

- **Answers to client questions:** Ask team members the most frequent client questions and provide answers. Or, ask clients for questions about pet ownership and care and offer advice.
- **Hot-button topics:** A blog is the perfect way to address issues that may be embarrassing or scary. Be brave and write about what needs to be said, such as marijuana toxicity in pets.
- **Back link to previous blogs and service lists:** Link a blog about a problem specific to cats, for example, to the practice website page that lists all the special services offered for cats.

## The Blogger

Writing a blog is not for everyone. Choosing the right team member is as important as writing a blog on a consistent basis. Typically, veterinarians are not the best choice because of the time commitment and the need to address readers in a nonmedical fashion. The team member(s) who blog for the practice should have:

- excellent writing skills
- access to practice decision makers for input and approval
- the confidence of owners and managers to be the practice's voice
- a love for what he or she is doing.

## The Time

Depending on the amount of research required and the time needed to write and find photos, each blog can take from one to 5 hours.



## Resources

Watch these Veterinary Marketing Webinar videos for help writing a practice blog:

- **Choosing the Perfect Keywords for Your Veterinary Blog:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT-jZZA3VX8>
- **How Lifestyle Blogs Can Help Your Practice:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRdzHLT6bKk>
- **SEO Basics for Your Veterinary Website:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfpiCkVk1mU>
- **The Wonderful World of WordPress:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wxIVupM9Rk>

## Conclusion

Blogging can be fun as well as a good practice promotion. Learn more from the many YouTube videos (see **Resources**) and online CE classes available and attend courses at conferences. The important thing is for a team member to start blogging and keep at it! ■■■

## References

1. Blog. Dictionary.com. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/bloggng>. Accessed November 2015.
2. Google: Panda Update. SearchEngineLand.com. <http://searchengineland.com/library/google/google-panda-update>. Accessed November 2015.
3. Bunting J. How long should your blog post be? A writer's guide. The Write Practice. <http://thewritepractice.com/blog-post-length>. Accessed November 2015.

## TEAM TAKEAWAYS:



**Veterinarians:** Take the time to review blog material to ensure it accurately reflects medical standards.

**Nursing Team:** Take pictures and make notes about interesting cases for the blog—and remember to get signed disclosure forms from clients.

**Client Care Team:** If you want to join the blogging team, promote your writing skills, education, and love for your job.