

Scott Mitchell Veterinary Care Ltd. Terms and Conditions of Business

Our surgeries

Hexham – The Surgeries, Tyne Green, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3SG.
01434 608999

Regular opening hours:

Small Animal Surgery: Mon-Fri 08.30 – 19.00, Sat 09.00-12.00.

Equine Surgery: Mon-Fri 08.30 – 17.00.

Tow Law – 29 Front Street, Tow Law, Country Durham, DL13 4DH.

01388 731911

Regular opening hours: Mon – Tues 08.30 – 18.00, Wed 08.30 – 11.00, Thurs – Fri 08.30 – 17.00.

Registration

To apply to register as a client we require a completed and signed registration form, proof of address and ID (showing your date of birth - clients must be over 18 years of age). Relevant client policies and terms and conditions are available upon request. If your animal(s) have been registered at another veterinary practice or received any veterinary treatment elsewhere whilst in your care, we must receive copies of the animal history before any examination / treatment can be given (with the exception of life-threatening emergencies).

In the majority of cases we are able to accept new client registrations during surgery opening hours (as above), however we reserve the right to refuse new registrations on any grounds.

Out of hours provision

We offer emergency care to registered clients at all times, with a vet on shift or on call, and at least one nursing assistant on shift, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The out of hours service is run from the Hexham branch only: all out of hours phone calls are directed to the Hexham surgery, and clients registered at our Tow Law branch will have to bring the animal to the Hexham surgery to be seen. There are higher charges for out of hours services, these should be discussed prior to an appointment / treatment wherever possible and can be requested when you call.

Please note that non-emergencies, appointment bookings or general advice should be sought during surgery opening hours: the emergency phone line is for emergencies only please.

Unregistered animals / clients (or clients not seen within the previous 12 months) will only be attended on an emergency basis following prepayment of the expected service / treatment / procedure charge. Credit will not be given.

Fees

An itemised invoice is available on request for all treatment and products provided. Fees are determined by a range of factors, including but not limited to time of day, time spent, expertise required, members of staff involved in the treatment / procedure, technical equipment usage, medicines and consumables used, travel required, etc. All product and service fees are subject to VAT at the current rate. All fees incurred are the registered client's responsibility.

Methods of payment

- Debit or credit card (in person at the surgery or over the phone)
- Bank transfer (20-40-09, 93947785, Scott Mitchell Veterinary Care Ltd)
- Cash (in person at the surgery)
- Cheque (in person at surgery or via post, Scott Mitchell Veterinary Care Ltd)

Settlement terms and non-payment

Payment is due at the time of treatment or discharge unless alternative arrangements are made in writing with the Practice. For some established clients an itemised invoice will be produced at month-end. Once the treatment / consultation / products have been invoiced, payment is due.

Should an invoice not be settled we will send reminders and/or contact you to ask for payment. If an invoice is not paid within 30 days, it is overdue and we will begin the process to recover the debt, incurring administration charges and a 10% surcharge of the debt on the client's account. If the account remains unpaid after due notice, we will refer the case to court and/or a debt collection agency and any additional charges incurred will be the client's responsibility.

Any invalid payments (e.g. cheques returned as unpaid, direct debits returned as unpaid, credit card payments not honoured, cash that is found to be counterfeit) will result in the original sum being due, plus further administration charges and bank charges incurred.

We reserve the right to suspend or withdraw services due to non-payment.

If for any reason you are unable to settle your account, or you are concerned about not being able to pay prior to treatment, please contact us to discuss the matter immediately.

Emergencies

Irrespective of any outstanding monies on your account, we can still provide emergency pain relief and/or euthanasia for the animal. Non-emergency treatment will not be provided.

Estimates of treatment costs

Registered clients may request an estimate for the cost of services, treatment and procedures that their animal(s) may require. Certain treatments and procedures vary depending on a number of factors, including species, size of patient, severity of condition/procedure, length of time required, etc. Estimates are approximate figures and as cases progress the actual fee may alter. Where this occurs, the Practice will endeavour to inform the client wherever possible (depending on the treatment / investigation this may not be possible). The client is welcome to request updates on the cost as the case progresses.

An estimate is not a quotation. The final fee may differ from the estimate, due to reasons outlined above.

Animal Health Insurance

We support the principle of insuring animal(s) against unexpected illness and/or injury. We do not recommend specific insurance companies or policies; it is the client's responsibility to research and choose their provider and policy. Please inform us if your animal(s) are insured (including your policy number and insurance company). It is the client's responsibility to understand the contents of their policy and to initiate insurance claims. The responsibility to settle any bill(s) remains with the client. Animal insurance is a contract between the policy holder and the insurance company: we are not responsible for obtaining the settlement from the insurer.

We recommend checking the policy inclusions/exclusions criteria carefully before purchasing an insurance policy or switching insurance providers.

Prescriptions

Prescriptions can only be made to registered clients with animals we have examined.

In order to prescribe and dispense veterinary medicines responsibly we must have examined the animal within the last six months (or within the last year for parasite treatments). Prescription check appointments are charged a consultation fee.

Written prescriptions are available on request after we have completed a clinical examination of the animal. A written prescription will normally cover a 6-month period, at the discretion of the veterinary surgeon. There is a written prescription fee per medicine: clients can request the price of a written prescription from Reception.

In the event that there are no existing licensed medications for the particular species and illness, in certain circumstances the veterinary surgeons may wish to prescribe medicines that are not licensed for that species but have clinical justification for their use and are therefore legally permitted. When this occurs, the client will be informed of the precautions and asked to consent to the use of such medicines.

Returns

We cannot accept returns of, or issue refunds for, any medicines, food or products after they have left our premises. We may only assist with the disposal of items if clients are not able to dispose of such items themselves. No refund shall be made for such items.

Reminder service

While we may provide a reminder service for clients, it is the clients responsibility to monitor and maintain vaccination, medication and treatment schedules for their animal(s).

Home visits for Small Animals

Clients may request home visits during surgery open hours; however the practice will only attend when practically possible. The on-duty vet(s) and support team will decide based on circumstances at the practice, availability of staff and the nature of the problem with the animal. In many cases it is in the best interest of the animal to be seen at the surgery, where we have our full range of medicines and facilities available. When home visits are arranged, the practice may request partial or full payment in advance of the visit.

Home visits are not possible out of hours.

Referrals and second opinions

In certain cases the vet may recommend referring a case to another practice for specialist treatment, medical investigations or a second opinion / advice. In such cases the referral will be discussed with the client initially, and, with their consent, we will share the relevant information with the chosen practice to facilitate the referral. Clients are welcome to discuss referrals or second opinions with our vets. Referrals are done in the animal's best interest.

We are able to examine animals to provide second opinions for another veterinary practice. In such cases we require the full animal history in advance of the examination.

Passports for Equines

It is a legal requirement that all horses, ponies and donkeys have a valid passport, and this must accompany the animal during transport. Our staff may ask to review the passport prior to examination and/or treatment (both at the surgery or while out on calls).

Animal imports / exports and Passports

It is the client's responsibility to ensure the requirements for the import / export of, or the passport for, their animal(s) are met under the terms of travel for that species / location. Our Practice is not an agent for animal passports or animal importing / exporting; we recommend the client seeks advice from the relevant government authorities for such activity.

Ownership of records / images / laboratory results

All case records, including radiographs, laboratory results and other imaging and medical data are the property of the Practice and will be stored securely by the Practice. We do not share client or pet information with third parties, with the exception of:

- External laboratories (when samples from your animal(s) are sent for specific testing, limited information is shared for sample identification purposes).
- Insurance companies (when you have/wish to make a claim, limited client information and full medical histories for the relevant animal as required by the insurance company).
- Veterinary referral practices (when you consent to a referral (to a specialist or alternative veterinary treatment centre in the best interest of your animal), limited personal details and full animal histories for the relevant animal as required by the referral centre).
- Other veterinary practices (when you are seeking services from another veterinary practice, we will always obtain your consent via phone, email or verbal before sharing limited personal details and full animal histories).

Clients may request a copy of their animal(s) clinical history at any time. Please note this may not include copies of all radiographs and laboratory results as these are saved in a different format/location.

Animal welfare

The welfare of animals is at the heart of what we do. Should a case be presented where we have concerns for the welfare and safety of the animal, we are responsible for reporting this to the relevant authority.

Data protection

Confidentiality is of utmost importance. We securely request and store personal information in accordance with our Privacy Policy, which is available on our website or by request.

Acceptable behaviour

We will treat you and your animal(s) with respect and courtesy and expect this in return. We will not tolerate any abusive, aggressive or unpleasant behaviour towards our staff, or our premises, at any time. Any client deemed to be behaving in such a way will be asked to leave the premises immediately. We reserve the right to withdraw services as a consequence, which we will do in writing via email and/or letter and pursue legal action where appropriate.

Feedback and complaints

We welcome feedback on all services we provide. We hope you never have reason to complain about the standards of service received from us, however if you do, please inform us in writing via our website feedback form or email the Practice Manager Sue Robson (suerobson@smvc.co.uk). Alternatively feedback can be provided by letter to The Practice Manager, Scott Mitchell Veterinary Care Ltd, Tyne Green, Hexham, NE46 3SG.

Any complaints received will be investigated and responded to, usually within 21 days but may be longer if the Practice Manager or staff involved are unavailable or delayed during this time period.

Variations in terms and conditions of business

No agent or individual employed by or under contract with the Practice has authority to change these conditions in any way. No variations or additions to these conditions will bind the practice unless it is agreed in writing and signed by the Managing Directors Roger Scott and Colin Mitchell.

Statutory rights

These terms and conditions do not affect your statutory rights.