



Reducing Commonly Experienced Injuries in Veterinary Practices

No one is at their best when they aren't feeling well. This goes for your patients too. When they are sick, injured, or simply anxious, they can be unpredictable. This unpredictability can lead to staff members suffering bites, scratches, and strains from patient interactions. In addition to patient interaction-related injuries, staff members must also be cautious of another common workplace injury—strains from lifting heavy items like bags of food, boxes, and cases of cans. Because these injuries are all too common in veterinary practices, all staff members should be properly trained in appropriate animal handling, muzzling, restraint, and safe lifting techniques.

Among Veterinary Insurance Services Company (VISC) clients, we have found that more than 75% of veterinary workplace injuries are related to (1) strains from lifting animals or heavy items, and (2) bite-and-scratch incidents while restraining dogs and cats. Fortunately, many of these injuries can be prevented with specific and diligent training. VISC clients have access to free safety training videos specific to these situations. The free training videos include:

- Proper Lifting Techniques
- Proper Lifting Techniques: Inanimate Objects
- Restraining Dogs

- Restraining Cats
- How to Muzzle a Dog

The most direct way for VISC clients to access their free safety videos is to visit visc-ins.com. From the home page, click the Free Safety Videos button in the 'Quick Links' box.

Consistent and effective safety training for staff is essential to reducing workplace injuries; however, it is also important to make sure the practice is equipped with appropriate safety equipment. For instance, one of the most effective ways to reduce strain injury exposures is to consider engineering controls. Some examples include:

- Examination tables, bathing tubs, and catch chutes that can be adjusted to varying heights
- Devices to assist lifting or restraining, such as lifting tables or steps leading to elevated baths and kennels
- Storing heavy or awkward items like large dog food bags between hip and shoulder height to eliminate low lifts

With the observation of necessary precautions, frequent training, and knowledge of your surroundings and patient demeanor, the likelihood—and severity—of workplace injuries can be reduced. ■