



## TEACHING VETERINARY STUDENTS PRACTICAL EXERCISES TO REDUCE ANIMAL STRESS DURING VETERINARY EXAMINATIONS TO IMPROVE DOG AND CAT WELFARE

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Veterinarians are responsible for safeguarding animal welfare during veterinary consultations, which are a known source of animal stress Döring, D. et al., 2009. "Pet friendly" practices are becoming more and more widespread in veterinary clinics Yin, S. (2009a), Yin, S. (2009b). However, other than specialist clinics, it appears that French veterinary students are not sufficiently trained in low stress animal handling techniques.

Our study aimed at teaching practical low stress handling techniques to veterinary students. We used the clinical skill lab created at the National Veterinary School of Alfort, Vetsims, to enhance practical learning. Exercises consisted of practicing simple techniques on stuffed animals, with the aid of photos and videos exhibiting emotional reactions (fear, stress, aggression) of dogs and cats.

15 exercises were designed and consisted of: approaching a dog and a cat, getting a cat out of its carrier, putting a muzzle on a dog, lifting a dog and a cat onto the consultation table, having a dog lie on his side, handling a dog for head examination, jugular vein puncture echographic examination, and catheterisation of the cephalic vein, and handling a cat for saphenous vein puncture, echographic examination, and catheterisation of the cephalic vein.

Students are free to use the vetsims room and validate by themselves their success in each exercise. Attendance to the tasks will be monitored, and future studies will consist in assessing the efficacy of such low stress handling practical techniques, to increase student safety and improve pet welfare.

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