

**TABLE 6.1**

**How to refer a case to a nonprofit veterinary or animal shelter practice**

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| Only refer based on the capabilities and services you know are available at the referral organization.   |
| Prepare the case as you would for any other referral case.   |
| As often as possible, establish a diagnosis and provide this to the referral practice.   |
| If you know the referral practice does not have a particular diagnostic test or modality that is important for diagnosis or treatment, if possible, perform this at your clinic before referring (e.g., take a radiograph to confirm a foreign body before referring for gastrotomy or enterotomy to a limited-scope-of-care surgical clinic). |
| Communicate with the practice ahead of time so that they are ready to receive the patient.   |
| Provide medical records electronically if possible and send physical records with the client.  |
| Set reasonable expectations with the client, for example, the possible costs of care or potential diagnostics the referral practice might perform.   |
| Be available for questions from the referral practice.   |
| Clarify if you will provide ongoing follow-up care for this case or if the referral passes that responsibility to the care partner.  |

**The 2024 Community Care Guidelines for Small Animal Practice are available at [aaha.org/community-care](https://aaha.org/community-care).**

These guidelines were prepared by a Task Force of experts convened by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and were subjected to a formal peer-review process. This document is intended as a guideline only, not an AAHA standard of care. These guidelines and recommendations should not be construed as dictating an exclusive protocol, course of treatment, or procedure. Variations in practice may be warranted based on the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to each individual practice setting. ©2024 AAHA.

