
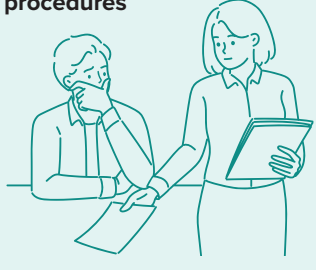


TABLE 8.1
Common Referral Disruptions and Strategies to Overcome Them

Disruption	Proactive Strategies
<p>Lack of mutual respect and understanding between teams</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role Clarity: Inform clients that PCT veterinarians serve as a constant resource by providing wide-ranging care and specialists receive additional focused training that allows them to delve deeper into specific conditions. Together the PCT and SCT provide comprehensive client service and patient care.^a • Team Building: Form a solid relationship between PCT and SCT by establishing mutual goals,^a knowledge sharing activities (e.g., regular case rounds), joint continuing education, and even social events. • Collaborative Care: Seek opportunities to involve both PCT and SCT in client consultations and treatment planning to improve communication, enhance understanding, and foster collaborative care.^{a,b} • Professional Courtesy: Communicate findings of a misdiagnosis or a difference in medical opinion with humility, using a direct form of communication (e.g., telephone call).
<p>Communication gaps between teams</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate Single Points of Contact: Select a single point of contact (for the PCT and SCT) to facilitate and manage consistent communication between the teams (e.g., referral coordinator, CrVT, etc.). • Provide Timely and Complete Specialist Reports: Timely and complete reports, including examination findings, diagnostic results, recommendations, and treatment plans, support continuity of care. • Set Expectations for Follow-Up Care: Clarify the post-referral process and responsibilities by providing detailed and clear instructions on when and where the patient requires follow-up care. • Leverage Technology: Use secure online portals or telehealth platforms to increase accessibility, convenience, real-time updates, and transparent record keeping, all of which improve information sharing.
<p>Duplication of tests and procedures</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meticulous Record Keeping: The PCT must clearly document and communicate any prior test results, while the SCT is responsible for thoroughly reviewing all records provided. • Online Access: A referral portal providing shared access to the referral form, medical records, and completed diagnostics decreases the potential for miscommunication and unnecessary duplication of diagnostics. • Set Client Expectations: The PCT can set the client's expectation that some tests may need to be repeated by the SCT for certain types of cases. The SCT also can clarify with the client why tests need to be repeated.

a. Best C, Coe JB, Hewson J, Meehan M, Kelton D, Black B. Referring equine veterinarians' expectations of equine veterinary specialists and referral centers. *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 2018;253:479-489.

b. Lefbom BK, Peckens NK. Impact of collaborative care on survival time for dogs with congestive heart failure and revenue for the attending primary care veterinarian. *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 2016;249(1):72-6.

The 2025 AAHA Referral Guidelines are available at aaha.org/referral.

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. ©2025 AAHA.

