



From feedlots to city blocks, visibility matters for every veterinary practice

Whether you serve livestock producers or urban pet owners, consistent community engagement builds trust and loyalty.

Second in the series “Seen, Heard, Trusted” by Rick Purnell
March 26, 2026

Whether your practice serves clients in a dense urban area or across several counties, your clients share two expectations. First, they need your medical expertise. Second, they look for your presence and leadership in the community.

The former comes naturally. The latter often happens sporadically when stock show winners want premium bids, a charity event needs a booth or a school class needs a veterinary presentation. It’s natural to assume that sound veterinary practices and word-of-mouth referrals will take care of the business and its growth. Until they don’t.

Visibility builds trust before clients arrive

Word of mouth still matters, but it’s not enough in today’s environment. Trust remains the foundation of veterinary-client relationships and it likely begins before the first appointment.

When a veterinarian makes a school presentation, writes a column for the local newspaper or website, or participates in a community event, the public sees the professional and their professionalism in action. This gives the veterinarian recognition and credibility.

This visibility matters. Research shows that familiarity and perceived expertise strongly influence client choice when selecting providers. In addition, the American Veterinary Medical Association emphasizes that community outreach and public education strengthen public trust in veterinarians and their services.

For urban practices, this visibility can be the deciding factor when potential clients select from the clinics near them. For rural practices, it reinforces long-standing relationships and helps ensure the practice remains top of mind among livestock and pet owners.

Consistency of outreach matters

One outreach won't produce meaningful effects. A steady, predictable presence will. Think of community visibility as you would preventive care. The benefit comes from vigilant ongoing effort rather than reactive intervention.

A simple annual calendar can help a practice build a strategic outreach plan. A blur of constant activity isn't needed. Rather, a steady cadence of engagement with a few well-planned touchpoints throughout the year can help the clinic maintain visibility without overwhelming the practice team.

A typical plan may include:

- Three or four school presentations a year (how to be a responsible youth pet owner, proper pet exercise, to pet or not to pet a strange dog, how-tos for baby wildlife encounters)
- Help with the local fair and livestock show (weigh-in, premium sale, show ring support)
- A regular expert column or interview with a local newspaper/website or radio station
- Guest appearance on a local podcast (or start your own)
- Participate in or host a pet vaccination or wellness clinic
- Regular social media posts (seasonal animal health topics, successful clinic moments, client/patient successes and, with permission, photos of clients and their pets)

None of these activities is complicated or expensive. However, their cumulative effect can be powerful as each article, interview, event or post reinforces a practice's community presence and expertise.

Granted, there will be strategic differences between rural and urban tactics. Fairs, livestock shows, Extension service meetings, 4-H and FFA events offer natural opportunities for rural practitioners to demonstrate expertise and strengthen community relationships.

Urban clinics face different dynamics. Competition can be intense and some populations are more transient than rural residents, making it hard to develop long-term client loyalty. Partnerships with dog training businesses, cat clubs, traditional and social media exposure and community event participation are highly important in these environments.

Whether rural, suburban or urban, the key to community visibility is the same. It takes ongoing, intentional participation.

Community activities strengthen the entire practice

Long-term community outreach is more than a marketing tool. It reminds existing and prospective clients and the community in general of the value of the veterinary profession.

It reaffirms client loyalty. When they see their vet actively supporting their community, it deepens their connection to a practice. It also lets them see how their vet interacts with others and gives them a glimpse of the bigger picture.

It supports staff morale. Vet techs and support staff often value being part of community events and outreach can become a source of pride. These experiences often generate new ideas and energy within the clinic.

Community engagement doesn't require a large budget or complicated programming. Assign responsibility to a team member or a small group and start small. Perhaps you begin with one social media post per month, one school assembly a semester, one animal shelter or livestock show and a few media interviews. Build from there as comfort levels rise and approaches are refined.

Before long, you'll have built a strong public profile.

This ongoing engagement nurtures relationships with clients, prospects and neighbors, which strengthens the practice, the community and the profession. Bottom line? Have fun because it's worthwhile and rewarding work.

###

About the author

Rick Purnell is the editor of Animal Health Digest and an animal health public relations professional. Reach him at rpurnell@rprcompany.com
For more information: <https://rprcompany.com/>