Category 1: Physical and Emotional

MANDATORY
1.12 Syringes and needles are single-use only. Needles are replaced after drawing up vaccines, medications, unsuccessful blood draws etc. so that the patient always receives a fresh needle.

- Job Level (who should be able to perform the task):
  - Veterinary technician/assistant – in those states that allow veterinary technician or assistant to perform this based on the state practice act
  - Veterinarian

Equipment and Supplies

Readily available supply of a variety of sized needles and syringes

Examples and Compliance Paths

Any injection (e.g. vaccines, SQ fluids) or sample collection (e.g. blood draw, cystocentesis) are performed using a fresh needle.

One of the most common reasons a dog or cat sees the veterinarian is for an annual exam with vaccinations. Please consider the following options for making that visit a more comfortable experience.

- To minimize movement and noise, aim to have all items needed for the visit (e.g. vaccines, syringes, needles, covering towel, treats), prepared and ready to go at the start of the exam. The goal is to avoid having to exit and re-enter the room repeatedly.

- For vaccinations, the vaccine will be drawn up (or reconstituted) using a larger gauge needle, and then a new needle will be attached to the syringe(s) ensuring the sharpest needle with the least drag.

- The room in which the procedures are done will feature adequate pheromone exposure for the species under care. The hospital staff will be wearing pheromones on their clothing, refreshed as needed. The non-skid surfaces are spritzed with pheromones. The towels covering the syringes are spritzed with pheromones.

Category 1: Physical and Emotional

- "Putting the treat into treatment"
  Before the procedure is attempted, i.e. the vaccination, the pet is distracted by extremely high-value treats such as dehydrated or warm deli meats, spreadable cheese, peanut butter, baby food, whipped cream, etc. We recommend using ice cream cones (just the plain yellow cones that taste like Styrofoam) to deliver the treats as it keeps your hands away from the mouth. Some veterinarians write the pet's name or make a yellow smiley face out of a high-value treat and have the pet owner video their pet eating their own name while vaccinated. This makes for great social media posts!

- Once the pet is fully distracted, the person doing the procedure implements touch gradient, maintaining constant physical contact with the pet so as not to startle him/her. When using touch gradient, instead of grabbing a fold of skin or hiking up the back leg and jabbing the needle in, touch and lightly stroke the patient, then do the same motion with your other hand, and then tent the skin where you intend to insert the needle. This massage-like laying on of hands may be repeated 2 to 4 times. The last time you tent the skin, you deliver the vaccine.

- Other gentle control techniques such as towel wrapping, head covering, and/or use of compression garments may be used to further decease offending stimuli.

- Sedate early and often. If you can't reduce FAS to an acceptable level by other means, sedatives should be thought of as a first option, not a last resort.

- Use the Emotional Medical Record to capture what techniques worked the best, where the pet liked the procedure to be done (e.g. table, floor, lap), what gentle control technique did or didn't work, what were known FAS triggers (e.g. a certain individual) and what treats were preferred. The goal is to always move the pet away from FAS and toward happy and calm.

Scoring

SOP for syringe and needle usage