



Category 4: Facilities

OPTIONAL

4.9 Reduce stress for patients in a ward setting

The following information explains in more detail techniques and possible compliance paths. The hospital must provide **at least two (2)** of the following stress-reducing strategies to attain the 80 points.

- Eliminate patients facing each other in wards
- Provide more than one dog ward
- Non-reflective surfaces in cages
- Ability of cats to hide in enclosure
- If bars are present on cat cage doors, they are horizontal
- Resting platforms in cages for cats
- Cages with views to pleasant or neutral spaces
- Enrichments used in cages
- Litter pans designed for hospitalized cats
- Provide critical Fear Free dimensions in caging
- Appropriate pheromone therapy

Equipment and Supplies

May include but are not limited to:

- Enrichments such as scratching pads, resting benches, etc. for cages
- Caging and runs designed for the wellbeing of patients
- Shallow litter boxes for easy use by hospitalized cats

Examples and Compliance Paths

General Strategies

- Eliminate patients facing each other in wards
 - Dogs and cats can react negatively when facing each other at close distance in ward spaces. Wards may be designed to be single-sided.
 - If this is not possible for the hospital, visual blocks may be placed on the fronts of caging¹.
- Non-reflective surfaces in caging
 - Caging and runs can be selected or modified to reduce reflective, shiny surfaces

¹ Critical patients should remain visible to practice personnel.



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- Laminate caging for cats
 - Plastic run side panels for dogs
- Caging with views to pleasant or neutral spaces
 - If possible, caging can be set up so animals can look out of wards into staff work spaces (better monitoring for staff) or to the outside.
- Enrichments used in cages
 - Blankets and towels
 - Resting shelves and benches for cats and raised beds for dogs
 - Scratching surfaces for healthy cats (for example, boarded cats)
 - Safe toys or treats for healthy dogs and cats
- Provide Fear Free dimensions in caging
 - Many cats have traditionally been housed in small enclosures that do not allow them to express normal behaviors and assume normal postures. Fear Free housing prioritizes a cat's ability to move normally in a horizontal direction and may also incorporate movement in the vertical direction. Enlarging caging to three feet in width and at least 30 inches in height can suffice for healthy, short-term housing.
 - Healthy cats held overnight, or cats housed with litter pans need at least a four-foot-long housing unit.²
 - Additional information about modifying existing structures can be found here: <http://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/cat-portals-order-information-and-instruction-for-installation>
 - Because dogs vary in size, a variety of housing units can be provided. Healthy adult dogs must be able to move freely within their enclosures. If a dog cannot turn around without touching the sides of an enclosure, the enclosure is too small for the dog³.
 - Runs in medical settings should be wide and shallow rather than deep and narrow. Wide and shallow runs give dogs more room to maneuver and allow technicians to sit inside the run with a dog.
- Dog Solutions
- Provide more than one dog ward
 - One of the tools animal behaviorists use to positively influence dogs is to house them based on their behavioral needs.

² If an animal needs restraint, such as in post-surgical situations, it is acceptable to provide smaller housing as is medically appropriate for the patients. Kittens may also be housed in smaller units.

³ The hospital may intentionally restrict movement when medically required, such as in post-surgical situations.



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- By providing more than one dog ward, dogs may be separated to provide maximum stress reduction.
- Beyond having more than one dog ward, create at least one low-stimulation run or room for a highly stressed or reactive dog. This may be a run in a separate room or a fully- enclosed run.
- Cat Solutions
- Provide choices for cats to hide in enclosures
 - Unless the cat needs monitoring for medical reasons, add a choice for hiding to the enclosure. A towel hung on a portion of the cage door can suffice. This can be a viable option even for cats who need monitoring such as those with an IV or urinary catheter.
- If bars are present on cage doors, they are horizontal
 - Horizontal bars are easier to use for hanging towels, etc., for hiding, but also provide unobstructed views when the cats want to look out.
- Litter pans designed for hospitalized cats
 - Provide wide, shallow litter pans so that ill or compromised cats can use them easily

Scoring

Observational

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Photo Examples



Housing sized for healthy dogs, with non-reflective side panels. Credit: Foto Imagery / Tim Murphy



Cat housing with non-reflective interiors, horizontal bars, and resting benches. Credit: Foto Imagery / Tim Murphy

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Cat housing in a single-sided ward, with a view to the outside. Credit: Foto Imagery / Tim Murphy

Cautions

Horizontal bars should not be used for dogs as they can bite the bars and injure themselves.