



Theo Kocher

Vets and Pets and Owners Oh My

Redesigning the veterinary exam room

Abstract

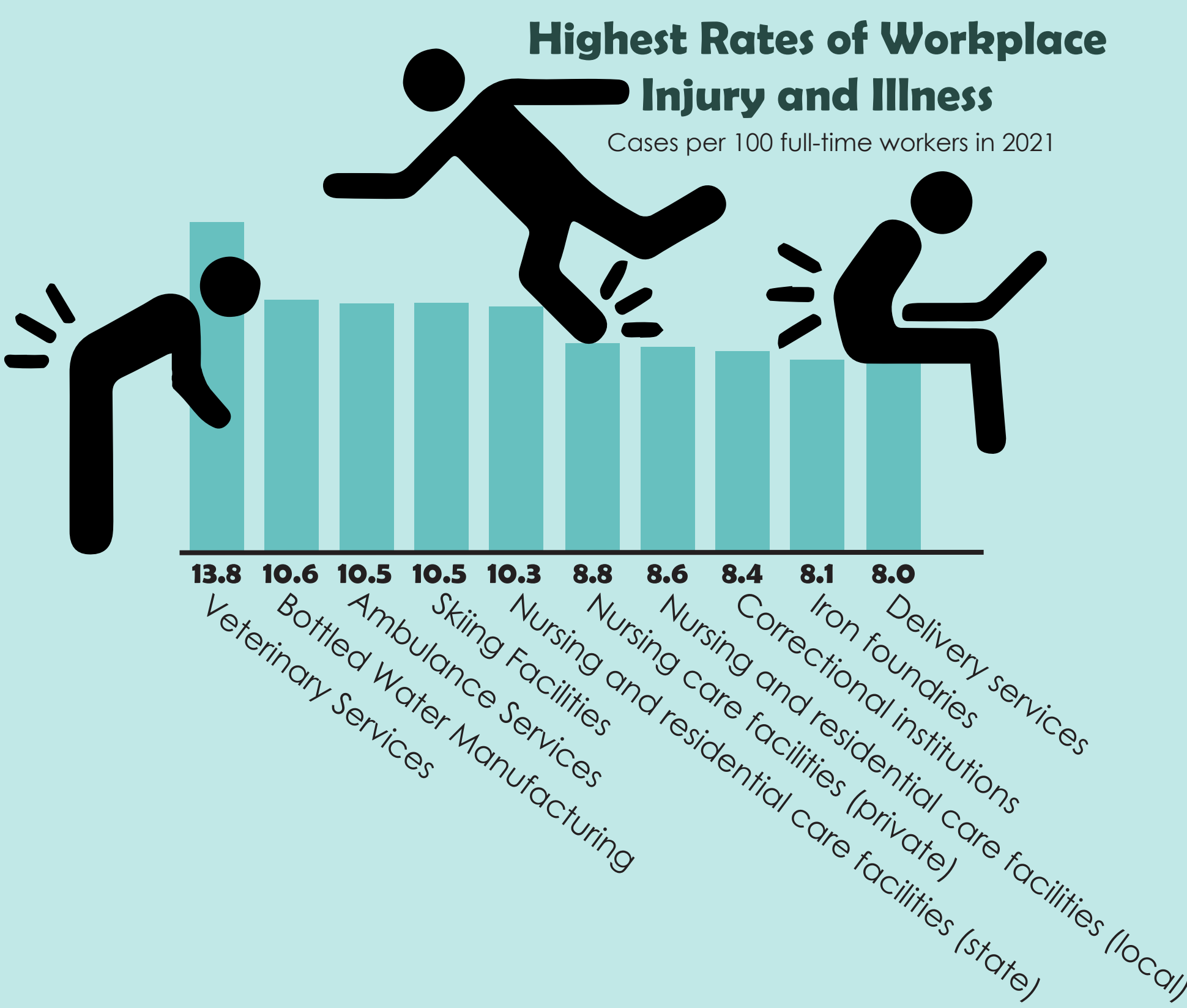
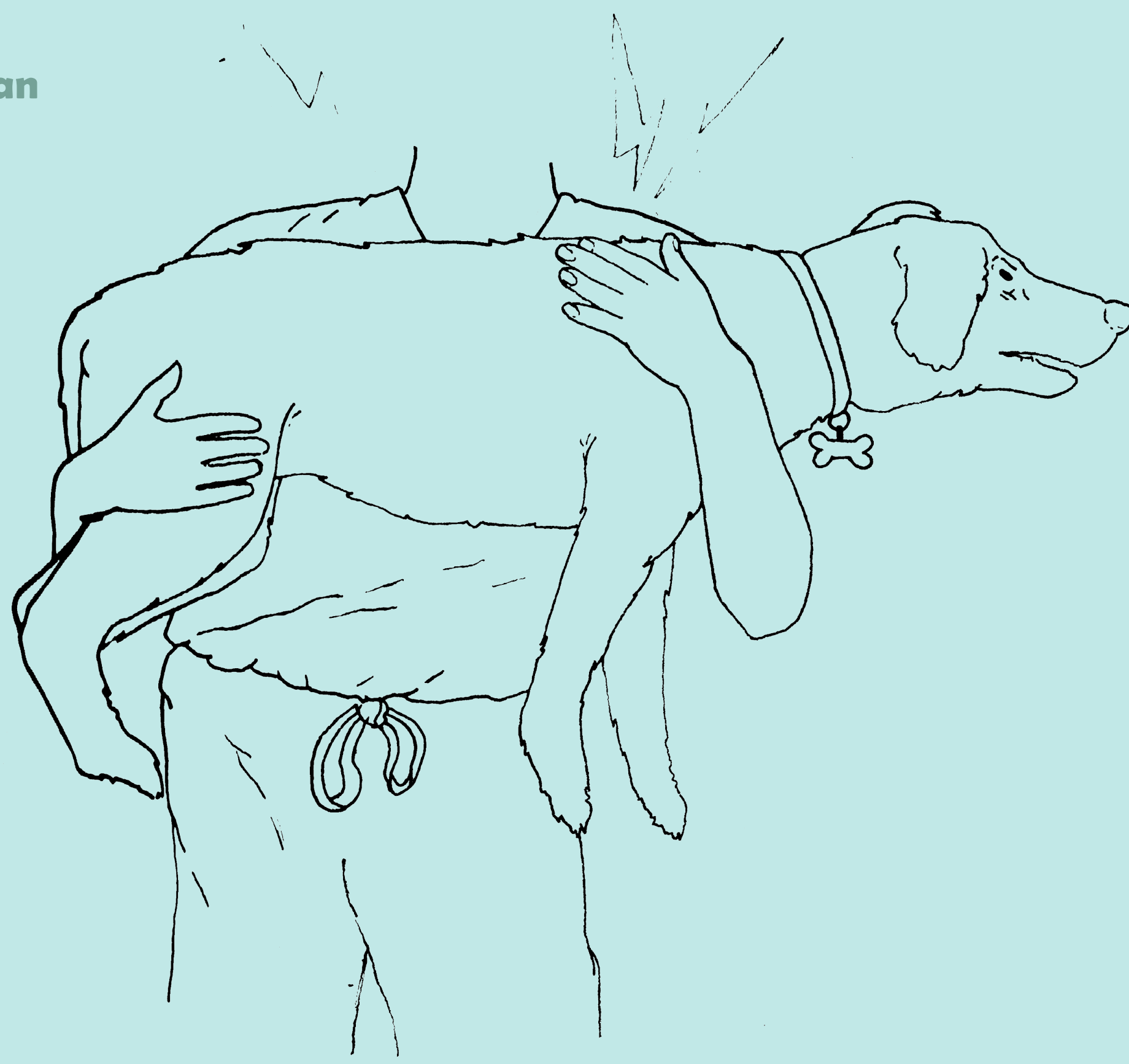
This study explores the obstacles faced in veterinary care, from the perspective of the doctor, the patient, and the pet owner. There is extensive research already surrounding the physical and mental toll of veterinary work as well as around the cause and prevention of stress in veterinary patients and their humans. There is, however, very little that combines the three and focuses on the interconnected nature of stress on all parties. More than ninety percent of veterinarians report some form of musculoskeletal pain caused by their work but a large part of this is due to lifting, restraining, or otherwise accommodating distressed animals. If the process of a vet visit can be made quicker and more comfortable for the animals it will have a cascading effect that also greatly benefits the health of the doctors. Creating a more comfortable and streamlined vet visit benefits both doctors and patients and could help motivate owners to get care for their pets earlier rather than waiting and exacerbating any health problems. A better vet visit is better for everyone.

Vets



"My back always hurts on surgery or dental, because I'm like this yeah, leaning over the table or something at an awkward spot and you have to... squat or... you could try to shift but then it's... weird or you'd have to... reach"
-Dr. Hoerner, DVM

"I squat a lot in the exam room or I'm on the floor like with those dogs that are nervous or things like that you're trying to like reduce their anxiety so there's a lot of just sitting or squatting on the floor which is a big wear and tear on, like my knees and stuff like that"
-Dr. Maghan Warmuth

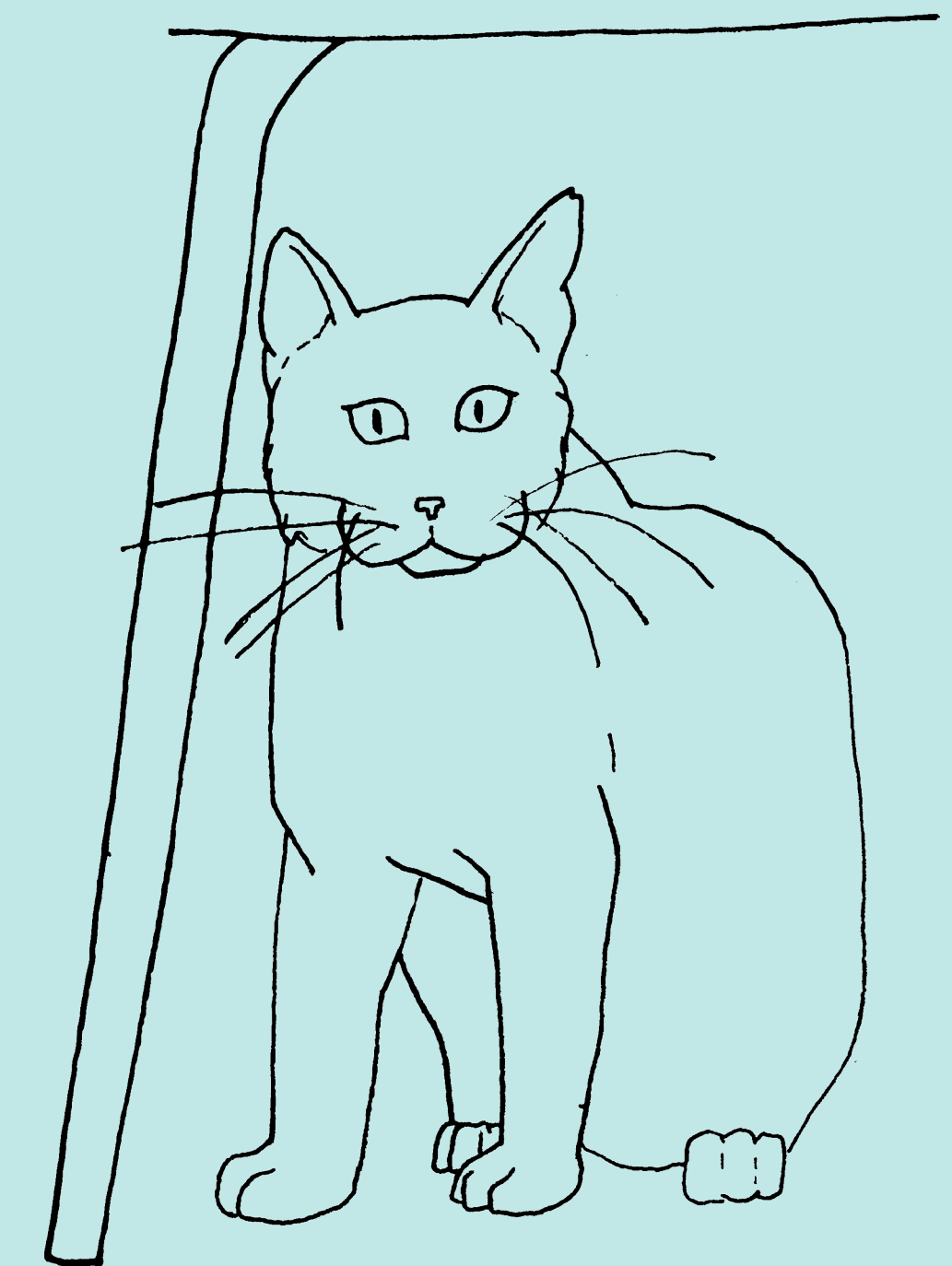


Veterinary doctors get hurt on the job more than any other profession. This is often due to the fact that they have to adjust their clinical approach to fit their patients needs. Since they can't communicate easily with the animals to try and reduce their anxiety, they are forced to do it in other ways. Many vets are willing to work on the floor or otherwise put strain on their bodies in order to minimize the stress that animals feel in the vet's office. This leads to a large number of back, neck, hand, and wrist stress injuries and contributes to shortages of vets in the field.

Pets

Going to the vet is a scary and unfamiliar experience for many animals. It is a new environment with lots of unexpected stimuli. The anxiety of a bad vet appointment can have life-long repercussions so it is very important for vets to try and make the experience as calm as possible.

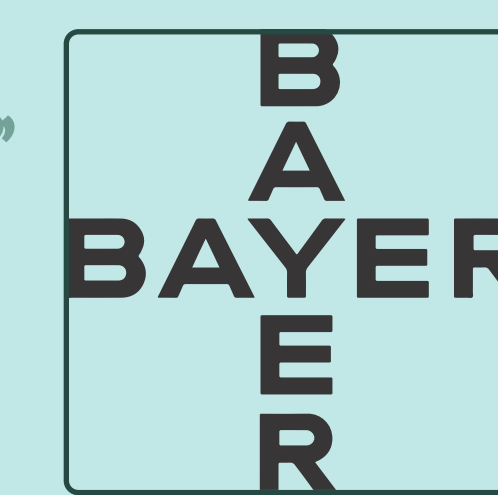
"If a dog experiences a negative event caused by a human, for instance by the staff in the veterinary clinic, the dog might be more difficult for the personnel to handle and the handling will be even more disturbing to the dog in the future, creating a vicious circle."
-Louise Hernander



Owners

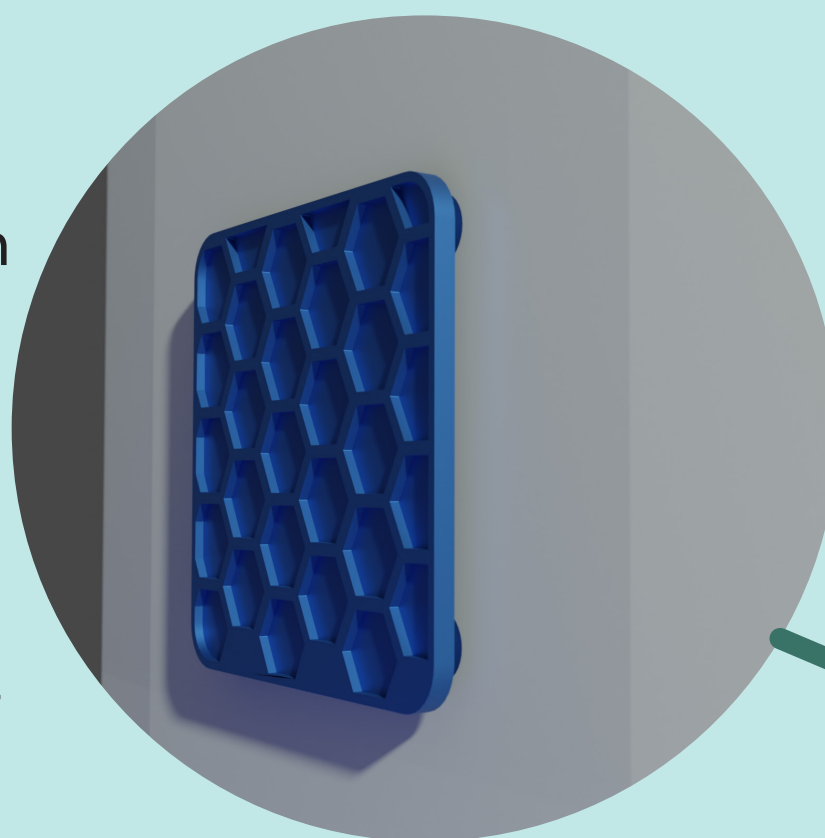
Pet owners are usually in the room for their pet's vet exam and they see it through the pet's eyes. They see how anxious the animal is and how hard it is to get them in the door. This often makes owners hesitant to bring their pet in and can cause them to delay getting treatment. In the end this is only detrimental to the health of the pet, as they are not seeing the doctor when they need to.

"I'm seeing pets three days sicker"
-Bayer Vet Study



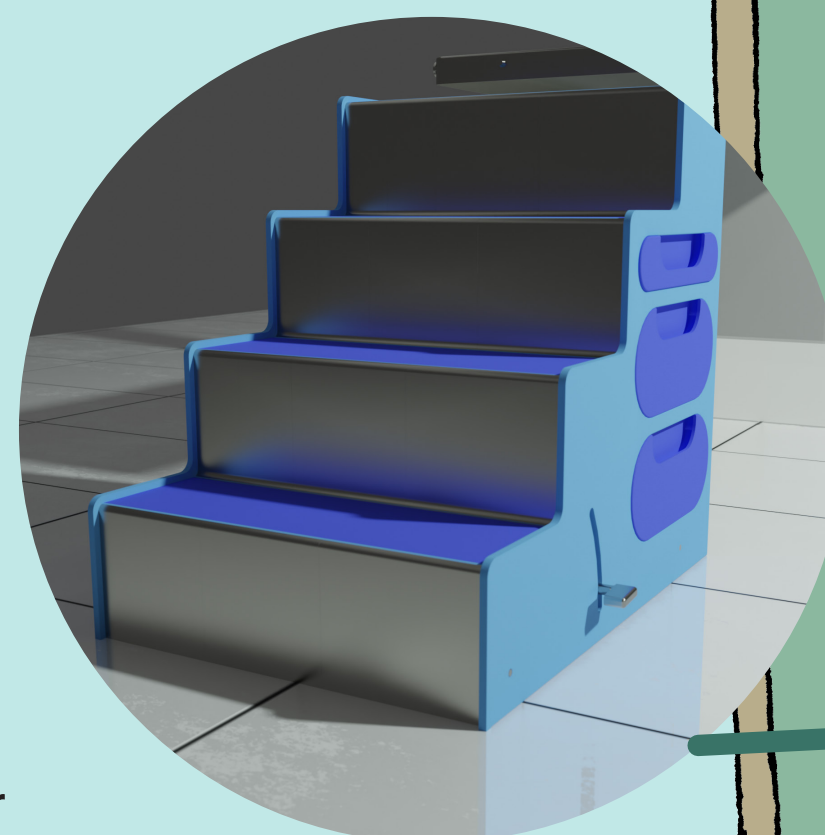
Lick Mats

Lick mats are already a pretty common item for dog training and grooming. They are rubber and have lots of little crevices and corners. To use them a person spreads peanut butter or a preferred snack spread across the mat making sure it gets into the crevices. The dog will lick the spread off the mat but since lots of it will have seeped into small, hard-to-reach corners, they will have to spend considerable time and concentration to get it all. It's great to get a food motivated dog to stay still and not focus on any discomfort from a vet exam. The lick mats here have suction cups on the back and can stick on numerous different places on the exam table and stairs. This should help vets to keep their patients happy and occupied while they do their work and should also make animals more comfortable and relaxed while they get examined.



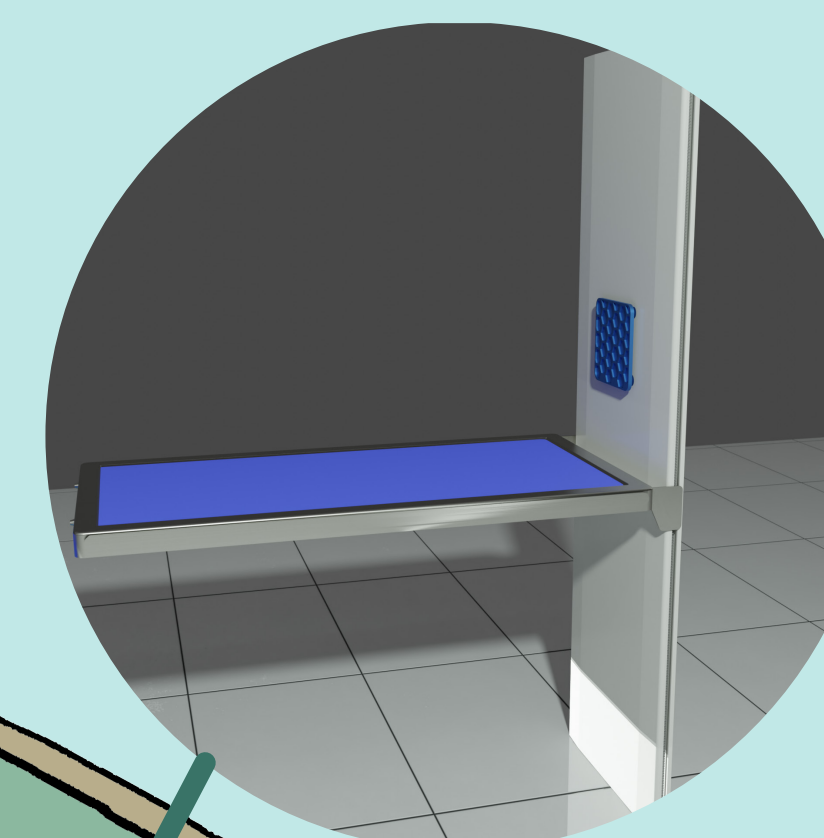
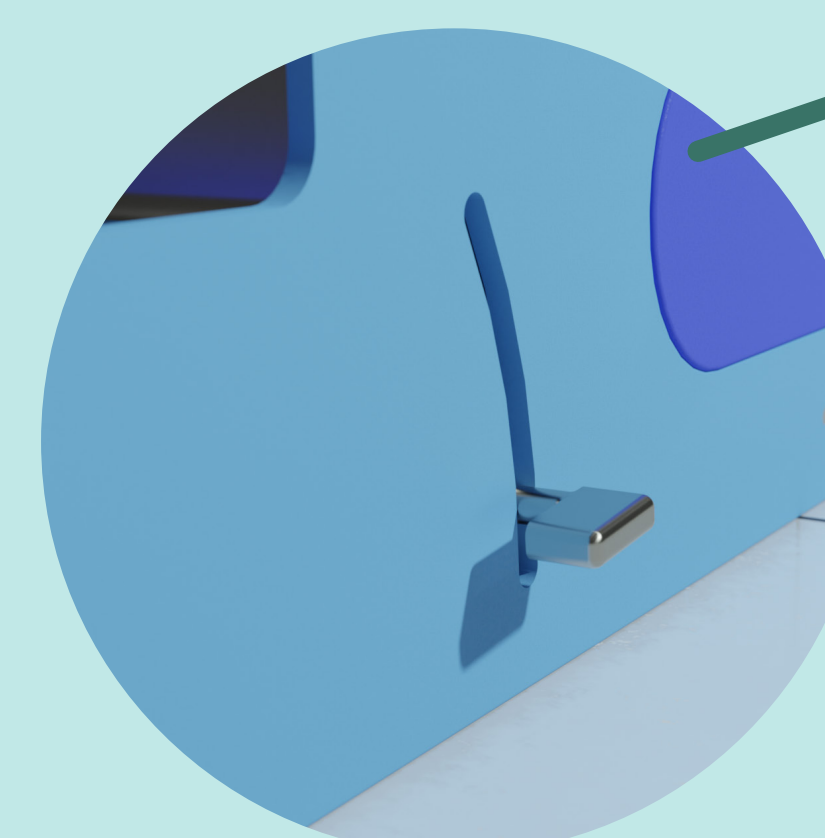
Stair Unit

The stairs are the main attraction in my solution. The idea is to make it so that an animal can get from the floor up to an exam table under their own steam. Since stairs are pretty ubiquitous in almost every home they should be familiar and easily understood by any animal. The stairs also provide a way for vets to get some key information. Walking up the stairs lets the vet view the animal's gait and also lets them see their undercarriage a bit better like they might try to get with "paws up" position. The faces of each stair are a smooth metallic material, this allows the lick mats from earlier to easily stick on with their suction cups. If a vet wants a longer look at the animal with their paws up they can keep them occupied on the stairs with a lick mat.



Casters

The stairs have a built-in set of retractable wheels to help make them even more useful. The pedal can be pushed down by foot. As it is pushed down it lowers a set of four free-rotating casters that allow the stair unit to be rolled around in any direction. As soon as the pedal is pushed back up, the stair unit will rest back on the floor and will not shift around, allowing it to be safe and secure for use.

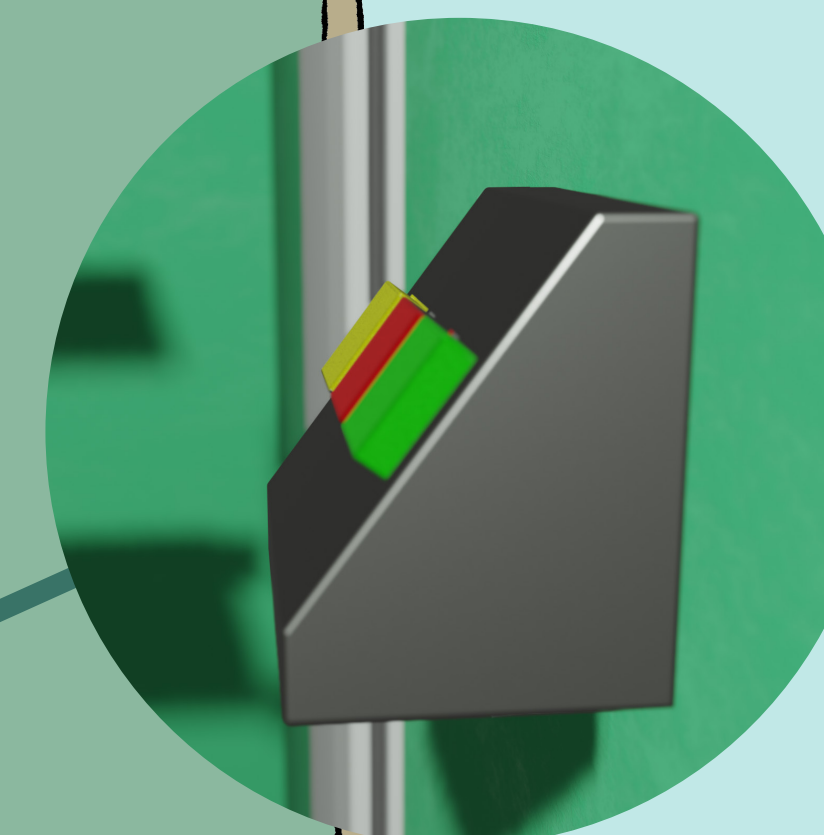


Lift Table

Lifting tables for vets already do exist and they can be an invaluable tool. They let a vet lift animals without putting any strain on their bodies. They also let a vet work at whatever height they want, making them adaptable to vets of any height or mobility level. This one is no different, it should make examining any animal much easier. The bed of the table is coated in a film of sharklet material, a microbe resistant plastic. This gives the bed some extra grip and color to make an animal feel more at home.

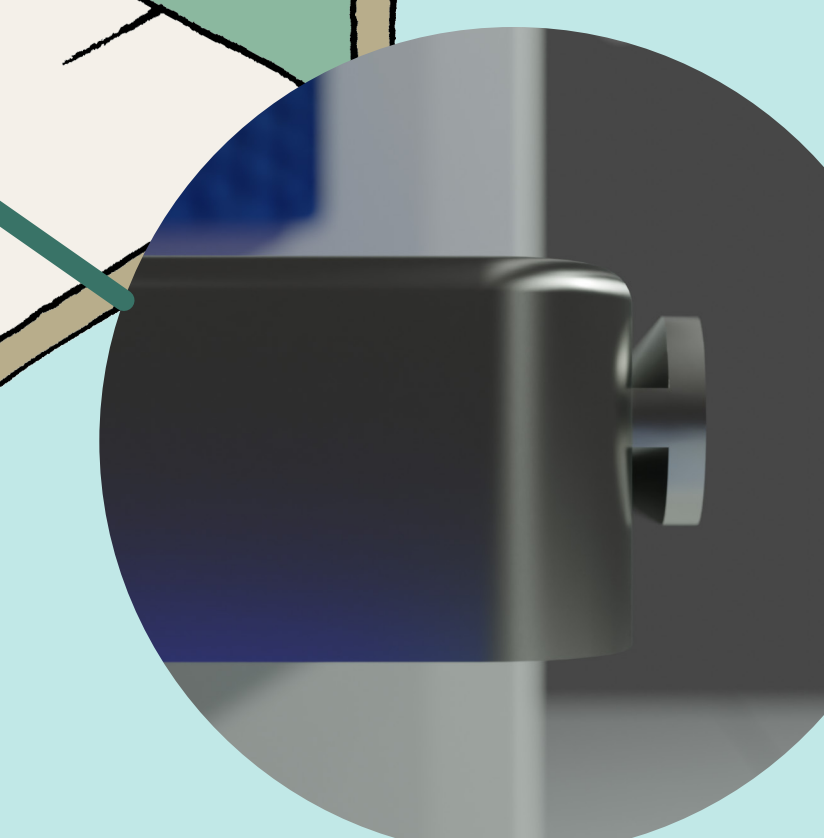
Buttons

The control buttons for this exam table are fairly simple. There is an up button, down button, and a centering button. The up and down buttons are fairly self-explanatory but hitting the centering button will automatically set the height of the table to the exact height of the staircase. This way a vet can easily adjust the table to whatever height they want but also have it conveniently reset to perfectly fit the stairs without having to try and match them up manually



Mounting Strips

Both sides of the table have a metal, T-shaped, channel along the side. These are meant to serve as mounting spaces for any peripheral a vet could need during an exam. Restrain, tool storage, lighting, or the cat cave shown later can all be secured to these mounting strips. This allows a vet to completely customize their workspace for whatever type of exam they are performing. This hopefully lets them perform exams quicker and with less hassle.



Drawers

The stairs do not waste any space, underneath their walking space they have a set of three drawers for general storage. This can either be used to store peripherals for the table or any other equipment a vet might want handy for an exam. If a vet is sitting in a chair at the exam table, the drawers will be perfectly within arm's reach, allowing them to easily access supplies without getting up or turning around to other storage areas.

