

Emergency Room

at Colorado Animal Specialty and Emergency (CASE)

What To Expect in the Emergency Room (ER)

What is the emergency room (ER)?

The ER is a department in a veterinary hospital. Unlike your primary care veterinarian's office, the ER does not see patients by appointment. Patients may arrive at all times of the day or night, and are seen and treated in order of medical urgency. This concept is known as triage, and is the same system utilized in human emergency rooms.

When you arrive at the ER

You will talk to a triage nurse after you arrive. This is a nurse trained in emergency care. He or she will ask about your pet's problem. The nurse will check your pet's temperature, pulse, respiratory rate, pain score and general demeanor. Your pet will be examined by a doctor right away if their injury or illness is severe. Otherwise, you will likely be asked to wait while patients who are more seriously ill are assessed and stabilized.

Wait times in the ER

Wait times in the emergency room can vary dramatically and are subject to change at any time. Due to the unpredictable influx of patients in an emergency room, we are unable to provide you with a specific wait time. However, we will do our best to provide an estimated range of your potential wait time. We appreciate your understanding that these times can change frequently. If you feel that your pet's condition has changed while you are waiting, please alert the front desk staff.

You may be offered the option to drop your pet off with our emergency department and receive a phone call from the doctor when your pet has been examined. Your pet will be placed in a kennel or dog run, with bedding and water appropriate to their size and condition. The triage staff will monitor your pet for any major changes in their status and alert the doctor if immediate attention is warranted.



Emergency care

In the ER, a doctor and team of nurses will care for your pet. Your pet may have X-rays, blood work, or other tests or procedures. The wait time for these results may be up to several hours, and as with patient wait time, is often determined by the caseload and how many other patients have diagnostics or procedures pending. In the meantime, your pet will be made as comfortable as possible.

Prior to running any diagnostics or performing any treatments, you will be provided with a financial estimate, and may be asked to sign a consent form or leave a deposit for the given estimate.

Going home

Your pet may be admitted to the hospital if they are very ill or need further evaluation or treatment by a specialist. Regardless of whether your pet is admitted, written instructions about how to care for your pet will either be provided to you at the time of discharge or may be emailed to you by the end of the night. Your pet may also go home with prescription medication. Be sure to ask your doctor or nurse if you have any questions about the care your pet received, additional instructions about the care you need to provide to your pet at home, or about your prescriptions.

A copy of all medical records and diagnostics results from your visit will be sent to your regular veterinarian the next day to keep them informed of your pet's condition and to help ensure continuity of care if any follow-up visits are needed. The ER provides emergent care, especially during hours when your regular veterinarian is not available. This department is not able to provide on-going care for chronic conditions, and in most cases, is not able to provide recheck visits or refills of prescription medications.

We understand that a trip to the emergency room is not how anyone plans to spend their day. It can be extremely stressful and scary when your pet is sick, especially when you are asked to wait for an unknown amount of time. Please know that every staff member at CASE is here because they want to help you and your pet. Please do not hesitate to speak to any staff member with concerns or feedback about your visit. We truly appreciate your patience and kindness.