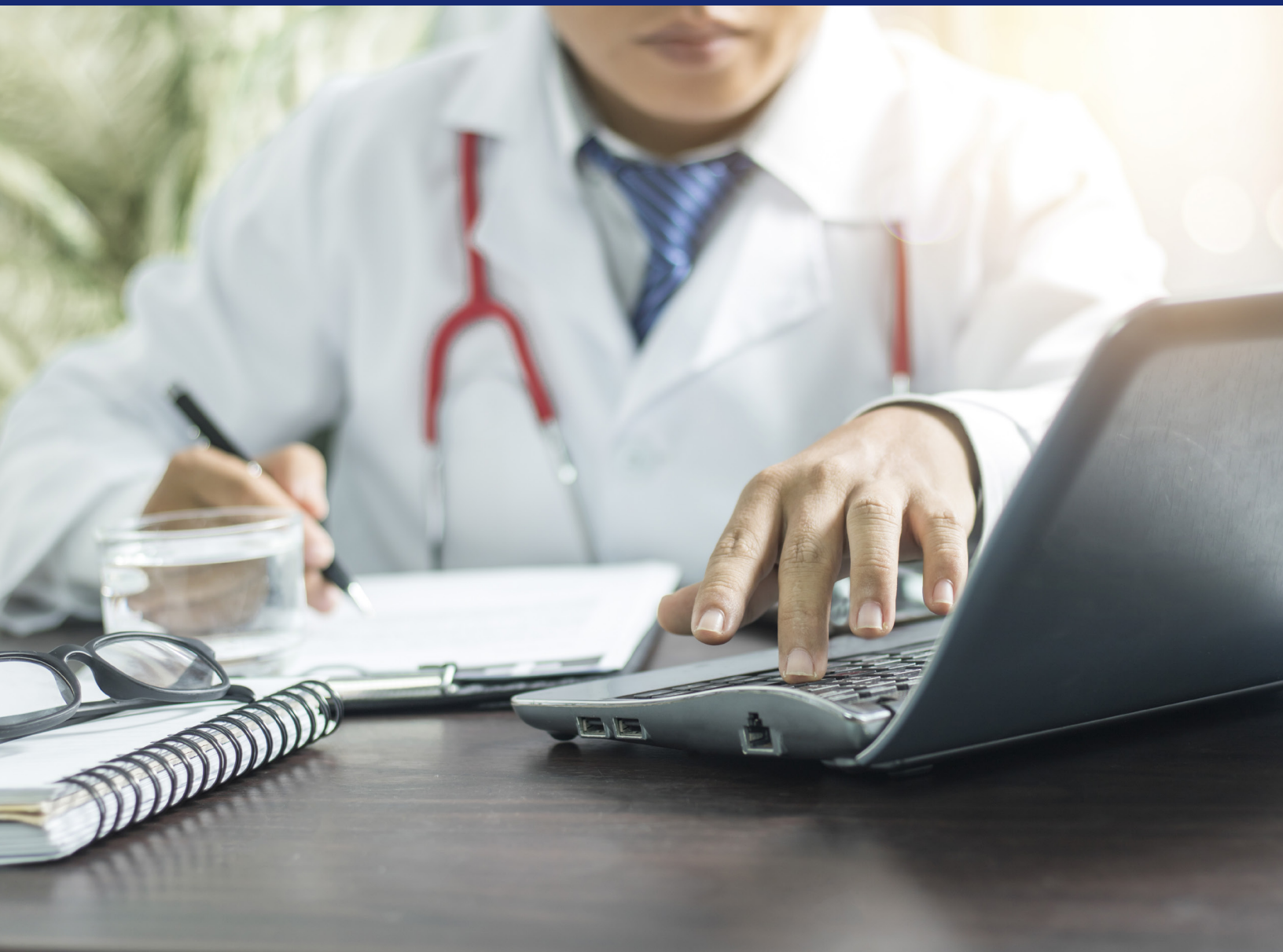


Case Study



Ponchatoula Animal Hospital, Ponchatoula, Louisiana

Improving efficiency and client satisfaction with cloud-based software



Overview

Since opening its doors nearly 40 years ago, Ponchatoula Animal Hospital has prided itself on offering excellent veterinary care in a family-like atmosphere. But when the hospital grew exponentially following Hurricane Katrina, co-owners Larry Ernst, Jr, DVM, and Bonnie Duhon, DVM, knew the practice needed to revamp its scheduling and check-in and checkout procedures.



With two full-time veterinarians, the practice began to grow at a steady pace. Then Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, and the population of Ponchatoula exploded as a result of the migration of people from the south. “A lot of people had to evacuate New Orleans and never went back, so after Katrina our area just grew,” Dr. Duhon recalls. “We were a one-horse town and now we are a busy little city. Just about every business in Ponchatoula saw growth after Katrina.” Today, Ponchatoula Animal Hospital employs six veterinarians and 21 support staff, cares for small animal patients only, and offers boarding services.

Exponential growth led to the decision to expand the practice’s physical footprint, including a greatly enlarged reception area. “Before the expansion we had six doctors and four receptionists but only a single scheduling book,” Dr. Duhon recalls. “Needless to say, the reception side of the practice was a disaster. From scheduling appointments to checking people in an out, it was just a mess.”

The challenge

Ponchatoula Animal Hospital is located in the small city of Ponchatoula, Louisiana, less than an hour’s drive northwest of New Orleans. Established in 1980 on a family-owned dairy farm, Ponchatoula Animal Hospital started out as a mixed-animal practice. The business evolved and grew over time, and in 2004 Bonnie Duhon, DVM, joined as a co-owner.

Scheduling snafus coupled with being an almost exclusively paper practice—the only electronic medical records came from a single homemade computer program for rabies reminders—led to headaches and hassle for staff and clients alike. In 2017, Drs. Ernst and Duhon decided to invest in practice management software that could help them alleviate the daily mayhem at the reception area, improve accounting accuracy, and boost overall efficiency.

The solution

The practice's investment in eVetPractice came soon after the facility doubled in size. In addition to the larger building, the software really enabled the practice to be more efficient, Dr. Duhon says, especially when it came to scheduling appointments and accessing records. "I considered a number of software products, and eVetPractice met our specific needs for a good scheduling calendar," she remembers. "The scheduling aspect of the system is superb, and being able to monitor the flow of patients through the hospital each day is invaluable."

Optimizing the check-in, processing, and checkout procedures has greatly improved client satisfaction at the practice as well. Before eVetPractice, a receptionist manually checked out approximately 70 clients per day—with the ever-present possibility of

missed charges and the near certainty of client frustration. With the software in place, the practice now checks out upwards of 100 clients a day with ease.

"Everything runs so much smoother," Dr. Duhon says. "We went from a tiny, crowded, chaotic reception area with one appointment book, one computer, and one phone at the front desk to a brand new, 1,000-square-foot reception room with four computers at the front desk and five more in treatment rooms, plus four phone lines throughout the practice."



"What I love most about eVetPractice is that we can get as big as we want and this software will be able to handle it."

—Dr. Bonnie Duhon

“Before the expansion we had **six doctors and four receptionists but only a **single scheduling book**. Needless to say, the reception side of the practice was a disaster.” -Dr. Bonnie Duhon**



Benefits beyond scheduling

Ponchatoula Animal Hospital quickly found that the benefits of using eVetPractice extend far beyond scheduling. “We needed the software for accounting purposes, to be able to manage several doctors,” Dr. Duhon said. The practice needed what Dr. Duhon refers to as a “hub,” a computer where a receptionist could access everything without having to find a chart or a doctor or a technician. “With eVetPractice all the information we need is at our fingertips,” she says.

Before incorporating eVetPractice, the hospital was unable to track key metrics accurately. They could track some things, such as vaccines administered, but they couldn’t track information by doctor, and the process was definitely not done automatically. “We could only track things by the group, by the whole hospital, but with the help of eVetPractice we now track individual doctor production, new patients, daily sales, practice growth, and more,” Dr. Duhon says

She also appreciates the software’s prescription refill feature, which enables the practice to fulfill refill requests with one click. “For patients that get the same medicines regularly, we don’t have to go in and respond to every prescription request,” she says. “With a single click, the refill request is approved automatically, the label is generated, and you’re done.”

Dr. Duhon also likes that the software helps track practice growth and is integral in managing incentive plans for the team. “Contests are great for business and morale,” she says. “I can challenge our technicians to get new patients on heartworm prevention, for example, because the software can track which team member made what recommendations.”

She was a bit worried about how all of the practice’s existing paper patient records would be transferred to the software, but it turned out she needn’t have worried at all. The software

team at Covetrus was able to transfer all of the information from the practice's home-written software into eVetPractice without the practice having to enter a single record. "They even were able to pick up on the reminders right off the bat," Dr. Duhon says. "We were able to issue reminders with eVetPractice on day one. No other company helped us with that.

Top-notch training

Dr. Duhon says that of all the practice management software available at the time, she chose eVetPractice because "it was the easiest for me to understand, and I knew my biggest hurdle was going to be teaching the program to staff," Dr. Duhon says.

She was beyond pleased with the software's ease of use. "It's so easy to teach, it's almost self-explanatory," she says. "I feel like I can explain the software for five minutes and someone will understand it enough to be able to navigate around pretty well on their own." She also appreciates the fact that the cloud-based system meant no additional equipment was required.

Dr. Duhon says she saw the positive effect eVetPractice would have on the practice from the very first day the software was installed. She attributes this in large part to the superb live training her team received. "Someone came to our practice on the day we went live, and that was invaluable," she says. "It helped out tremendously."



Even though the staff had received a good bit of training before they began using the software, when going live with any new platform there are bound to be issues that crop up that a practice doesn't yet know how to handle. "Our trainer basically stayed at the reception desk for 8 hours on that first day and helped us handle a lot of pop-up problems."

In addition to the option for on-site training, the availability of live chat was another of the many reasons Dr. Duhon pushed for eVetPractice. "When I'm open, they're available via live chat, and there's always somebody available to type back an answer to your question," she says. "That's been phenomenal. The answer to any issue I had was literally at my fingertips."

Today, every member of Ponchatoula Animal Hospital except for kennel staff uses eVetPractice, from doctors entering medical notes and client charges to receptionists scheduling appointments and checking clients in and out without a hitch or holdup.

The bottom line

Easier and faster scheduling, more accurate accounting, and superb customer service and training offered by eVetPractice have enabled Ponchatoula Animal Hospital to offer its expanding customer base a smooth and excellent experience from check-in to check out and everything in between.

What's next?

The practice is just beginning to use other features of the software, such as email appointment reminders for vaccines, routine tests, and recheck exams. "What I love most about eVetPractice is that we can get as big as we want and this software will be able to handle it," Dr. Duhon says.



For more information, talk to an expert:

P / 855-478-7920

E / Marketing.GSS.NA@covetrus.com

W / softwareservices.covetrus.com

