



Velma Pets As Therapy Training School

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Enriching the lives of people and pets through education,
bringing them together safely and beneficially



Accidents and Injuries That Can Occur Without Correct Training

This list includes real situations encountered by untrained pet handlers
and unsupervised pets in health care facilities

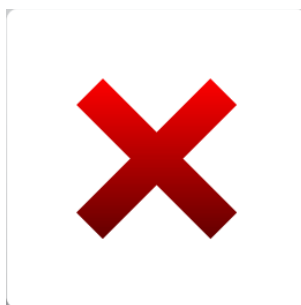
Written by Velma Violet Harris, Pets As Therapy Consultant

For untrained pet handlers, taking a pet into a health care facility can be a mine field of health, safety, insurance and legal issues. Our Pets As Therapy e-course gives an excellent foundation regarding health and safety issues and how to keep the pet, pet handler and the clients interacting safely while offering the maximum enjoyment and benefits to individual clients.

Our Pets As Therapy e-course explains how to manage the pet interaction with clients, and the environment to avoid all risk from accidental injuries and possible incidents.

Known injuries to pets:

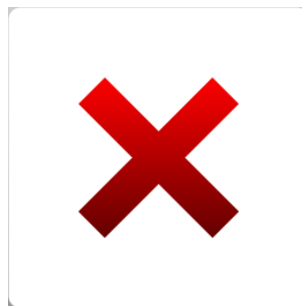
1. Untrained pet handlers didn't protect the pets being kicked by non pet lovers or clients having mood swings.
2. Untrained pet handlers who were not protecting the pets allowed dogs' paws or tails to be run over by wheel chairs and tea trollies.
3. Clients with muscle spasms were allowed to pat pets.
Their hand went into spasm on the pet's fur, pulling the fur and not being able to let go.
4. An untrained pet handler allowed a moody client to grab at a dog's head - the dog was lifted off the ground by the fur.



In this photo, the pet handler is distracted endangering the dog from accidental or intentional harm.

A trained pet handler keeps 100% focus on the pet at all times.

5. An untrained pet handler visited a client's room with a cat. The client was so pleased to see the cat that she grabbed him and gave him such a tight hug, she caused the cat to have bruised ribs.
6. Unsupervised pets had their paws and tails being deliberately and accidentally stepped on by staff, clients, and client's visitors.
7. An unsupervised pet ate polluted bodily wastes found on the floor then kissed other residents.
8. An unsupervised pet was found locked in a small cupboard. It was thought to be deliberate by a non pet-loving staff member, resident or resident's visitor. No one knew who put her in there or, how long she had been there.
9. An unsupervised pet was permanently lost due to escaping through the main door when it was opened. Some of the residents were devastated.
10. A cat that was allowed to roam unsupervised started to withdraw from people and became 'hand shy' running away from people approaching her. Later, a staff member was found hitting the cat on the head – the person believed this was a suitable punishment after the cat had wandered into a certain area of the nursing home. The cat came to fear hands and people.
11. An unsupervised pet jumped up onto a client's lap accidentally spilling hot tea on himself and the client.



In this photo, the client is using her walking frame as a weapon, endangering the dog and herself by risking a fall

Pet handlers are trained to protect pets from clients who use walkers and sticks as weapons.

12. An unsupervised dog was asleep on the floor and an anti-dog client with mood swings in a wheel chair deliberately ran the wheel chair over the dog's legs causing lacerations. The dog required veterinarian attention.

13. An unsupervised pet require veterinarian treatment when he was hit several times with a walking stick by a dementia challenged patient who was having a bad day.

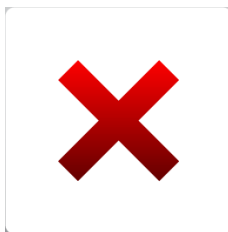
13. Unsupervised residential dog and cat ended up obese due to the clients and staff over feeding them.

14. An unsupervised nursing home's residential dog often went missing due to resident's visitor's allowing the dog out of the main door. The dog often went missing for hours and sometimes days at a time and staff spent extra hours searching surrounding streets. The dog was usually found on the nearby. Once the dog was collected by the ranger and taken to the local pound which incurred a fine.

Known injuries, accidents, upsets from clients and their complaints:

1. Scratches to client's hands due to an untrained dog handler encouraging a client to do the "shake a paw" trick with a frail client.

2. Scratches and bruising to frail client's feet due to the untrained pet handler not blocking the dog from standing on the client's feet.



In this photo, the handler has not kept one foot between the dog and the client causing potential scratching and bruising.

Pet handlers are trained to block clients' hands and feet from claws.

3. One patient fell over a dog that was sitting on the floor.

The untrained pet handler did not check for approaching patients.

4. One child fell out of his wheel chair when an untrained pet handler had the dog placed out of easy reach of the client. The child had to stretch so far that he fell forward out of the chair.

5. Fur was left on the clothing of an allergy sufferer by an untrained pet handler causing the client to suffer an allergy attack requiring medication.

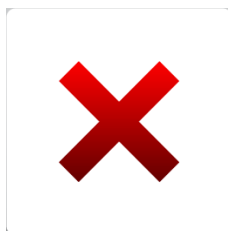
6. At a hospital, an untrained dog handler wasn't paying attention to the dog – the dog jumped through tubes attached to a patient, nearly pulling one out of the patient's arm.

7. A child tossed a toy for an unsupervised dog. The dog ran into another frail child accidentally causing the child to trip and fall requiring medical attention.

8. An unsupervised cat caused a non mobile resident with a fear of cats to get very upset when the cat walked into a room where she was sitting. The lady had to scream for attention to have the cat removed and was highly anxious for some time after wards.

9. A client was giving a biscuit to a dog with an untrained pet handler. The dog snatched the food catching the client's fingers with the teeth causing bleeding and bruising.

10. An untrained pet handler pushed a dog closer for the client to pat, the dog didn't want to interact with that client and resisted, tripped, fell into the client and scratched the client's leg and foot causing bleeding.



This dog has been allowed to stand too close to the client's frail feet causing potential scratching, bruising and injury to the client.

Pet handlers are trained to block client's hands and feet from claws, to avoid scratches to clients.

11. An untrained pet handler insisted a patient should meet her friendly cat but the cat didn't want to meet the patient. The cat was placed on the patient's lap without protection and the cat jumped off causing scratching and bruising to the client's thighs.

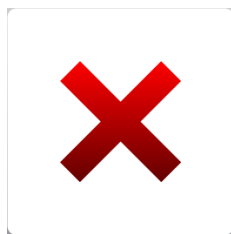
12. A pet loving resident tossed a sausage from her plate onto the floor for the unsupervised dog to eat. The dog ate the sausage leaving a greasy patch on the floor. A passing resident slipped on the grease and if she hadn't clung to her walker would have fallen over.

13. An untrained pet handler allowed a client to hold a guinea pig on the client's lap without a waterproof towel. The guinea pig toileted on the client's lap soiling her clothing, upsetting the client.

14. A resident's family member noticed that the unsupervised cat was unkempt and dirty and thought therefore the cat had fleas. The person complained to the unit manager.

15. An untrained dog handler placed her 30 kilo dog on a client's lap because the client asked for it. The client had forgotten about her swollen legs.

16. There was no official 'pet therapy' program implemented for the residential cat and dog, so the animals generally spent most of their time in the offices with staff. The pet loving residents had little to no contact with them.



In this photo, the handler has allowed an inappropriate interaction.

Pet handlers are trained in interaction risk assessment

These are some things that can go wrong without correct preparation and training of the pet handler.

Our Pets As Therapy e-course for professionals and volunteers, teaches pet handlers safe pet positioning and interaction.

By keeping the pet happy and safe, the clients are automatically happy and safe!

Please note: No person or pet was harmed in the taking of these photos.
These photos show trained pet therapy visitors and role-playing clients, set up for training purposes.

CASE STUDY

As an example of possible risks and issues with a residential dog, please see the report below. I was contacted by a residential aged care facility that purchased a Border Collie puppy as a residential dog without consulting a 'pets as therapy' expert or formulating a program or plan.

Dear Manager,

With regards to my recent talk on 'An Introduction To Residential Pet Management' given to residents and staff and assessment of puppy Lulu on Tuesday, 27th June.

My findings are that your staff are experiencing some significant problems regarding the management of Lulu and I will note them here.

1. Staff, residents and resident's visitors are all training Lulu using different techniques.

Cause: Lack of a 'residential pet management plan' and roster.

Outcome: This will confuse Lulu prevent effective training and will be detrimental to her mental well-being. Some methods being used are dangerous e.g., shaking her; playing rough with her; hitting her nose; rubbing her nose in urine. These are all extremely detrimental to Lulu's health, well-being and personality. These methods can injure Lulu's organs and spine as they are very sensitive at this time. This is equivalent to hitting and shaking a small baby. These methods will also cause Lulu confusion and teach her to be 'hand shy', or to be aggressive and to bite.

2. Lulu is mouthing and nipping.

Cause: This is normal. Lulu is teething and is in her oral stage of development.

Outcome: This may cause injury to residents with fragile skin. Lulu needs to be given large sterile, rawhide and marrow bones to help with the teething process.

3. When I picked up Lulu, she growled and attempted to bite my face -

Probable Cause: Due to being hit, shaken or being played with in a rough manner.

Outcome: This is dangerous. I am used to dogs and can move fast if necessary. Your staff, residents and resident's visitors may not be able to avoid receiving a bite.

4. Feeding - no one knows who is feeding Lulu or how often. On Tuesday, Lulu's bowl was full and outside in the air. It was contaminated with flies. Her water bowl was empty.

Cause: Lack of a 'residential pet management plan' and roster.

Outcome: Lulu needs to be on a specific diet with specific foods and in specific volumes. Lulu may be given foods which are detrimental to her health. Food left out are prone to bacteria and may make Lulu ill, give her worms or even heart worm.

5. It is my recommendation that Lulu is withdrawn from the nursing home until she is at least 6 months old and fully trained in basic obedience and assessed for suitability.

6. Lulu need one, or at maximum two trainers.

7. Lulu needs to be supervised at all times and as a young dog, requires regular rest times out of reach of staff and residents.

8. I recommend a minimum of 3 staff responsible for her health, medications and vaccinations.



Velma and Coco