Swansea Cat Clinic Complaints Policy

Practice name: Swansea Cat Clinic
Policy owner: Jessica Saunders
Date of implementation: 01/06/2023
Review date: 01/10/2026

1. Our commitment

At Swansea Cat Clinic, we are committed to providing a high standard of veterinary care and customer service.

We recognise that, occasionally, things may not go as expected. We welcome feedback and take all complaints seriously, as they provide us with an opportunity to review our services, learn from experiences and make improvements where necessary.

We aim to deal with all complaints promptly, fairly, sensitively and transparently.

We will not discriminate against or treat any client less favourably because they have raised a concern or made a complaint.

However, we recognise that in some circumstances, the relationship between a client and the practice may break down to the extent that it is no longer possible to maintain a constructive and effective working relationship.

In such circumstances, and where we consider it to be in the best interests of both the client and the practice, we reserve the right to advise the client that they may seek ongoing veterinary care from another veterinary provider.

Any decision to end the client-practice relationship will be made on an individual basis, will not be taken simply because a complaint has been raised, and will be handled professionally and sensitively. We will take reasonable steps to ensure continuity of care and provide appropriate notice and arrangements for the transfer of clinical records, in accordance with our professional and legal obligations.

2. How to make a complaint

Clients can raise a complaint using any of the following methods:

- In person at the practice.
- By telephone.
- By email to enquiries@swanseacatclinic.com.
- In writing to the Practice Manager at Swansea Cat Clinic, Gower House Charter Court, Enterprise Park, Llansamlet, Swansea, SA7 9FS.

Where possible, we encourage clients to submit complaints in writing so that we can ensure their concerns are accurately recorded and investigated.

When making a complaint, clients should provide:

- Their name and contact details.
- The name of the animal concerned.
- Relevant dates and details of the events.
- The nature of their concerns.
- Their preferred outcome, if applicable.

We will assist clients who require reasonable adjustments to make a complaint.

3. Acknowledgement of complaints

All formal complaints will be acknowledged within **3 working days** of receipt.

The acknowledgement will:

- Confirm that the complaint has been received.
- Explain who will be responsible for investigating it.
- Outline the complaints process.
- Provide an estimated timescale for a full response.

If further information is required, we may contact the client to clarify the issues raised.

4. Investigation process

Formal complaints will normally be investigated by the Practice Manager or, where possible, another suitably senior person who has not been directly involved in the matter being complained about.

The investigation may include:

- Reviewing the animal's clinical records.
- Reviewing relevant correspondence, emails and telephone records.
- Speaking with the veterinary surgeon, veterinary nurse or other members of staff involved.
- Reviewing relevant practice procedures and policies.
- Considering any additional information provided by the client.

All complaints will be investigated objectively, fairly and without assumptions.

Where a complaint concerns a clinical decision or veterinary treatment, appropriate clinical input will be obtained.

5. Response timescales

We aim to provide a full written response within **20 working days** of receiving a complaint.

If the investigation requires additional time, the client will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with an updated timescale.

We will keep clients informed of progress where an investigation is taking longer than anticipated.

6. Our response

Once the investigation is complete, we will provide a written response setting out our findings and conclusions. We will also detail any areas where we recognise that improvements could have been made and/or any action we intend to take as a result.

Where we identify that mistakes have been made, we will acknowledge them and explain what action will be taken to prevent similar issues occurring again.

7. Escalation of complaints

If a client remains dissatisfied following our final response, they may request that the complaint is reviewed by another senior member of the practice management team.

Clients may also seek independent assistance from:

Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS)
Website: https://vetmediation.co.uk/

The VCMS provides an independent mediation service for eligible complaints involving veterinary practices.

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)
Website: https://www.rcvs.org.uk/

The RCVS regulates veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses and may consider concerns relating to professional conduct and fitness to practise.

8. Confidentiality and data protection

All complaints will be handled confidentially and in accordance with applicable data protection legislation, including UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Information will only be shared with individuals who need access to it for the purposes of investigating and resolving the complaint, subject to applicable legal requirements.

We will respect the privacy of clients, their animals and members of staff throughout the process.

9. Record keeping

The practice will maintain a record of all formal complaints, including:

- The date the complaint was received.
- The nature of the complaint.
- The person responsible for investigating it.

- Details of the investigation undertaken.
- Correspondence and responses.
- The outcome and any agreed actions.

Complaints records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with the practice's data retention policy.

10. Learning and improvement

Complaints will be reviewed to identify recurring issues, areas of concern and opportunities to improve our services.

Where appropriate, learning points will be shared with relevant members of the team and changes to practice procedures, training or working practices will be considered.

Our aim is to use complaints constructively to improve the experience and care we provide to our clients and their animals.

11. Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes to relevant legislation, regulatory requirements or professional guidance.

Client information

A copy of this complaints policy is available on request from reception or by contacting the practice directly.

We value your feedback and are committed to listening to and learning from your concerns.

As an independently owned veterinary practice, we take personal responsibility for ensuring that complaints are dealt with appropriately.

The Practice Manager is responsible for receiving, recording and investigating complaints in the first instance.

Where possible, no member of staff will be responsible for investigating a complaint where they have a direct personal involvement in the matter being complained about.