



How quickly adapting client communication saved a practice from drowning during COVID-19



**MELANIE GENTRY,
VILONIA ANIMAL CLINIC**

For 24 years, Melanie Gentry and her veterinarian husband have run Vilonia Animal Clinic in Conway Arkansas. Melanie serves as the clinic's passionate and hard-working practice manager. The most rewarding part of her job is the relationships she builds with pets and their owners. She's gotten to know and care for so many animals throughout their entire lives!

As you can imagine in 24 years, Melanie has experienced a lot. However, the spread of COVID-19 and the adaptations her clinic had to make were definitely a first.

CHALLENGE

With the pandemic sweeping the country and cases on the rise, Vilonia Animal Clinic decided to protect their clients and their staff by closing the lobby and going to strictly curbside service. They were able to continue all medical services, but had to adapt to a new way of conducting business.

Vilonia was down to just two receptionists and Melanie manning the front desk and clinic business. Having only been using VitusVet for less than a month, she found herself heavily relying on the technologies the platform offered her. She enabled the campaigns tab to get mass messaging out to her clients through email and push notifications to keep them informed on the new safety measures that the clinic was taking.

SOLUTION

The feature that Melanie found most useful was **2-way text and picture messaging**. With the clinic phone lines jammed with clients calling to check in and out, as well as doctors talking with owners by phone during appointments, 2-way texting saved the day. Clients could text to check in and it gave the staff another way to communicate with all clients. She was surprised how much clients loved it. With the ease that texting brought, clients were able to share documents and pictures as well as engage in back-and-forth updates all in real time.

Another surprise that threw Vilonia for a loop was the amount of clients scheduling wellness appointments after receiving their VitusVet digital reminders; some as early as three weeks out from their recommended date. Melanie had never experienced this in the 24 years the clinic has been running. She was used to sending out appointment reminders and chasing clients down to confirm, but now she didn't have to!



Vilonia experienced the busiest June on record. Melanie believes that with the virtual accessibility of information and appointment requests, owners are more cognizant of their pets' healthcare and thus more actively engaged.

With more folks going back to work in their area, 2-way texting is as popular as ever. It's much easier to shoot a text over to the clinic than to take the time to check your email. And it's more seamless than talking on the phone. **As of July, Vilonia had sent and received nearly 7,000 text messages!**

As Vilonia continues to move forward with their new normal with no signs of slowing down, they'll continue to rely on technologies such as 2-way texting, digital reminders and automated client campaigns to keep up with the high demand their clinic has seen over the summer. As Melanie put it, "I think it's a VitusVet thing!"