HOW TO MARKET
GLAUCOMA SCREENING

by Ronald E. Whitford, DVM

1. Educate Yourself and Your Staff:
Where the rubber will meet the road in the future of private practice will be in your medical competence. Today’s client expects you to be the expert in all facets of pet wellness. Numerous reference books and many continuing educational seminars can provide you with the information you need to be medically competent.

2. Equip Yourself:
Until recently, veterinarians had to rely on the Schiotz tonometer. This instrument is cumbersome to use and requires a large degree of pet restraint. The difficulty in using the instrument has greatly limited glaucoma screening. From my experience as a practice management consultant, less than 50% of the practices I have visited have the instrument in the clinic. A new instrument has become available, greatly enhancing the ease of glaucoma screening. The TONO-PEN AVIA VET Tonometer is battery operated, accurate, versatile, and reliable. Sanitized tip covers are used to eliminate cross contamination. The TONO-PEN AVIA VET unit is gently tapped on the cornea after the application of topical anesthetic. Four measurements are taken. The unit then displays an average of four readings, along with an accompanying coefficient of variance. Testing is quick, easy, and reproducible.

3. Educate Staff:
Staff must understand the reasons for glaucoma screening, the best salesman is sold on the product. Screening all pets owned by staff can stress the importance as well as teach all veterinarians how to use the instrument correctly.

4. Find the Need:
Determine your list of indications when screening is indicated.

5. Educate the Client:
Clients will not accept what they do not understand. The client is the foundation of all marketing of professional services. Educated clients, more services, and handouts can be utilized to educate the client, but most creditable education comes from one-on-one time with either the veterinarian or the staff.

6. Remind Clients:
List glaucoma screening as one of the services you recommend when preventive care visit reminders are sent out. This can target market the breeds disposed to glaucoma and all geriatric pets. “Seed planting” the idea increases acceptance of the recommendation when presented during the visit.

7. Make it Convenient:
Convenience is the essence of all marketing efforts. Performing it during the routine physical exam makes it time efficient. The new instrument now available will greatly decrease the time needed for taking the readings.

8. Price for Your Market:
There is little on-going cost for offering glaucoma screening. Batteries and tip covers costs are minimal. Therefore, the only major cost you incur is the initial purchase of the unit. I recommend charging a fee acceptable to 80% of your clients. This might be $2 or it might be $35. Obviously, the higher the fee, the quicker the unit is recouped and almost 100% profit from its use will be gained. The greatest way to decrease cost/unit volume is to spread it over more patients. Set a fee that will cause at least 80% of all clients to accept the procedure. Even charging $2, if used on every patient, will pay for the unit in the first year. Some practices have even added this service as a value-added benefit of the annual comprehensive physical exam.

9. Re-Checks Are Important:
Scheduling rechecks on predisposed breeds at regular intervals is good medicine and good business.