

A Pet Emergency During the Pandemic

Being confined to the house during the pandemic has been hard. Having to wear a mask when you go to a public place has been hard. Being separated from family and friends has been hard. Add a pet medical emergency into the mix, and there's a whole new level of adjustment and sacrifice added to pandemic life.

My dog came sailing into the living room late one night, jumped on the couch, and yelped in pain. He looked at me piteously while holding his leg at an awkward angle. It didn't appear to be broken but obviously something was amiss. I loaded him until the car and drove to the emergency pet hospital. Due to restrictions because of the pandemic, pet owners weren't allowed to go into the building. The parking lot was full of 6 cars, with pet families milling around the lot. Fortunately for me, my son worked at a vet clinic in town so I was given special dispensation to enter the building. Communicating with masks is difficult as they make it more difficult to hear what others are saying and for them to hear what you are saying, particularly when your level of anxiety is high and your voice is strained from stress. The staff took my dog into an examining room, which we weren't allowed to enter. This added to the stress and anxiety as I wasn't there to provide comfort to my dog. Instead, he was surrounded by strangers in a strange place being poked and prodded without knowing what was happening. The vet came out twice to talk with me briefly and then disappeared again for hours; otherwise, no one from the staff interacted with me. The whole ordeal lasted four hours. They brought out my dog, who by this time, based on the haunted look in his eyes, seemed traumatized. I spent the next day with him glued to me working on calming him down.

I took him to my regular vet the next day; luckily, I was able to stay in the exam room with him. He ended up requiring knee surgery and is currently recovering, a process that will take six months total. Because of the necessity of him staying calm and quiet, he couldn't be left alone for the first two months. No one came to visit because of concerns about transmitting or contracting the virus, so I was truly isolated. Before his injury, I could get out of the house to go for walks and for grocery shopping; now I am tied to the house. I was already having difficulty with being confined so much to the house this past year (my place of business has required us to work at home since March 2020), losing people to the pandemic, and having to work from home, so having this extra confinement time has been particularly hard.

I can only imagine what it must be like for people who have had friends or family with medical emergencies and aren't able to be there for them during medical procedures. It has also given me a deep appreciation and a desire to help people who are caregivers and people who are housebound for whatever reason.