

Sample appointment schedule

Pam Weakley, a practice manager at Dickman Road Veterinary Clinic in Battle Creek, Mich., shares this scheduling approach that helps her practice deal with walk-ins, emergencies and appointments that run long. In this example, four doctors are scheduled to work this afternoon. The practice uses a four-by-four rule of thumb. Each doctor takes four appointments an hour, and four of the appointments per

hour can only be scheduled on the same day. Between 1 p.m. and 3:30 p.m., only three doctors are available to take appointments. This makes an extra buffer in case the team needs to work in an extra surgery that presents earlier in the day. After 3:30 p.m., all four doctors take appointments.

“Same-day appointments offer a little cushion,” Weakley says. “If you get way behind, you can block out a few of these to catch up.”

For simplicity, this schedule shows 15-minute increments. In practice, Weakley recommends scheduling in 10-minute increments to stagger when clients arrive. “For example, if eight doctors are working today, the front desk doesn’t want eight people showing up at 8:15 a.m., another eight showing up at 8:30 a.m. and so on. Staggering to have a few clients show up every 10 minutes helps the traffic flow.”

Time	Medicine cases	Vaccine cases	Non-DVM cases (suture removal, nail trim, etc.)	Medicine or vaccine cases	Same-day write-in appointments (for emergencies)
1 p.m.	Dr. Jones	Dr. McCoy	Robin, RVT		Dr. Watson
1:15 p.m.	Dr. Watson	Dr. Jones			Dr. McCoy
1:30 p.m.	Dr. McCoy			Dr. Watson	Dr. Jones
1:45 p.m.	Dr. McCoy	Dr. Jones	Selena, RVT	Dr. Watson	
2 p.m.	Dr. Watson		Robin, RVT	Dr. McCoy	Dr. Jones
2:15 p.m.		Dr. Jones		Dr. Watson	Dr. McCoy
2:30 p.m.	Dr. McCoy			Dr. Jones	Dr. Watson
2:45 p.m.	Dr. Jones	Dr. Watson	Selena, RVT	Dr. McCoy	
3 p.m.	Dr. Watson			Dr. McCoy	Dr. Jones
3:15 p.m.		Dr. Watson	Robin, RVT	Dr. Jones	Dr. McCoy
3:30 p.m.	Dr. Jones	Dr. McCoy		Dr. Watson	Dr. Scully
3:45 p.m.	Dr. Scully	Dr. Jones		Dr. McCoy	Dr. Watson
4 p.m.	Dr. Scully	Dr. McCoy	Robin, RVT	Dr. Watson	Dr. Jones
4:15 p.m.	Dr. McCoy	Dr. Watson		Dr. Jones	Dr. Scully
4:30 p.m.	Dr. Watson	Dr. Scully	Selena, RVT	Dr. Jones	Dr. McCoy
4:45 p.m.	Dr. McCoy	Dr. Jones	Robin, RVT	Dr. Scully	Dr. Watson
5 p.m.	Dr. Watson	Dr. McCoy	Selena, RVT	Dr. Jones	Dr. Scully
5:15 p.m.	Dr. McCoy	Dr. Watson	Robin, RVT	Dr. Scully	Dr. Jones

Note: This example shows what a schedule might look like if all available same-day, or emergency, appointments and medical and vaccine appointments were filled.