

Webisode Manner: The Art of Telemedicine NEVMA Fall 2026 Webinar Series

Lori Teller, DVM, DABVP (canine/feline), CVJ

Webisode manner is the virtual equivalent of bedside manner including how veterinarians convey empathy, clarity, and professionalism through electronic modalities. Effective virtual communication blends emotional care (trust, empathy, respect) and cognitive care (information gathering, education, expectation-setting).

Core concepts

- Webisode manner = how you interact remotely (text/phone/video); bedside skills don't always carry over without adaptation
- Emotional care and cognitive care both play a role in telemedicine

Pre-visit setup

- Choose a quiet, private space and ensure confidentiality
- Use appropriate lighting and avoid shadows or being backlit
- Camera at eye level
- Good posture
- Silence notifications
- Have a backup plan if there are technical difficulties

Opening the visit

- Warm greeting
- Confirm they can see/hear you;
- Note possible ambient noise interruptions
- Eye contact: look into the camera regularly and alert the client you may glance away to take notes
- Set expectations up front:
 - With a valid VCPR, you can diagnose and treat via telemedicine
 - Without a VCPR, limited to general advice, education, emergency guidance, or triage and may need to arrange in-person care
- Every visit starts with a smile and ends with a concise summary and next steps

Verbal communication techniques

- Manage latency
- Avoid “mm-hmm” while the client is speaking; use nods instead
- Be clear and precise and use plain language and reflective statements

- Information sharing: confirm understanding with teach-back (“Can you walk me through the plan we discussed?”)

Non-verbal communication on video

- Lean in slightly, nod, and use open posture;
- Hand over chest can signal empathy
- Avoid crossed arms or leaning back
- Dress professionally
- Avoid fidgeting, pacing, eating, or drinking on camera

Chat-based visits

- Rapport is harder but achievable, so set expectations about what chat can accomplish
- Use select emojis carefully to convey warmth and remain professional

Technical difficulties: contingency plans

- Audio/video problems:
 - switch to phone if feasible
 - ask clients to text/email photos or short videos
- If adequate visualization cannot be achieved or issues persist, schedule in-clinic visit

Role of veterinary technicians in virtual care

- Follow-up after exams
- Client education
- Review/support clients regarding “how-to” administer medication, injections, SQ fluids
- Nutrition counseling
- Triage

Rules of engagement for digital health

- Do what’s best for the pet first
- Gather sufficient data (photos, videos, wearable data, at-home measurements, records)
 - no data = limited recommendations
- Educate clearly and avoid big words
- Empathize
- Outline next steps and follow-up

Evidence and insights from practitioners

- Virtual care requires heightened listening and communication: “be more in tune to really hearing what they are telling you verbally”
- Transparency is essential: be clear that telemedicine supplements, not replaces, in-person care when needed
- Guide clients through elements of the exam to engage them and demonstrate value

Practical scripts you can use

- Opening: “Hi, I’m Dr. _____. Can you see and hear me clearly? If the connection drops, I’ll call you right away. I’ll be looking at you on my screen, and I may glance aside to take notes or review <patient’s name> chart.”
- Expectation setting (with/without VCPR): “Because we have an established VCPR, I can diagnose and prescribe today. If anything requires hands-on assessment, we’ll schedule a visit.” OR “We don’t yet have a VCPR, so today I can provide advice or help triage, and we’ll plan the best way to examine your pet in-person, if needed.”
- Empathy statement: “I hear how stressful this is, and I’m going to do everything I can to help. Here’s what we can do right now.”
- Latency cue: “I’ll pause between questions, so we don’t talk over each other. Let me know if I need to repeat something.”
- Teach-back: “Just to be sure I was clear, can you tell me how you’ll give the medication and when you’ll update me?”
- Close: “Today we discussed _____. Watch for these concerns: _____. If they occur, go to _____. I’ll send a summary and follow-up plan, and we’ll check in on _____.”

Document everything in the medical record!