



**Where Care and Experience Come Together.**

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To our valued clients,

I write this letter to give you an update on the state of Long Animal Hospital and the veterinary profession. My father's generation graduated veterinary school and often went to work the following Monday caring for the pets in their community. There were no specialty practices or emergency clinics to share their work load, so they would typically be at the practice 65-70+ hours per week. Until my father hired additional associates, he worked 7 days a week for 7 straight years. As a child, I can remember late nights after a 12 hour day the infamous "pager" would sound off, and my father would head back to the clinic to care for a patient in need only to be back to work at 7:00 am the next morning. My generation saw the advent of multi-associate practices. This enabled our work hours to be cut to 55-60 hours per week with rotating weekend duties. We were able to share on-call after-hours duties with the other associates, so the "pager" wasn't attached to our hip and some holidays could be spent with our family. In today's market, new associates request 4 day work weeks, no late nights or after hours duties. Our associates do not fall into this classification. They have worked extremely hard during these difficult times to serve the Charlotte and surrounding community. It is not rare to see our associates 1-3 hours post their shift's end working on patients or completing their medical records. Believe it or not, we have seen patients who have traveled across our state and from as far away as South Carolina, Georgia and Florida who could not find a practice to care for their pets.

Currently there are approximately 123,472 veterinarians in our country. Understanding those numbers include small animal practitioners, large animal veterinarians, exotic veterinarians, veterinary specialists, emergency veterinarians, researchers, professors, industry and government veterinarians. There are 32 accredited veterinary hospitals who graduate around 3,200 veterinary students per year. During the Covid pandemic, it is estimated that 1 in 5 households have acquired a new pet which added approximately 23-30 million new patients. That equates to around 7,000-9,000 new patients per new veterinary graduate. Keep in mind those graduates do not all go into general practice and are all spread out among the previous mentioned chosen fields. It is equally daunting for our support staff. There are around 200 accredited veterinary technician schools in the country and several online options. Our closest veterinary technician school, Gaston College, only accepts 40 students per year and rarely graduates that number.

Since we opened our new facility in March of 2014, I have tried diligently to employ 5 full time veterinary emergency doctors and acquire a full technical and support staff to serve you better. Every time we reached 4 ER doctors, we would lose one for various reasons. During the pandemic, it has been difficult to stay fully staffed for day-time hours, while nights, weekends and holiday coverage has been nearly impossible. During the last 5 years, when not at work, I have been constantly looking for emergency clinicians. Whether it be internet search, Linked In,

the AVMA job board or reaching out to universities and colleagues, I have not been successful. In addition, we have employed four professional recruiting services during this time. Currently, there are approximately 4,600 emergency veterinarians working in the entire United States. At this time, we only have 3 emergency clinicians available. My father and I have been covering Saturday evenings, Sunday mornings and evening hours to enable our ER clinicians to work a regular schedule while still searching for new emergency associates. One of our emergency clinicians has graciously worked extra shifts as well. Unfortunately, one of our emergency clinicians has informed me after January 1st he will no longer be available. He has been an excellent part of our team and has sacrificed much for LAH as he lives in Aiken, SC and travels several hours to work for our practice. We were left in this predicament for several months a couple of times in the last few years. During that time my father and I worked the extra ER shifts while still working our daytime hours. In our current situation, that choice is just not practical.

Therefore, with a heavy heart, Long Animal Hospital will be closing our nighttime and weekend emergency department on December 31, 2021. We will still see emerging emergency patients Monday-Friday from 7AM- 8PM and Saturday from 7AM- 3PM. We will continue to have veterinary technicians and support staff on site to care for our hospitalized patients 24 hours a day. Each hospitalized case will need to be assessed with your doctor as to whether they should be transferred to an emergency facility. Unfortunately, due to the veterinary work shortage, that may not be possible. If you have a sick patient, I strongly encourage you to make the decision to seek care as early in the day as possible.

People have expressed their dislike for these long emails. However, after having the privilege of serving our clients and their pets since 1948, I felt that I owed our faithful clients an explanation for our decision. Please understand, my father and I do not like having to make this choice. We worked through numerous alternatives including becoming full-time emergency clinicians ourselves, but we are having a difficult time finding day-time clinicians as well. Fortunately, our community has several speciality emergency practices to choose from. Recently, it has been rumored, a national emergency veterinary group will open a practice in the South Park area.

We sincerely thank you for allowing Long Animal Hospital the opportunity to work with you. If you have any questions about this difficult decision, please do not hesitate to ask.

I hope you and your family have a blessed holiday season and Happy New Year!

Be Light,  
Richard Brian Killough DVM,CCRP

**Emergency Veterinary Hospitals in the Area**

**Carolina Veterinary Specialist**

<https://www.carolinavet.com/site/home>

Matthews: 704-815-3939

Charlotte: 704-504-9608

Rock Hill: 803-909-8300

Huntersville: 704-318-2544

**Charlotte Animal Referral and Emergency (CARE)**

<https://carecharlotte.com/>

Charlotte: 704-457-2300