



ONUR ÜLGENALP, CHIEF PHYSICIAN AND MEDICAL DIRECTOR, VETAMERICAN ANIMAL HOSPITAL: **'WE RECOGNIZE THAT EVERY PET HAS UNIQUE NEEDS'**

VetAmerican, a Vehbi Koç Foundation Healthcare Institution, was established to provide world-class veterinary healthcare services. Designed in international standards, VetAmerican is equipped with state-of-the-art devices for effective diagnosis and treatment of our beloved pets. Onur Ülgenalp, Chief Physician and Medical Director at VetAmerican Animal Hospital, discusses the process from idea to implementation and provides details about the activities and importance of the hospital.

“VetAmerican stands as a unique example in Türkiye, integrating pets—now regarded as family members—into the same healthcare system as people. The hospital, established with the mission of delivering world-class veterinary health services, operates within an ethical and reliable environment and embraces a transparent healthcare approach that prioritizes animal health and rights.”



Why are animal hospitals important in our community and how do animal hospitals contribute society?

Animal hospitals are important for several reasons. First of all, they play a critical role in protecting and improving the well-being of pets by addressing a crucial gap in the healthcare industry. Beyond providing essential services, these institutions also raise awareness among pet owners regarding the significance of routine check-ups and support them with early diagnosis of diseases and through the management of their treatment processes. All of these not only contribute to pets living a longer and healthier life but also help create a general health awareness by fostering a deeper understanding in pet owners. Animal hospitals also enable veterinarians to provide services in their areas of specialty, creating a specialized environment for diagnosing, treating and preventing diseases. These conditions have a positive impact on both animal health and the overall health of society. In addition, animal hospitals provide employment in their

local communities, create jobs for veterinarians and become centers for training specialized healthcare professionals. At the same time, they lay the foundations for a healthier society by raising awareness about our pets.

What is the current condition of animal hospitals in Türkiye and the world?

The Turkish animal health and veterinary care sector is witnessing significant developments. In recent years, a surge in interest in pets and heightened awareness have triggered growth and change in the sector. Much like their global counterparts, animal hospitals and veterinary clinics in Türkiye play a key role in animal health, treatment and care. As pets are increasingly regarded as family members, the demand for quality healthcare for our furry friends is also on the rise. Therefore, veterinary medicine and animal health are constantly evolving.

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Türkiye we should note that awareness and service quality in this field is gradually increasing. However, it is obvious that more efforts are required to address issues such as training more specialist veterinarians, developing technological infrastructure and increasing social awareness in the field of animal health. To effectively meet Türkiye’s evolving requirements, fostering collaboration and information exchange among institutions involved in animal health and veterinary education becomes key. At the same time, training programs and projects should be supported to attract qualified professionals for the sector. By embracing such initiatives, Türkiye can position itself more effectively in animal health and veterinary services, both at the local level and in the international arena.

We know that you will offer two separate services for cats and dogs in one hospital. What do you aim to achieve with this approach?

As the VetAmerican family, we recognize the distinctive needs of each pet. With this understanding, we are committed to providing a tailored health experience specifically designed for our feline and canine companions by offering two distinct hospital services under one roof. Since cats and dogs require differing environments, equipment, and medications, we believe that separate hospitals offer better access to the specific resources needed for the care and well-being of each species. Animal hospitals in our country generally adopt an integrated approach that provides services for both species. In such cases, organizing the personnel and facilities based on the needs of each species becomes key. These hospitals may be more advantageous than separate

facilities designed for cats and dogs in some situations. VetAmerican was designed in global standards as two hospitals under one roof to harness the benefits of both systems.

Cats are typically susceptible to stress due to external factors and therefore need an atmosphere that promotes a sense of calm and security. At VetAmerican, we aim to minimize their anxiety by providing specially designed examination rooms and waiting areas. Conversely, our canine companions generally exhibit a more social and energetic nature. To transform their treatment process into a positive experience, we plan to create private waiting areas where they can comfortably spend time with their family members and social interaction areas where they can engage with other dog friends. Our goal is to provide services tailored to the unique needs of cats and dogs to improve their visits to our hospital.

How did VetAmerican become a part of the Vehbi Koç Foundation (VKV) Healthcare Institutions ecosystem? Why is this important?

The VetAmerican project was brought to life, drawing from a dream of Mr. Rahmi Koç, Honorary Chairman, Koç Holding, and the vision of Mr. Erhan Bulutçu, CEO, VKV Healthcare Institutions. VKV Positioned within the VKV Healthcare Institutions ecosystem, the VetAmerican project ranks among the first examples in Türkiye for the “One Health” concept, gaining global recognition. It stands as a unique example in Türkiye, integrating pets—now regarded as family members—into the same healthcare system as people. VetAmerican, established with the mission of delivering world-class

veterinary health services, operates within an ethical and reliable environment and embraces a transparent healthcare approach that prioritizes animal health and rights.

Please provide some details about the technologies you use to adapt modern medicine and treatment methods to animal health.

We embrace modern medical and treatment approaches to deliver optimal care to our beloved animal companions. Our advanced technologies include high-resolution MRI, computed tomography (CT), digital imaging and x-ray devices, developed to enhance diagnostic capabilities and refine treatment processes. In our commitment to comprehensive care, we utilize molecular, serological, and biochemical

laboratory testing equipment, as well as cutting-edge tools such as kidney stone crushing units and thermal cycle devices, designed specifically for pets. Since we embrace a minimally invasive surgical approach, we use endoscopic and arthroscopic equipment to ensure less invasive surgical procedures, which promote faster recovery and less stress in our canine and feline companions. In addition to the technologies I have listed, we have a LINAC device in our Radiation Oncology department, which is available in only seven centers in Europe and is the only one in Türkiye. Additionally, our Radiation Oncology department houses a LINAC device, in only seven European centers and the only one in Türkiye. Complementing these technologies, we use digital recording systems



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and automated medication management systems in line with our “Right Patient, Right Medicine” slogan, facilitating swift and effective information management and communication. Furthermore, we leverage digital platforms for more effective communication regarding treatment plans and patient follow-up, fostering continuous interaction with the caregivers of our pet patients. At VetAmerican, we are dedicated to implementing the latest technological advancements in veterinary health services through our technological infrastructure to ensure animals lead healthier and happier lives.

How does VetAmerican ensure rapid and effective response in emergencies?

At VetAmerican, our dedicated emergency team, equipped with specialized training for emergency response, stands ready to deliver 24/7 service. Our hospital is furnished with modern, high-tech medical equipment for swift and effective emergency intervention. Specifically designed emergency rooms, operating rooms, imaging facilities, and intensive care units enhance our capacity to respond promptly to critical cases. To facilitate seamless communication during emergencies, we offer an emergency phone line and online consultancy services, providing a convenient means for the caregivers of our patients to reach us swiftly.

VetAmerican is quite a new hospital. What are some of the areas you plan to expand into in the future? Do you have anything in the works for this purpose?

As a young organization, we are committed to overcoming the challenges we face. Our immediate priority is elevating corporate awareness and enhancing our engagement with

local communities. To achieve this goal, we are intensifying our marketing and communication strategies, while formulating growth and development strategies to drive our hospital forward.

Our primary investment focus is on leveraging cutting-edge technologies to elevate the standards of animal health. We believe that incorporating the latest advancements will improve the quality of our hospital services, making them more appealing to a broader audience. We plan to actively engage with communities and aim to collaborate with industry stakeholders in line with our vision of adding value to the sector.

We are committed to strengthening the leadership of our hospital and becoming a prominent asset for the sector. To fulfill this vision, we will continue to play a leading role in animal health by developing new projects and programs. Through these initiatives, we aim to achieve sustainable success in the sector by prioritizing the satisfaction of our patients and caregivers.

What are your long-term plans and aspirations to strengthen your ties with society and improve your relations with local animal protection organizations?

For the upcoming period, we have plans to deliver training and awareness programs, designed to create a deeper understanding of the health needs of our feline and canine companions. Through these programs, we aim to provide animal owners with information on issues such as routine health check-ups, nutritional requirements, basic care practices and early diagnosis of diseases. Moreover, we are planning various activities to foster



increased community engagement and strengthen collaborations with local animal protection organizations. We aim to elevate the standard of living for our pets by organizing informative seminars and contribute to their rehabilitation by supporting the local aid projects. Beyond traditional health center roles, we envision our hospital becoming an integral part of the community and also creating a healthier, happier, and safer environment for animals by fulfilling our social responsibilities.

Our training and awareness programs will extend beyond pet animal owners to veterinarians. It is critical for veterinarians to stay abreast of the latest medical information and advancements in the field to improve the quality of health services. Therefore, we are committed to equipping veterinarians with insights into new treatment methods, diagnostic techniques, technological innovations, and best practices within the sector through training programs.

At the same time, we are dedicated to enhancing the professional skills of veterinarians by providing training programs on essential topics such as effective patient communication and guest satisfaction management. For this purpose, we have plans to provide access to educational resources on digital platforms, enabling veterinarians to execute their roles more efficiently and reach

the latest information promptly. Furthermore, we intend to enhance relationships with local veterinary communities and promote knowledge exchange through educational events. Our overarching goal is to cultivate a culture of mutual support and elevate professional solidarity among veterinarians.

Our long-term aspirations include opening a school of veterinary medicine with the mission of raising the veterinarians of the future, contributing qualified professionals to the sector, and advancing the field of veterinary sciences. Founding a school of veterinary medicine will allow us to educate young generations in the field of animal health and veterinary medicine, build a culture of research and development and introduce fresh perspectives to the sector. Our objective with such a school will be to offer the students a broad perspective and well-rounded education, provided by highly-qualified faculty members through a modern educational system and infrastructure. At the same time, we plan to support innovations in the sector through research projects and scientific studies conducted at the school, accelerate advancements in veterinary medicine and increase communities' awareness of animal health. This vision aligns with our broader objective of creating significant impact, not only within our local community but also globally in veterinary medicine.