

# The Art of a Good Rant

Article by Roxanne Hawn



## It is ever okay to say what you really think?

Social media and other online tools gave rise to the explosion and elevation of ranting on all manner of topics. Once the sole domain of well-constructed essays, editorials, speeches, or letters to the editor about grand topics, strongly held opinions now crop up incessantly in our feeds.

Rants go way back in both written and oratory form. They are not new. Seventeenth-century England even saw a short-lived sect known to its detractors as the Ranters. Ranting is simply more common and more easily broadcast via the ability of anyone to “go live” via video from any smart phone.

The immediacy and non-stop pressure of social media make most of today’s rants less artful than a well-crafted jibe from someone like Benjamin Franklin. It’s easy to get caught up in the moment and fire off a diatribe.

Rants get attention to the point of full viral status. Rants often garner support. Rants also lead to counter-rants and sometimes unexpected backlash, including #haters.

So, is it ever okay to say what you really think? Yes, as long as you do it sparingly and in a strategic way to define your practice’s values.

A carefully crafted rant, especially if paired with a community outreach component aimed at change, can play a role in client education and even brand-level veterinary marketing.

The art of the rant comes from knowing who you are, what you believe, and upon which topics you’re willing to take a stand.

## What good rants have in common

Good rants come from passion, but from a marketing perspective, ranting must relate to a topic of importance in veterinary medicine.

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Here are a few possible examples:

- Your practice no longer does feline declaws or canine ear crops or tail docks. You might not rant in a way that decries those who continue to do them, but you might post a passionate explanation about why you don't.
- There is a new non-veterinary provider of anesthesia-free dental cleanings in your community, and you want to educate clients and protect your patients.
- You're exhausted by people choosing wacky remedies instead of evidence-based medical strategies for serious or terminal illnesses in pets.
- You cannot abide another day of clients believing a certain pet-care myth.

Sure, it can be funny to rant about things that annoy us at work, but keep the little things amongst a small circle of professional colleagues. Save your real ranting skills for things that truly matter.

Some argue that ranting's only purpose is catharsis, with no intention of finding a solution or forging progress. I disagree. I believe a good rant has both passion and purpose, so I recommend only ranting with a goal in mind.

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Ask yourself:

- Is the issue a cornerstone of your personal or practice brand? Is this something you're already known for or want to be known for?
- Are you willing to stand up for what you believe, no matter any push-back you get, including potentially losing clients who disagree with you or making your veterinary colleagues angry?
- Is this an issue that affects a great number of pets?
- Is this an issue that, if changed, would benefit a great number of pets?
- Are you willing to carry this issue over the long haul, not just until you calm down?
- Are you best suited to take on this topic as a thought-leader?

One way to test the rant-worthiness of a topic is to write something (or record something) in a moment of passion and then let it set for a week or even a month. Decide later if you still feel passionate about it or if it continues to be a consistent issue that requires addressing. If so, is there a more strategic way to structure your rant for public release?

Good rants also take root in authenticity. Are you a methodical person who argues in a logical manner with supporting points, like a debate champion? Or, would you rather be funny to make your point?

### Real-world veterinary rants

Veterinarian and author Jessica Vogelsang, DVM, (Dr. V from Pawcurious), infuses humor into an occasional and educational rant. Some of my favorites of hers include hilariously posed Barbie dolls to illustrate a veterinary vignette.

"In terms of how I choose my tone, honestly it's something I've toyed with for a decade. I can push the envelope further on my own blog than I would on a clinic website, because it represents me as a writer more than a clinic. I

get that," Vogelsang explains. "I prefer satire over straight up ranting. (This is how the Pet Doctor Barbie stuff came about.) Will it make clients less likely to come see you, or does the underlying message still remain consistent with your core values as a practitioner? People still have to believe at the end of your piece that you are truly doing this because you care about making pets healthy; if that doesn't come across, I'd reconsider."

A blog post Vogelsang wrote called "No Obamacare for Dogs" also grabbed a lot of attention on the issue of veterinary ER costs.

Vogelsang admits that you have to be comfortable with upsetting the subjects of your rants. She says, "I'm perfectly happy doing a satirical piece about 'pet food gurus' or

pseudoscience magazines who tell people coconut oil cures cancer because I believe some ideas don't deserve credence. Satire is a good way to disagree. The subjects of my satire are aware of what I've said; they dislike it (and me) because of it. I'm ok with that."

### How rants might go wrong

No matter your position in veterinary medicine (owner, associate, management, etc.), when you post things online, including videos, it does represent the veterinary profession to some degree.

Sometimes fellow veterinarians will agree with you. Sometimes they won't. Sometimes clients will agree with you. Sometimes they won't.

This uncertainty leads to anonymous rants via online comments or on sites designed specifically to let people vent (such as Rant Rampage), but even that can backfire. "I think people sometimes use the cloak of anonymity to excuse themselves from having to censor themselves," Vogelsang says. "You'd be surprised at what people can figure out if they want to. I wouldn't write anything anonymously you wouldn't be comfortable defending in court. It's happened."

That's why rants do need to be about topics important to you and your practice. Be passionate. Be strategic. Be careful how you do it.



Roxanne Hawn is a professional writer and award-winning blogger based in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. A former writer/editor for the American Animal Hospital Association and the American Humane Association, she has written about veterinary medicine and pet topics for nearly 20 years. Her work has also appeared in The New York Times, Reader's Digest, Natural Home, Bankrate.com, WebMD, The Bark, Modern Dog, and many high-profile outlets. Her first book is called *Heart Dog: Surviving the Loss of Your Canine Soul Mate*.

*Author's Note: You might think this article about rants was inspired by the recent uproar on Facebook in September 2017 when a veterinarian in Maryland posted a video decrying the high cost of emergency veterinary care. The reality is that we chose this topic in late 2016, when we set the entire editorial calendar for 2017, because we knew that ranting would become a greater issue as technology makes it easier. That video and the response to it make an interesting case study you might want to discuss with your practice team.*

## Related Reading

### A Selection of Rants from Pawcurious

<http://pawcurious.com/2014/04/no-obamacare-for-dogs-5-things-you-should-know-about-the-vet-er/>

<http://pawcurious.com/2017/09/heres-who-i-blame-for-the-high-cost-of-vet-care/>

<http://pawcurious.com/2017/08/the-truth-about-media-mobs-vets-and-you/>

<http://pawcurious.com/2015/07/pet-doctor-barbie-and-the-pet-food-dude/>

### Online Ranting Forums

[www.Rantrampage.com/index.html](http://www.Rantrampage.com/index.html)

[www.Reddit.com/r/rant/](http://www.Reddit.com/r/rant/) (Warning: These tend to be profane.)

### Best Rants in Sports

[www.si.com/extra-mustard/2014/11/04/best-sports-outbursts-rants-meltdowns](http://www.si.com/extra-mustard/2014/11/04/best-sports-outbursts-rants-meltdowns)

### Best Rants in Movies

[www.screenrant.com/legendary-rants-in-movie-history/](http://www.screenrant.com/legendary-rants-in-movie-history/)

### The World's Best Funny Complaint Letters

[www.dearcustomerrelations.com/](http://www.dearcustomerrelations.com/)