



VETERINARY COUNCIL  
OF NEW ZEALAND  
Te Kaunihera Rata Kararehe o Aotearoa

## Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians

## **Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians**

Prescribed under the Veterinarians Act 2005  
as a minimum practising standard.

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Veterinary Council of New Zealand  
PO Box 10 563  
Level 11, Kordia House  
109 Willis Street  
Wellington 6143  
New Zealand

Telephone: +64 4 473 9600  
Fax: +64 4 473 8869  
Email: [vet@vetcouncil.org.nz](mailto:veter@vetcouncil.org.nz)  
Web: [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz)

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# Introduction

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The primary purpose of the Veterinary Council of New Zealand (VCNZ) is to protect the public interest by ensuring that veterinarians are competent and fit to practise. The Veterinarians Act 2005 provides VCNZ with a number of mechanisms to achieve this purpose including setting minimum standards for practising as a veterinarian, setting and monitoring standards for veterinary performance and promoting and encouraging high standards of professional education and conduct.

VCNZ sets standards in consultation with the public and the veterinary profession. This Code sets out the professional conduct standards the public, the profession and VCNZ expect veterinarians to meet and to be measured against.

The work of veterinarians can take many forms. Their roles and responsibilities, whether in clinical or non clinical practice, extend beyond individual patients and clients to include, amongst other things, food safety, public health and biosecurity. The principles of this Code are intended to be broad enough to define the expectations of veterinarians in any area of veterinary practice.

The Veterinarians Act 2005 restricts the right to practise as a veterinarian in New Zealand to those who are appropriately qualified, are registered with VCNZ and hold a current practising certificate. The rights conferred by veterinary registration go hand in hand with legal and professional responsibilities and are placed at risk if these obligations are ignored or flouted.

## Structure of the Code

The Code has been structured around seven fundamental principles that form the basis of the professional behaviour expected of veterinarians. These principles are:

1. Protecting animal welfare and alleviating animal suffering;
2. Practising in a way that promotes effective communication, trust, meets confidentiality and consent requirements and recognises clients' right to choose;
3. Interacting with colleagues honestly and with respect and in a way that fosters good relationships and communication;
4. Acting in a manner that promotes the public's trust and confidence in the profession;
5. Striving to provide a high standard of veterinary practice;
6. Exercising sound professional judgement when authorising, dispensing, recommending, selling and using veterinary medicines; and
7. Practising in accordance with relevant legislation and other applicable standards.

Supporting each principle is a series of statements which set out the specific expectations and a glossary with definitions of some of the terms used in the Code.

More detail on the expectations, and how veterinarians can comply with them, is provided in comprehensive explanatory notes which are embedded in the online version of the Code. These notes, and other identified resources also provide specific examples of the Code's application.

Those seeking further clarification of the requirements are strongly advised to consult the online version of the Code and explanatory notes at [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz)

## How this Code will be used

For those entering the profession, the Code identifies the fundamental principles of professional veterinary practice and serves as an educational tool.

For those within the profession the Code provides the basis for monitoring their own practice. The related online explanatory notes serve as an educational tool to guide veterinarians on meeting their professional obligations.

For those outside the profession the Code provides guidance for assessing the professional conduct standards expected of veterinarians.

The Code will be used by VCNZ and its Committees as a standard by which to measure veterinarians' professional conduct in the event of complaints and concerns being raised.

The minimum standards are identified in the Code and related explanatory notes by the use of the word 'must'. The explanatory notes include additional advice and recommendations to encourage veterinarians to maintain, or aspire to, high standards of professional conduct. In this case the word 'should' is generally used.

The overarching expectation of the Code is that veterinarians will exercise sound professional judgment in all their professional endeavours. The Code is not exhaustive. It is accepted that there is not necessarily one right decision in every set of circumstances and that the Code cannot define how every situation must be managed. VCNZ expects veterinarians to evaluate situations (whether in relation to a clinical matter or not), apply the principles of this Code and make competent and reasonable decisions about the most appropriate course of action taking into account the individual circumstances and the best potential outcomes.

Veterinarians are professionally accountable for their practice, which means being personally responsible for what they do or do not do. Veterinarians are encouraged to take advice from senior colleagues and managers, but when faced with conflicting responsibilities they must exercise their own professional judgment in deciding on the appropriate course of action and use this Code as a basis for making that decision.

## Legal Status of this Code

The principles and responsibilities specified in this Code have been prescribed, by notice in the New Zealand Gazette, as minimum standards for practising as a veterinarian under Section 88 of the Veterinarians Act 2005.

All veterinarians must comply with the Code.

## Revision of the Code

This Code is based on VCNZ's interpretation of the professional conduct standards that the public and the profession expect all veterinarians to meet. It may need to be reviewed in the light of any changes to these expectations or any significant issues arising from its implementation. Unless required earlier, a review will take place every three years.



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# Animal Welfare

Veterinarians have a special duty to protect animal welfare and alleviate animal suffering.

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1. Veterinarians must be familiar with and comply with the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the relevant Codes of Welfare. In the course of their work, veterinarians must consider and take all reasonable steps to protect the needs of animals in relation to the five basic requirements of:
  - a. Proper and sufficient food and water;
  - b. Adequate shelter;
  - c. The opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour;
  - d. Appropriate physical handling; and
  - e. Protection from, and rapid diagnosis of, injury and disease.

This obligation is qualified however, as the needs in each individual case are assessed according to what is appropriate to the species, environment and circumstances of the affected animal(s).
2. In the course of their work veterinarians must not ignore circumstances where they have reasonable grounds to suspect non compliance with the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and Codes of Welfare. Veterinarians must be satisfied that their co-workers and their clients are informed of and comply with the relevant provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and Codes of Welfare that relate to work they are undertaking.
3. Veterinarians must act immediately to remedy situations where they have cause to suspect unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress in an animal(s), or possible breaches of animal welfare legislation.
4. When euthanasia is necessary it must be carried out humanely. In situations where an animal's owner is not known or cannot be contacted, veterinarians must exercise their duty under section 138 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 to euthanise severely sick or injured animals responsibly.
5. Veterinarians must ensure, that in the course of their work, only persons appropriately approved under sections 15-20 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 perform significant, restricted or controlled surgical procedures. Veterinarians must be satisfied that any person under their authority who performs any type of surgical procedure on an animal is appropriately trained and supervised, and that the animal does not suffer unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.
6. Veterinarians must not carry out treatments or procedures on animals unless they meet the following criteria. Treatments or procedures must:
  - a. Only be performed:
    - i. When the procedure is reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances in order to prevent, diagnose or treat an illness or injury; or
    - ii. In accordance with accepted farming practices (e.g. de-velvetting deer); or
    - iii. In accordance with generally accepted principles of responsible pet ownership (e.g. de-sexing cats and dogs).
  - b. Not be performed primarily for the convenience of the owner.
  - c. Meet accepted professional standards.
7. Where a client's animals are found to carry inherited defects that compromise their welfare or that of their prospective progeny veterinarians must give the client sound genetic counselling and management advice which is in the best interests of the animal and its progeny.



## Client relationships

Veterinarians must practise in a way that promotes effective communication, trust, meets confidentiality and consent requirements and recognises clients' right to choose.

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1. Veterinarians must interact with clients in a way that promotes effective communication and trust. This includes:

- a. Listening to clients, respecting their views, responding to their concerns and preferences and treating them with courtesy;
- b. Treating all client information and information related to the provision of veterinary services as the private information of the client except in circumstances where:
  - i. The client's consent has been given; or
  - ii. Disclosure of the information is made in accordance with the principles set out under the Privacy Act 1993; or
  - iii. There is a requirement for disclosure of information made under the Veterinarians Act 2005.
- c. Not exploiting a client's lack of veterinary knowledge.

2. Veterinarians must obtain appropriate consent before proceeding with a proposed treatment/course of action. Veterinarians must provide clients with the information that they need, in a way that enables the client to understand and give consent to the proposed treatment/course of action. Veterinarians must be satisfied that clients are authorised to provide that consent. Depending on the circumstances the information provided to clients may include:

- a. The condition of their animal(s);
- b. Treatment options, including likely outcomes, risks, side effects, complications, costs and benefits;
- c. Referral options where appropriate and how to access;
- d. The veterinarian's skills and experience in providing the proposed treatment (where appropriate);
- e. Post treatment requirements and costs.

Note that the consent requirements may not apply in an animal welfare emergency where the client or owner is unable to be contacted and there is an immediate threat to the life of the animal, or there is an immediate need to relieve unreasonable or unnecessary pain (refer to the Animal Welfare requirements of this Code).

3. Veterinarians must respect clients' rights to:

- a. Use the services of more than one veterinarian;
- b. Seek a second opinion or referral;
- c. Choose an alternate course of action to the one recommended by the veterinarian provided this does not conflict with the animal's welfare.

4. Veterinarians are not obliged to accept new clients, continue to provide services to existing clients, or provide a requested treatment, providing animal welfare and professional standards are met.

# Professional Relationships

Veterinarians must interact with colleagues honestly and with respect and in a way that fosters good relationships and communication.

1. Unless there is a good reason for confidentiality, veterinarians must communicate factual technical information in their possession to those people with a need to know in order to ensure (either generally or in individual cases) the welfare of animals, the promotion of public health, national biosecurity, integrity of certification, the advancement of veterinary knowledge, or maintenance of public confidence in the profession.
2. Where veterinarians are providing a specific and limited range of veterinary services to a client (e.g. consultancy services) they must:
  - a. Ascertain from the client which veterinarian would be considered to be their usual general veterinary practitioner;
  - b. Request the client's consent to make contact with the general veterinary practitioner and continue to communicate relevant information with the general veterinary practitioner during the course of their professional involvement with the client;
  - c. Ensure they only authorise the use of restricted veterinary medicines for clinical matters they have specifically consulted on;
  - d. Make provision for 24 hour emergency care in relation to their responsibilities around the matters consulted on.
3. Second opinions give effect to a client's right to have a diagnosis or treatment plan considered by another veterinarian.
  - a. When a second opinion is being considered for patients under their care veterinarians must:
    - i. Recognise the client's right to request a second opinion and if necessary identify that right to the client;
    - ii. Use their professional judgement to recognise when they should recommend a second opinion;
    - iii. Obtain the consent of the client before organising a second opinion;
    - iv. Provide appropriate case summaries for the second opinion veterinarian.
  - b. When providing a second opinion veterinarians must:
    - i. State their opinion in a way which does not unduly or wrongly discredit the first veterinarian;
    - ii. Respect the ongoing relationship between the client and the first opinion veterinarian;
    - iii. Communicate the second opinion with the first opinion veterinarian in those situations where the second opinion was initiated by, and the client is returning to, the first veterinarian.
4. A client may be referred to a specialist, or a veterinarian with particular expertise or equipment, in order to obtain a diagnosis and/or carry out treatment. Following referral both veterinarians are jointly accountable to the client with the veterinarian first consulted being responsible for the continuing management of the case (unless otherwise agreed).
  - a. Referring veterinarians must:
    - i. Recognise the client's right to request such joint services by referral;
    - ii. Be familiar with the referral options available;
    - iii. Recognise when a case is outside their area of competence and offer referral to a colleague whom they are satisfied is competent to carry out the investigations or treatment involved;
    - iv. Inform the client of the referral veterinarian's level of expertise and whether they are a registered specialist;

- v. Before the referral, where possible, provide appropriate documentation and case records to the referral veterinarian;
  - vi. Document the referral appropriately in their client records.
- b. Referral veterinarians must:
- i. State their opinion in a way which does not unduly or wrongly discredit the referring veterinarian;
  - ii. Respect the ongoing relationship between the client and the first opinion veterinarian;
  - iii. Provide the referring veterinarians with detailed reports on diagnoses, treatments and prognoses for patients which are referred. If the referral veterinarian provides a written statement for the client, a copy is to be sent to the referring veterinarian;
  - iv. Make provision for 24 hour emergency cover for their patients in relation to the matters consulted on.
5. Supersession is the act of taking over the clinical management of a case recently treated by another veterinarian.
- a. Veterinarians must:
- i. When an animal is seen for the first time, ascertain whether another veterinarian has recently provided treatment;
  - ii. With the owner's consent, notify the superseded veterinarian before consultation where possible, or as soon as practicable after the consultation;
  - iii. Request from the superseded veterinarian any relevant clinical information which may have a bearing on the future clinical management of the patient.
- b. Superseded veterinarians must:
- i. Provide all of the requested and relevant clinical information in a manner and form appropriate for the circumstances;
  - ii. Not impede or delay the transfer of clinical information;
  - iii. Communicate with the superseding veterinarian in a professional manner, in order to manage risks;
  - iv. Recognise a client's right to choose another veterinarian.
6. Veterinarians must treat colleagues with professionalism and respect not making malicious or unfounded criticisms of colleagues that may undermine the public's trust and bring discredit to the profession.
7. Newly registered and/or inexperienced veterinarians must be appropriately supported at all times.

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see -ATION] **integrity** n. wholesomeness; honesty. [ME, f. F usage] **integument** n. skin, natural covering; her L *integumentum* f. IN1 (faculty n. faculty) [ME]

# Professional Integrity

Veterinarians must act in a manner that promotes the public's trust and confidence in the profession.

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1. Veterinarians must display high standards of integrity and accountability and must not engage in fraud, misrepresentation or deception.
2. Veterinarians must maintain the integrity of certification.
3. Veterinarians must identify, declare and manage conflicts of interest so as to demonstrate that they are acting with impartiality and independence.
4. Veterinarians must not seek or accept inducements that can be shown to influence their treatment or sales decisions.
5. Veterinarians must immediately notify MAF when they suspect the presence of any organism (disease, parasite etc.) not usually seen in New Zealand, and any notifiable organism and then comply with the instructions of MAF.
6. Veterinarians called as either a witness or an expert witness in a court or tribunal must give their evidence honestly and accurately. When presenting expert evidence, veterinarians must do so impartially and within their areas of expertise.
7. Veterinarians officiating in a professional capacity at animal based events such as races, shows or competitions must:
  - a. Declare any conflict of interest relevant to their official duties to the appropriate authority at the earliest opportunity;
  - b. Behave in accordance with the principles and rules of the competition and those of its organisers;
  - c. Use their professional judgement to prevent any situation which is likely to compromise an animal's welfare;
  - d. Avoid any act which unfairly influences any animal's performance.
8. When treating or prescribing for any animal before a race, show or event, veterinarians must ensure that the relevant rules of the Racing, or Harness Racing Conferences, Greyhound Association or similar bodies are followed.
9. When promoting services and products:
  - a. Veterinarians must act fairly representing their capability and competence accurately;
  - b. Veterinarians must not exaggerate any claim or comparison of the service or product over another or overstate their skills and knowledge by using misleading descriptors.
10. Veterinarians must use their professional judgement in deciding whether to notify VCNZ where they have reason to believe that the health, conduct or competence of a colleague is adversely affecting patient care or undermining the public's trust in the profession.
11. Veterinarians must, at the time of completing their annual practising certificate application, declare if they have:
  - a. Any health conditions;
  - b. Been charged with or found guilty of a criminal offence;
  - c. Been suspended or dismissed on conduct or competence grounds;
  - d. Resigned for reasons relating to competence or conduct;
  - e. Been subject to an adverse finding by an overseas veterinary regulatory body.

Veterinarians must also consider notifying VCNZ of any of the above issues at the time they arise rather than delaying until the annual practising certificate round.
12. Veterinarians must respond to complaints in a timely, honest and constructive manner.



# Veterinary Services

Veterinarians must strive to provide a high standard of veterinary practice.

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1. Veterinarians must keep their skills and knowledge up to date by taking part in relevant continuing professional development activities that maintain and develop their competence and performance.
2. Veterinarians must recognise when either their competence or the resources available to them place limits on their ability to perform to an acceptable standard. All reasonable steps must be taken to avoid exceeding those limits.
3. All veterinarians must take reasonable care to ensure that the practice that they are working in is operated to the standard expected in this Code.
4. Veterinarians must maintain clear and accurate clinical records. The records must:
  - a. Be of such detail that another veterinarian could take over the management of the case at any time;
  - b. Be retained for periods of time as required by statute or for the duration of time for which they remain relevant to the purpose for which they were recorded;
  - c. Not be altered retrospectively unless the changes are marked chronologically on the record, and the additions are dated and noted as being added retrospectively; and
  - d. Be made accessible to clients on request, unless there are justifiable legal reasons to withhold.
5. Veterinarians employed by government or involved in industry, education or research must:
  - a. Ensure that employer requirements and contractual obligations do not compromise or override professional standards;
  - b. Inform clinical practitioners before providing services affecting their clients. This includes public presentations, trial work and investigating aspects relating to products;
  - c. Ensure all professional and regulatory requirements are satisfied when undertaking trial, research or investigatory work for an employer.
6. In considering the use of alternative or complementary methods of diagnosis or treatment the welfare of the animal is paramount. Where a veterinarian chooses to use alternative or complementary methods of diagnosis or treatment the client must be able to make an informed decision about whether to proceed. Therefore the veterinarian making this choice must inform the client of:
  - a. The nature of the alternative treatment offered; and
  - b. The extent to which it is consistent with conventional medicine.
7. Veterinarians in clinical practice must make an emergency service available at all times. This service is required so that their clients' animals can receive essential veterinary treatment in order to relieve unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.

The emergency service must be sufficiently resourced, so that except in extraordinary circumstances, all veterinary emergencies involving clients' animals are attended in reasonable time to ensure the welfare of the animals. A decision of what is a reasonable time will take into account the type of practice and the locality.

Those veterinarians on duty and directly responsible for providing the emergency service can refer callers who are not clients to the emergency service provided by the caller's own veterinarian. However, if that alternative service is not available and if the veterinarian has the necessary skills and resources required for the particular emergency, the veterinarian must attend the emergency and provide essential treatment.
8. There will be times when a veterinarian who is not currently working in clinical practice, or who is not on duty, is called upon in a veterinary emergency. On these occasions, if the veterinarian is unable to attend the animal personally to provide emergency treatment, he/she must make a reasonable effort to assist the caller to locate an alternative source of emergency veterinary care.

Instances will occur where neither of the options in paragraphs 7 and 8 is suitable or applicable. In any such case the veterinarian must provide appropriate advice in order that the person in charge of the animal is able to take the necessary steps to alleviate any unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress being suffered by the animal.
9. Veterinarians must make provision for the care of animals currently receiving in-patient treatment. This must be at a level appropriate to the clinical problem being managed and must be communicated to the client.



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# Veterinary Medicines

Veterinarians must exercise sound professional judgement when authorising, dispensing, recommending, selling and using veterinary medicines.

1. When using or selling any unrestricted veterinary medicine or dispensing a restricted veterinary medicine, veterinarians must:
  - a. Ensure effective product management (storage, reporting adverse reactions, maintaining the integrity of product, labelling, security, safety of handling); and
  - b. Practise in accordance with the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997, Animal Products Act 1999, Hazardous Substance and New Organisms Act 1996, Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, Medicines Act 1981, Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 and associated subordinate legislation in relation to all these acts as well as other relevant legislation.
2. When using or recommending any unrestricted veterinary medicine or authorising any restricted veterinary medicine, veterinarians must:
  - a. Consider the implications of its use with regard to risks to public health; trade in primary produce; agricultural security; animal welfare; occupational health and safety; and the environment and act accordingly to avoid or mitigate significant risks;
  - b. Be satisfied that the choice of product is justified, and that use is appropriate to achieve the intended effect and ensure the welfare of the animal;
  - c. Provide appropriate advice on the management of residues and withholding periods in food producing animals;
  - d. Determine and provide the appropriate level of veterinary involvement (if any) required during and after administration in order to manage the risks; and
  - e. Determine and provide the appropriate level of advice and training (if any) to:
    - i. Administer the veterinary medicine safely and appropriately;
    - ii. Monitor the effects of treatment on the animals;
    - iii. Make provision for veterinary intervention in the case of adverse effects.
3. When using or authorising restricted veterinary medicines, veterinarians must comply with the requirements and expectations of MAF ACVM Group in relation to authorisation. This is set out in their published performance and technical standards: (<http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/industry/acvm/topics/vet/index.htm>)

Additionally veterinarians must:

  - a. Comply with all of the points in paragraph 2
  - b. Obtain sufficient information to assist risk assessment and to support the choice of that veterinary medicine through either:
    - i. Veterinary consultation as defined in the glossary; or
    - ii. Issuing Veterinary Operating Instructions as detailed in paragraph 4;
  - c. Create and maintain appropriate records detailing the decision and the action taken; and
  - d. Honour requests for written authorisations in lieu of dispensing.
4. When issuing Veterinary Operating Instructions (VOI), veterinarians must comply with the requirements and expectations of MAF ACVM Group in relation to VOI. These are set out in MAF's guidelines at: [www.foodsafety.govt.nz/elibrary/industry/Veterinary\\_Operating-Guidelines\\_Issuing.pdf](http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/elibrary/industry/Veterinary_Operating-Guidelines_Issuing.pdf)

Additionally veterinarians must:

  - a. Tightly define the specific treatment circumstances in which each restricted veterinary medicine is authorised to be used under VOI;

- b. Authorise use of restricted veterinary medicines under VOI only in circumstances where there is no reasonable expectation that either veterinary judgement or a veterinary diagnosis would be needed to ensure that the use of the product in the specific case is appropriate and justified;
  - c. Not use VOI to authorise the use of any controlled drug as defined in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975;
  - d. Be able to provide evidence that the process for developing and issuing VOI has been followed appropriately prior to implementation of the instructions;
  - e. Be able to provide evidence that they have identified:
    - i. The specific competencies required of personnel authorised in the VOI;
    - ii. Appropriate detail on the training and assessment of the personnel in relation to those competencies;
  - f. Make it a requirement of the VOI that specific records are kept in relation to every instance of use of the restricted veterinary medicines by VOI specified personnel. Records must document sufficient information to permit easy assessment of compliance with the terms of the VOI;
  - g. Be able to provide evidence of sufficient monitoring that allows the veterinarian to be confident that the terms of the VOI are being complied with;
  - h. Review the competency of the personnel at least annually by personally assessing the use of the restricted veterinary medicines by the user;
  - i. Withdraw the VOI immediately in situations of non compliance.
5. When using or authorising human medicines or the discretionary use of registered veterinary medicines 'off label', veterinarians must:
- a. Comply with all of the points in paragraphs 2 and 3 above;
  - b. Consider if there is a registered veterinary medicine that will adequately achieve the intended effect and ensure the welfare of the animal, and if appropriate, choose the registered veterinary medicine in preference; and
  - c. Not supply any Medsafe approved human medicine for use as a veterinary medicine, or any registered veterinary medicine off label, unless the additional risks can be justified.
6. When using or authorising a preparation that has been compounded, veterinarians must:
- a. Comply with all of the points in paragraphs 2,3 and 4 above;
  - b. In situations where there is no appropriate registered veterinary medicine consider if there is an appropriate Medsafe approved human medicine. If such a product is available and will adequately achieve the intended effect and ensure the welfare of the animal it must be chosen in preference to a compounded product;
  - c. Ensure that compounded products do not contain prohibited or restricted substances as defined by MAF ACVM Group;
  - d. In situations where the product is compounded personally, be competent in all aspects of formulation and manufacturing and take full responsibility for the product including its preparation, packaging and labelling;
  - e. Be satisfied that any third party contracted to do the compounding is competent, and issue the third party with a compounding order specifying the product, quantity, packaging and labelling;
  - f. Ensure that there is a documented system for compounding in place;
  - g. Retain full responsibility for the product even when it is compounded by a third party contractor;
  - h. Compound only enough product to manage short-term requirements and not store product in anticipation of future needs;
  - i. Not advertise or promote compounded products as veterinary medicine trade name products or display them for sale to the general public; and
  - j. Not import compounded veterinary medicines without approval from MAF ACVM Group.
7. When decanting or breaking down a trade name product, veterinarians must ensure that:
- a. The product is not altered in any material way, other than to change the original packaging and labelling;

- b. No additional hazards are introduced through careless or inappropriate procedures during decanting or breaking down;
  - c. The choice of alternative packaging does not jeopardise the quality of the product; and
  - d. All the crucial information about the product is provided to the client including the veterinarian's contact information and additional instructions.
8. When providing a dispensing service for restricted veterinary medicines authorised by any veterinarian outside the practice, veterinarians must:
- a. Have the appropriate MAF ACVM recognition to trade in restricted veterinary medicines;
  - b. Ensure that the veterinary medicine is supplied only to a person who has the appropriate authorisation;
  - c. Be satisfied that the authorisation is authentic and the person requesting the veterinary medicine is the one authorised to purchase it;
  - d. Give effect to the instructions of the authorising veterinarian if it is a veterinary authorisation; and
  - e. Keep a record of the transaction with a copy of the authorisation.
9. For a generic chemical to be used as a veterinary medicine veterinarians must:
- a. Recognise that there has been:
    - i. No regulatory assessment of the chemical for that purpose;
    - ii. No regulatory control of the quality and fitness for purpose for treatment of animals;
  - b. Address the risk management in an adequate manner;
  - c. Make the client aware of the situation and provide adequate risk management advice.
10. Any veterinary medicine with a specific condition of registration that it is only to be administered by a veterinarian, must not be authorised, dispensed or sold by a veterinarian.
11. Veterinarians must not use, recommend or authorise the use of veterinary medicines, prescription medicines, pharmacy-only medicines or restricted medicines (as defined in the Medicines Act 1981) for use on humans.
12. Veterinarians must be satisfied that protocols exist and are followed by all staff to securely store and monitor the use of any controlled drugs used within their business. Those protocols must include as minimum requirements that:
- a. The storage of all controlled drugs (including those classified C5 in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 under Schedule 3 Part 5) must comply with section 28 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1977;
  - b. Every instance of sale or use of a controlled drug must be linked to a veterinary consultation. There must also be an accurate record which can be readily reported and reviewed. Veterinary businesses that do not use a computerised medical record system that is able to quickly and easily report on the sale or use of each controlled drug, must record each individual sale or use in a Controlled Drug Register. This register must take the form of a bound volume with consecutively numbered pages set out and used as described in Form 1 Schedule 1 of the Controlled Drugs Regulations 1977;
  - c. Every six months the stock of all controlled drugs held must be counted and recorded. At these times, for every strength of each controlled drug, there must be a reconciliation of the opening stock, closing stock, purchases and sales. This must be documented along with a proper explanation for any volume or amount which is not accounted for in the reconciliation. Records of reconciliations must be kept for four years; and
  - d. Extraordinary variances in the reconciliation that cannot be explained or are thought to be due to unauthorised use must be reported to VCNZ.
13. Veterinarians must not advertise or display restricted veterinary medicines where such action has the potential to influence the end user's expectation about the necessity to use a specific product.



## Legislative requirements

Veterinarians must practise in accordance with all relevant legislation and other standards applicable to their veterinary practice.

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1. Veterinarians must practise in accordance with the legislation which directly impacts on their practice. This includes the relevant provisions of the:
  - a. Veterinarians Act 2005 and associated subordinate legislation (such as Minimum Practising Standards for Practising as a Veterinarian Notice);
  - b. Animal Welfare Act 1999 and associated subordinate legislation (such as Codes of Welfare);
  - c. Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997 and associated legislation and standards in relation to the use, authorisation, sale and supply of veterinary medicines;
  - d. Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 and associated regulations;
  - e. Medicines Act 1981 and associated regulations;
  - f. Biosecurity Act 1993 and associated subordinate legislation and standards;
  - g. Section 87A of the Health Act 1956 and Health (Diseases Communicated by Animals) Regulations;
  - h. Animal Products Act 1999 and associated subordinate legislation and standards;
  - i. Food Act 1981 and associated regulations
  - j. Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 and associated regulations;
  - k. Radiation Protection Act 1965 and associated codes of practice;
  - l. Privacy Act 1993; and
  - m. Electronic Transactions Act 2002.
2. Veterinarians must practise in accordance with the professional standards set or endorsed by VCNZ. These include:
  - a. Standard relating to Sufficient Information for authorising Dry Cow Therapy;
  - b. Statement on the Discretionary use of Human and Veterinary medicines by Veterinarians;
  - c. Statement on the Induction of Dairy Cattle
  - d. Statements on Compounding and Manufacturing Veterinary Medicines;
  - e. The continuing professional development requirements set out in the VCNZ document Continuing Professional Development – Information for Veterinarians;
  - f. Policy on Recency of Practice;
  - g. Competence Standards and Performance Indicators for Veterinarians; and
  - h. Policy on Additional Registered Qualifications and the Use of Post nominal and Courtesy Titles.
3. Veterinarians must maintain a working knowledge of the legislation which impacts on their practice in their associated roles such as employers, business owners or veterinary medicine traders.

# Glossary

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**Adverse event:** An adverse event is considered to have occurred if any one (or more) of the following takes place after the administration of a veterinary medicine:

1. an unexpected reaction;
2. unreasonable pain or distress;
3. lack of efficacy;
4. the production of residues in primary products when the product has been used as recommended.

**Advertise:** To publicise to the community or to any section of the community using any words, whether written, printed, spoken, or in any electronic form, or of any pictorial representation or design or device used to promote the sale of any agricultural compound; and 'to advertise' has a corresponding meaning (ref: section 2 ACVM Act). Advertising does not include general information transfer about animal health, animal welfare, or food safety status or management.

**Attending** a veterinary emergency means to physically assess the animal(s) and as a minimum provide relief from unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.

**Authorising, dispensing, recommending, selling and using veterinary medicines:**

**Authorising:** A veterinarian creating a documented approval allowing a client to purchase a particular restricted veterinary medicine to administer to a particular animal(s) in accordance with the instructions of the veterinarian.

**Dispensing:** Supplying veterinary medicines strictly in accordance with a written veterinary authorisation. Products must be dispensed in their registered packaging unless otherwise specified in the authorisation.

**Recommending:** Advising a client to use a particular veterinary medicine.

**Selling:** Offering for sale a veterinary medicine, including gifting or offering samples.

**Using:** A veterinarian administering a veterinary medicine to an animal(s) in their care. This includes staff administering in accordance with the veterinarian's instructions.

**Veterinary medicine:** Any substance, mixture of substances or biological compound used or intended for use in the direct management of an animal.

A **client** of a veterinarian is a person (or organisation) that uses or has used the professional services of that veterinarian.

**Certification** is the action of providing a written assurance or notification to any person about any animal or animal product. (In this context 'written' includes using electronic means).

**Clinical practice** means the professional examination, diagnosis, prophylactic, medical and/or surgical services veterinarians provide.

**Competency** is the application of knowledge, skills, attitudes, communication and judgement to the delivery of appropriate veterinary services in any particular field of veterinary practice. Competence is demonstrated through performing the tasks required to an acceptable standard and doing this on a consistent basis

**Compounded preparation:** A preparation prepared by a veterinarian or by a person on behalf of a veterinarian for use or sale as a veterinary medicine without regulatory assessment or approval.

**Compounding:** Combining ingredients (some of which may be generic chemicals or biological compounds and others may be trade name products) to prepare a medication to be supplied to a person to treat an animal. To prepare means not only the process of combining ingredients in an appropriate manner for the intended purpose, but also placing the medication into appropriate packaging with appropriate labelling to allow it to be supplied to and to be used by a person other than the veterinarian who compounded it.

**Controlled drug** means any substance, preparation, mixture, or article specified or described in Schedule 1, Schedule 2, or Schedule 3 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975. ([www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz))

**General Veterinary Practitioner** is the predominant veterinarian who a client chooses to provide the continuing and comprehensive primary veterinary care requirements for an animal or group of animals.

**Generic Chemical:** A substance that is offered for sale without any veterinary medicine claims being made by the manufacturer, proprietor or seller.

**Human medicine** refers to any medicine, prescription medicine or pharmacy-only medicine as defined in the Medicines Act 1981.

**Ill treatment of an animal** means causing an animal to suffer pain or distress which is unreasonable or unnecessary.

**Immediate** means taking place without delay.

**Inducements:** Gifts or rewards offered to individual veterinarians or their staff which provide a significant personal benefit and therefore have the potential to influence treatment decisions (including the choice of Restricted Veterinary Medicine) or incentivise sales. Examples might include but are not limited to cash, attendance at entertainment or sporting events, travel, hospitality, loans, personal items and consumables.

**MAF:** Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

**NZVA:** New Zealand Veterinary Association

**Off Label Use:** Using a registered veterinary medicine (Over The Counter or restricted) product for a purpose not assessed by MAF ACVM Group.

**Practice:** Any aspect of veterinary endeavour. The practice of veterinary science includes:

1. signing any certificate e.g. clinical and export certificates;
2. prescribing;
3. treating;
4. reporting or giving advice in a veterinary capacity using the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competence initially attained for the BVSc degree (or equivalent) and built upon through experience and/or post-graduate and continuing professional development. 'Practice' goes wider in this context than clinical veterinary science to include regulatory and compliance functions, teaching, consultancy, advice and health and welfare management.

**Referral:** The act of handing over a matter/clinical case to a person, who has particular skills, or who is a registered specialist in the appropriate discipline.

**RVM:** restricted veterinary medicine

**Veterinarian** means a person who is registered with the Veterinary Council of New Zealand and who holds a current practising certificate.

**Veterinary authorisation:** An instruction, in an appropriate documented form, from a veterinarian authorising:

1. the use of a restricted veterinary medicine by the specified person in accordance with the authorising veterinarian's instructions;
2. the holding of a relevant restricted veterinary medicine by a person who is neither a recognised trader nor a veterinarian;
3. the sale from a person recognised to sell restricted veterinary medicines to a person specified in the authorisation.

The terms veterinary authorisation and veterinary prescription have the same meaning and may be used interchangeably.

**Veterinary consultation:** A veterinary consultation must include the veterinarian:

1. interviewing the client (or a legitimate and authorised representative of the client);
2. collecting and recording sufficient information relevant to the individual circumstances to ensure the proposed course of action (including treatment) is appropriate and meets the needs and best interests of the animal(s) and the client;
3. obtaining appropriate consent to the proposed course of action;
4. being given and accepting responsibility for the ongoing health and welfare of the animal(s) concerned in relation to the consultation. This includes arranging emergency care taking into consideration the circumstances and the potential for adverse effects from, or failure of the agreed course of action;
5. determining and providing the appropriate level of advice and training in order to be satisfied that the agreed course of action can occur as planned.

Consultation will usually involve the animal(s) having been seen by the veterinarian at the time of the consultation. If not, they will have been seen recently or often enough for the veterinarian to have sufficient personal knowledge of the condition/health status of the animal(s). This consultation is required in order for the veterinarian to be able to propose the particular course of action/treatment.

**VCNZ:** Veterinary Council of New Zealand

**Veterinary emergency:** Any sudden, unforeseen injury, illness or complication in an animal demanding immediate or early veterinary treatment to save life or to provide timely relief from unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.

**Veterinary Operating Instruction (VOI):** A set of instructions from an authorising veterinarian (AV) to a non-veterinarian to hold restricted veterinary medicines (RVM) in anticipation of their use, and to use RVMs only in accordance with the AV's instructions in circumstances in which the AV will not be carrying out a case-specific consultation.

Veterinary Council of New Zealand  
PO Box 10 563  
Level 11, Kordia House  
109 Willis Street  
Wellington 6143  
New Zealand

Telephone: +64 4 473 9600  
Fax: +64 4 473 8869

Email: [vet@vetcouncil.org.nz](mailto:vet@vetcouncil.org.nz)  
Web: [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz)