

Client relationships:

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

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 confidential to the client except in circumstances:
 - i. where the client's consent has been given or;
 - ii. where disclosure of the information is made in accordance with the principles set out under the Privacy Act 1993 or;
 - iii. where 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. Clients must be provided with the information they need, in a way they can understand, to give consent to the proposed treatment/course of action, and veterinarians must be satisfied that clients are authorised to provide that consent. Depending on the circumstances this information may include:
 - a) the condition of their animal(s)
 - b) likely progression
 - c) treatment options, including likely outcomes, risks, side effects, complications, costs and benefits
 - d) referral options where appropriate and how to access
 - e) the veterinarian's skills and experience in providing the proposed treatment (where appropriate)
 - f) 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 immediate need to relieve unreasonable or unnecessary pain (refer to Animal Welfare requirements)

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 ethical considerations are met.

Definition of client

A person (or organisation) who uses the professional services of a veterinarian.