

Veterinary Services

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

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 their limitations in either competence or resources, to perform to an acceptable standard and take all reasonable steps to avoid exceeding those limits.
3. Premises, records, instruments, facilities and staff must be of a standard necessary to facilitate competent performance. In every clinical practice, irrespective of the nature of ownership of the practice one or more 'responsible veterinarians' must be clearly nominated to take reasonable care to ensure that the practice is operated to the standard expected in this Code
4. Veterinarians must provide adequate supervision and direction to non veterinarians or veterinary students performing any procedures where there is a risk of adverse consequences which may lead to the death of the animal or prejudice its future well being.
5. Veterinarians must maintain clear and accurate clinical records of such detail that another veterinarian could take over the management of the case at any time. Veterinarians are required to retain their notes for periods of time as required by statute or for the duration of time for which they remain relevant to the purpose that they were recorded for.
6. 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 (including public presentations, trial work and investigating aspects relating to products);
 - c. Ensure all ethical and regulatory requirements are satisfied when undertaking trial, research or investigatory work for an employer.
7. Veterinarians in clinical practice must make an emergency service available at all times so that their client's 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 (see definition) involving clients' animals are attended in reasonable time taking into account the type of practice and the locality in order to ensure the welfare of the animals.

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 no alternative service is reasonably 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. When called upon in a veterinary emergency any registered veterinarian who is not at the time on duty providing an emergency service, and any registered veterinarian who is not currently working in clinical practice, must if they are unable to attend the animal personally to provide emergency treatment, make a reasonable effort to assist the caller to locate an alternative source of emergency veterinary care.

Where neither of the above options is suitable or applicable 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 at a level appropriate to the clinical problem being managed and communicate that level of care to the client.
10. In the event that a veterinarian chooses to use alternative / complementary methods of diagnosis or treatment within his or her veterinary practice they must inform the client not only of the nature of the alternative treatment offered but also the extent to which it is consistent with conventional medicine, so that the client can make an informed decision about whether to proceed. At all times the welfare of the animal is of paramount consideration.

Glossary

Veterinary emergency

A veterinary emergency is defined as 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.

Clinical practice means any veterinary practice providing clinical services

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

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

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