

Veterinary Practice Veterinary Practitioners Code of Professional Conduct 2018

Notifiable instrument NI2018-726

made under the

Veterinary Practice Act 2018, section 42 (Veterinary practitioners code of professional conduct)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Veterinary Practice Veterinary Practitioners Code of Professional Conduct 2018*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the commencement of the *Veterinary Practice Act 2018*.

3 Approval

The ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board approves the document at Schedule 1 as the ACT Veterinary Practitioners Code of Professional Conduct, setting out the standards of conduct for veterinary practitioners carrying out the practice of veterinary science.

Dr Steven Roberts
President
ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board
19 December 2018

ACT Veterinary Practitioners Code of Professional Conduct

Under Section 42 of the ACT *Veterinary Practice Act 2018* the ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board is authorised to establish a Code of Professional Conduct setting out the standards of conduct for veterinary practitioners carrying on the practice of veterinary science. The information contained in this Notifiable Instrument are to be used as a guideline for veterinary practitioners to follow. Non-adherence or breach of the Code may be grounds for finding of a breach of the Act.

Schedule 1

Basic principles of professional conduct

1. The basic principles of professional conduct for a veterinary practitioner are:
 - a. a primary concern for the welfare of animals, and
 - b. the maintenance of professional standards to the standard expected by:
 - i. other veterinary practitioners; and
 - ii. users of veterinary services; and
 - iii. the public.

Welfare of animals must be considered

1. A veterinary practitioner must at all times consider the welfare of animals when practising veterinary science.

No refusal of pain relief

1. A veterinary practitioner must not refuse to provide relief of pain or suffering to an animal that is in his or her presence (except in the case where there is an unacceptable and unmanageable risk to his/her or others, personal safety).
2. In this clause, relief, in relation to pain or suffering, means:
 - a. first aid treatment; or
 - b. timely referral to another veterinary practitioner; or
 - c. euthanasia, as appropriate.

Knowledge of current standards of practice

1. A veterinary practitioner:
 - a. must maintain knowledge to the current standards of the practice of veterinary science in the areas of veterinary science relevant to his or her practice; and
 - b. must always carry out professional procedures in accordance with those current standards.
2. A veterinary practitioner must base professional decisions on evidence-based science or well- recognised current knowledge and practice, or both.

Utilisation of skills of colleagues

1. A veterinary practitioner must utilise the skills of colleagues, by consultation or referral, where appropriate.

Professional conduct

1. A veterinary practitioner must not mislead, deceive or behave in such a way as to have an adverse effect on the standing of any veterinary practitioner or the veterinary profession.

Informed consent

1. A veterinary practitioner must, where it is practicable to do so, obtain the informed consent of the person responsible for the care of an animal before providing veterinary services to the animal.

Schedule 1

Availability to care for animal

1. A veterinary practitioner must, when accepting an animal for diagnosis or treatment:
 - a. ensure that he or she is available for the ongoing care of the animal;
or
 - b. if he or she will not be so available, make arrangements for another veterinary practitioner to take over the care of the animal.

Referrals and second opinions

1. A veterinary practitioner must not refuse a request by a person responsible for the care of an animal for a referral or second opinion.
2. Specialists and referral practitioners have a responsibility to communicate their procedures, findings, details of any treatments and necessary aftercare back to the referring practitioner.

Provision of records

1. A veterinary practitioner who has previously treated an animal must, when requested to do so, and with the consent of the person responsible for the care of the animal, provide copies or originals of all relevant case history records directly to another veterinary practitioner who has taken over the treatment of the animal.

Return of records

1. A veterinary practitioner to whom another veterinary practitioner has referred an animal for treatment or a second opinion must return records provided by the referring veterinary practitioner as soon as practicable.

Confidentiality

1. Except as otherwise required by this code of conduct, a veterinary practitioner must maintain the confidentiality of information obtained in the course of professional practice.

Skills, knowledge and equipment of assistants

1. A veterinary practitioner must ensure that all persons assisting in the provision of veterinary services to animals in his or her care have the skills, knowledge and available equipment to enable them to perform their duties according to current standards of the practice of veterinary science, except in the case of an emergency.

Compliance with codes or rules of animal sporting organisations

1. A veterinary practitioner must maintain knowledge of and obey any code or rules of an animal sporting organisation when attending on that organisation or working within the industry to which it relates (unless the code or rules are contrary to the Act, this Regulation or any other legislation).

Schedule 1

Records

1. A veterinary practitioner must ensure that a detailed record of any consultation, procedure or treatment is made as soon as is practicable.
2. The record:
 - a. must be legible and in sufficient detail to enable another veterinary practitioner to continue the treatment of the animal; and
 - b. must include the results of any diagnostic tests, analysis and treatments.
3. If a record is altered, the alteration must be clearly identified in the record as such.
4. A veterinary practitioner must ensure that all records of any consultation, procedure or treatment are retained for at least 4 years after they are made.

Fees for veterinary services

1. A veterinary practitioner must, where it is practicable to do so and before providing veterinary services in relation to an animal, inform the person responsible for the care of the animal of:
 - a. the likely extent and outcome of the veterinary services; and
 - b. the estimated cost of those services.

Certification by veterinary practitioners

1. A veterinary practitioner must not certify to any fact within his or her professional expertise or knowledge, or that a veterinary service has been provided, unless the veterinary practitioner has personal knowledge of the fact or has personally provided, or supervised the provision of, the veterinary service concerned.
2. Any certification by a veterinary practitioner must contain such detail as is necessary to ensure that it is complete and accurate and that the meaning is clear.

Correction of genetic defects

1. A veterinary practitioner must not perform a surgical operation for the correction of an inheritable defect, or provide medical treatment for an inheritable disease, unless the primary purpose of the operation or treatment is to relieve or prevent pain or discomfort to the animal concerned.
2. In the case where surgery is performed to correct an inheritable defect, a veterinary practitioner should advise the owner not to breed from the animal.

Special interest areas

1. Before undertaking practice in a particular area of veterinary science, a veterinary practitioner must ensure that he or she has the knowledge and competence necessary to practise in that area.

Schedule 1

Supply of restricted substances

1. A veterinary practitioner may supply restricted substances only:
 - a. to a person responsible for the care of an animal that the veterinary practitioner has physically examined or has under his or her direct care, and only in respect of that animal; or
 - b. to a person responsible for the care of an animal/s, with the written authority of another veterinary practitioner who has physically examined the animal concerned or has it under his or her direct care, and only in respect of that animal.
2. A veterinary practitioner must not obtain any restricted substance medications in order to take that substance himself or herself.
3. A veterinary practitioner should maintain a knowledge of current appropriate antimicrobial prescribing guidelines and prescribe judiciously to minimise the development of antimicrobial resistance.
4. In this clause:

restricted substance means a substance that is specified in Schedule Four or Schedule Eight to the Poisons List proclaimed under the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008*.

Inducements

1. A veterinary practitioner must not provide a referral or recommendation the request for which is accompanied by an inducement to the veterinary practitioner.

Continuing Professional Development

1. All Australian veterinary Boards have agreed, through the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) and the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), on a minimum requirement of 60 CPD points over a consecutive 3 year cycle.
2. At least 15 of the required 60 CPD points must be structured points. The remaining 45 points may be either unstructured points or more structured points.
3. Veterinary practitioners who fail to meet their CPD requirements for any 3 year cycle will be required to address any deficit.
4. The total points for any adjusted current cycle will therefore be the standard requirement plus the deficit from the previous cycle.
5. Validation of CPD activities must be kept for at least 4 years for possible future reference.

Schedule 1

Contents of annual return of veterinary practitioner for Continuing Professional Development

1. Only the points gained during the 12 month return period from 1 April to 31 March are to be recorded in the Annual Return.
2. For the purposes of section 24 (2) (c) of the Act, the following details of continuing professional development undertaken by the veterinary practitioner are prescribed:
 - a. details of any university continuing professional development course relating to the practice of veterinary science undertaken;
 - b. details of any postgraduate course relating to the practice of veterinary science undertaken;
 - c. details of any conference or seminar relating to the practice of veterinary science attended;
 - d. details of any papers presented at any conference or seminar relating to the practice of veterinary science;
 - e. details of any other presentation relating to the practice of veterinary science attended;
 - f. details of any correspondence course relating to the practice of veterinary science completed;
 - g. details of any written assessment test relating to the practice of veterinary science completed;
 - h. details of any paper published in any journals relating to the practice of veterinary science;
 - i. details of any journals relating to the practice of veterinary science read;
 - j. details of any observation of the carrying out of veterinary surgery;
 - k. details of any act of veterinary science done with other veterinary practitioners for the purpose of expanding the veterinary practitioner's knowledge of, or competence in, veterinary science; and
 - l. details of any paper relating to the practice of veterinary science published on an Australian, State or Territory Government website.
3. In the case of a veterinary practitioner who holds specialist registration, details of the extent to which the veterinary practitioner practised in the branch of veterinary science.