

GUIDELINE 4

AFTER HOURS HOSPITALISATION

Registered veterinary practitioners should ensure they are familiar with the contents of this Guideline. The Board considers this Guideline to be the minimum standard expected from a registered veterinary practitioner exercising reasonable skill and care in the course of providing treatment to animals.

Practitioners should read this Guideline in conjunction with the Definitions listed in the introductory pages.

4.1 PREAMBLE

It has long been a commonly accepted practice within the veterinary profession for animals to be hospitalised after hours, often not fully supervised. There is a vast range of medical and surgical conditions that may benefit from after hours hospitalisation. These range from simple convenience situations to critical care cases where movement of the animal may pose significant risk.

4.2 INFORMING THE CLIENT

The client has a right to be fully informed on the benefits that after hours hospitalisation may provide to the animal and owner, the level of supervision that will or could be provided during hospitalisation, the various options available and the costs of these various options.

4.2.1 Options

Options may include:

- (a) no supervision – animal left unattended;
- (b) minimal supervision – scheduled supervised visits by veterinary or nursing staff during the hospitalisation period;
- (c) constant supervision – veterinary or nursing staff to provide constant supervision throughout the hospitalisation period;
- (d) referral to another facility e.g. an after hours emergency centre;
- (e) owner taking the animal home to provide supervision.

Agreement to any of these options constitutes informed consent, and should be noted in the clinical record.

Once the client has been informed of the hospitalisation option(s) available to them at the practice, and has given their informed consent, the registered veterinary practitioner is responsible for ensuring the conditions of the chosen option are met.

4.2.2 Informed Consent

The Board expects that all veterinary practices will adopt protocols to ensure documented informed consent in relation to after hours hospitalisation.

4.2.3 Progress Reports

If an animal is hospitalised overnight or longer, arrangements should be made for the client to receive regular daily progress reports.

4.2.4 Release following anaesthesia

All animals that have been anaesthetised should remain under veterinary care until they are ambulatory.