

GUIDELINE 5

CERTIFICATION

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.

5.1 GENERAL

A high standard of veterinary certification is expected of the veterinary profession, by the Victorian community and for the international reputation of Australia's veterinary services. This not only applies to the formal issuing of Veterinary Certificates, but to various declarations, statements and/or evidence provided by veterinary practitioners in the course of their professional duties (e.g. witness statements, insurance claims).

- 5.1.1 When a veterinary practitioner provides a certificate it must be prepared with honesty, care and accuracy, using terms which are simple and easy to understand and without words or phrases which are capable of more than one interpretation. It must be legible, preferably typewritten or computer generated, or on a pre-printed form. It should bear the date of when the examination or procedure was carried out, the date of issue of the certificate and the name and qualifications, unique registration number (i.e. V5569) and address of the issuing registered veterinary practitioner. A copy should be made and kept in a paper or computer file.
- 5.1.2 **The registered veterinary practitioner should only certify those matters that are within the practitioner's own knowledge and that can be ascertained by him/her personally.** Matters known to other persons such as the farmer, breeder, trainer or truck driver should be subject to declaration by those persons, not the veterinary practitioner.
- 5.1.3 The certificate should not contain any matters that may raise questions of a possible conflict of interest. Any potential conflict of interest must be disclosed in advance to the person requesting the certificate. Examples of such conflict include provision of certification for the veterinary practitioner's own or family animals, or a pre-purchase examination where the practitioner has an undisclosed veterinarian-client relationship with the vendor. Also see Guideline 16.
- 5.1.4 The certificate should clearly and accurately identify the animal or animals that are the subject of the certificate, so that there can be no doubt to which animal or animals the certificate applies.
- 5.1.5 Where appropriate, the certificate may indicate a time period for which the certificate will remain valid.

- 5.1.6 The certificate should be completed and issued within a reasonable time period (maximum 14 days) from the time of examination of the animal. The certificate should specify the date of any examination, test or procedure on which the certificate relies.
- 5.1.7 Certificates should be issued and presented in the original. Where a duplicate certificate is made for any valid reason it must be clearly marked "duplicate" before issue.
- 5.1.8 Certificates should be produced on one sheet of paper or, if more than one page is required, in such a form that any two or more pages are part of an integrated whole and indivisible.
- 5.1.9 Registered veterinary practitioners should read thoroughly and consider carefully all the implications of a certificate tendered by a client or a third party for signature, and in such circumstances should test the statements made in such a certificate against the recommendations of these Guidelines.
- 5.1.10 Provision of inaccurate, misleading, false or fraudulent certification can have serious consequences for veterinary practitioners such as
- penalties or sanctions for negligence under common law
 - liability for consequences (e.g. disease spread) under trade practices legislation,
 - criminal proceedings for fraudulent activities
 - professional misconduct under the Veterinary Practice Act (1997).

5.2 VACCINATION RECORD (CERTIFICATES) FOR DOGS AND CATS

A vaccination record (certificate) should be issued for all dogs and cats that are vaccinated, including individuals in litters. A vaccination record cannot be regarded as certification of the health of an animal. The record should include:

- (a) date
- (b) breed or type;
- (c) sex of the animal;
- (d) its known or approximate age, or date of birth;
- (e) colour;
- (f) any other obvious features which will aid identification;
- (g) the number of the microchip (if the animal is microchipped);
- (h) the name of the owner at the time of the vaccination (this may be a breeder or pet shop);
- (i) vaccine batch numbers ;
- (j) the name and address of the veterinary practitioner and veterinary practice;
- (k) the signature of the veterinary practitioner;
- (l) the unique registration number of the veterinary practitioner (i.e. V5569).

Practitioners should also ensure that this information is included in the clinical record for the animal.

5.3 PROFORMA VACCINATION CARDS

Proforma cards or generic practice vaccination forms commonly referred to as vaccination certificates may not be used for legal purposes including export certification.

5.4 PROFORMA CERTIFICATES

Often proforma certificates are provided by associations or accreditation groups for specific certification purposes, such as insurance, pre-purchase examinations or animal status levels. It is recommended that these forms be used and completed in full. Any sections not completed should be neatly ruled off to minimise the opportunity for details to be added by a third party after issue.