

GUIDELINE 17

PROVISION OF SERVICES ACROSS BORDERS AND TO REMOTE CLIENTS

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.

17 PREAMBLE

Australian veterinarians are increasingly providing professional services in more than one state or territory. With electronic means of communication such as the internet, the ability to provide certain services to people and their animals located remotely from the veterinarian is becoming increasingly available and practicable.

There are both legal and professional responsibilities that veterinarians need to be mindful of when operating in such an environment.

All the usual legal and professional obligations of veterinary practitioners apply to the provision of any veterinary-related service by remote means.

17.1 PROVIDING SERVICES ACROSS JURISDICTIONAL BORDERS

17.1.1 While legislation varies between jurisdictions, all states and territories restrict veterinary practice including the possession and supply of drugs and/or the use of veterinary title, to registered veterinary practitioners. **Practitioners providing veterinary services in any state or territory are required to be registered in that state or territory.** Mutual recognition legislation in Australia ensures that once a person is registered as a veterinary practitioner in one jurisdiction, they are eligible for registration in all or any other Australian jurisdictions. However registration still has to be applied for and legally granted in another state or territory before a person can provide a veterinary service, supply restricted drugs or use a veterinary title in that state or territory.

17.1.2 Provision of veterinary services while unregistered may void a veterinarian's professional indemnity insurance. There are other legal obligations such as notification of prescribed diseases to state authorities, and protection under animal cruelty legislation that can only be fulfilled by veterinary registration

17.1.3 By agreement between the jurisdictions, practitioners already registered in their "home" state or territory may now apply for "secondary registration" in other jurisdictions and pay a significantly reduced registration fee.

17.2 REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR REMOTE CONSULTATIONS

17.2.1 Where a veterinary consultation or the provision of professional advice occurs remotely by electronic means, it is the view of the Board that the veterinary service

or act of veterinary medicine occurs where the animal patient is located. If the animal is located in another jurisdiction, the practitioner must be registered in that other jurisdiction. As a general rule therefore, a veterinarian providing a veterinary service by remote means must be registered in the place where the animal patient is located.

17.2.2 Registered Victorian veterinary practitioners with primary care of an animal, may seek advice and/or services from a veterinary practitioner registered in another jurisdiction without that veterinary practitioner being registered in Victoria, provided that the veterinary practitioner registered in Victoria continues to provide the primary on-going care for that animal.

17.3 SUPPLY OF DRUGS ASSOCIATED WITH A REMOTE CONSULTATION.

17.3.1 Veterinarians have specific and important legal and professional obligations when supplying restricted drugs. Veterinarians can only supply restricted drugs for animals clearly under their care and for which they have established a therapeutic need. Guideline 6 provides comprehensive information and guidance on this important area of veterinary practice, and applies to the supply of restricted drugs following either a conventional or 'remote' professional consultation. Supply of restricted drugs via an internet interface must meet all the requirements of the "Total Professional Service" principles detailed in Guideline 6, and the associated *Dispensing Checklist*.

17.3.2 When a restricted veterinary drug is supplied by a veterinarian as the result of an electronic consultation, the Board considers that the act of supply occurs where the veterinarian is located, ie the veterinarian must be registered in the jurisdiction in which they are located at the time of supply of the drugs.

17.3.3 In summary, it is the view of the Board that a veterinary practitioner providing professional services by remote means must be registered both in the jurisdiction in which he or she is located, and in the jurisdiction in which the animal patient is located. All the usual legal and professional obligations of veterinary practitioners apply to the provision of any veterinary-related service by remote means.