



PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Veterinary practitioners are required to comply with all legal obligations relevant to their practice.

The exercise of professional conduct requires a high standard of ethics and behaviour by veterinary practitioners who in so doing contribute to, and benefit from, the standing of the profession as a whole.

Professional conduct includes adherence to these guidelines and to a range of other rules and standards published by relevant authorities that impact on the activities of veterinary practitioners.

In doing so, veterinary practitioners can demonstrate that they have exercised reasonable skill, care, and ethics in the course of dealing with animals, clients and other practitioners.

Updated July 2009

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GUIDELINES

These Guidelines are issued by the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria from time to time for the consideration of registered veterinary practitioners. The Board considers these Guidelines to be the minimum standard expected from a registered veterinary practitioner exercising reasonable skill and care in the course of providing treatment to animals.

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GUIDELINES

Definitions:

After Hours Service

After Hours Service refers to the availability of a registered veterinary practitioner to the public outside of his or her advertised normal hours of business. It is expected that all veterinary businesses providing a clinical service to the public should make some provision for after hours service, whether that be by making available a registered veterinary practitioner to provide direct after hours service, or whether it is by making and facilitating appropriate redirection arrangements with an alternative agreeable registered veterinary practitioner located within reasonable proximity.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises if there exists:

- * a conflict between one person's own interests and that of another person or body;
- * a conflict between a person's differing obligations to two or more other people;
- * the appearance of such a conflict

Direct Supervision

Direct Supervision means ongoing, continuous and direct personal supervision by a registered veterinary practitioner. The supervising registered veterinary practitioner must be on the same premises, or in the case of a visit, must accompany the person being supervised.

Powers of the Board

Section 62 (1) (e) of the Veterinary Practice Act 1997 states the Board's designated functions include "to issue guidelines about appropriate standards of veterinary practice and veterinary facilities".

Professional Interest Practitioner

A practitioner who does not hold endorsement as a veterinary specialist - for example "*Professional Interest Practitioner in Dermatology*"

Registered Veterinary Practitioner

A registered veterinary practitioner is a person registered by the Board under the Veterinary Practice Act 1997, whether or not the registration for that person is general or specific.

Specialists

A specialist is a registered veterinary practitioner who holds endorsement as a veterinary specialist (Veterinary Practice Act 1997, S8). Specialists may function as primary access veterinarians but also provide a vital service to referring registered veterinary practitioners. The specialist status of this service implies increased standards not only in animal care but also in the specialist's relationship with other registered veterinary practitioners.

24 Hour Contact

24 hour contact refers to providing a telephone contact number at which the public can receive either care or advice or redirection to an available emergency service at all hours. The use of a commercial call answering service or an answering machine which provides details of how a client may obtain prompt veterinary attention are suitable means of contact. An answering machine which provides no on-calling telephone number for the public to receive a prompt answer to their calls, or which the registered veterinary practitioner does not frequently check for messages during the out of hours period does not qualify as a means of "24 hour contact", or as a means of after hours service.

24 Hour Service

24 hour service refers to the availability of a registered veterinary practitioner from the practice being outside of normal working hours to attend to after-hour calls or hospitalised animals within the context of the practice (not by redirecting after-hours calls to an emergency service). The registered veterinary practitioner is not required to be physically in the clinic at all hours unless the business is so advertised.

Unprofessional Conduct

Unprofessional conduct as defined in S3 of the Veterinary Practice Act 1997 includes (but is not limited to) the following points which have relevance to the issue of Guidelines:

- a) professional conduct which is of a lesser standard than that which the public might reasonably expect of a registered veterinary practitioner;
- b) professional conduct which is of a lesser standard than that which might reasonably be expected of a veterinary practitioner by his or her peers;
- c) professional misconduct;
- d) infamous conduct in a professional respect;
- e) providing veterinary services of a kind that are excessive, unnecessary or not reasonably required for an animal's well-being;

In the case of an allegation of unprofessional conduct made by one registered veterinary practitioner against another, the Board will consider whether the welfare of an animal or client is at stake when determining how to proceed. Employment-based disputes should primarily be pursued through mediation or the relevant Industrial Relations services unless there is a clear impact on the public or the welfare of animals.

Veterinary Practice

The Veterinary Practice Act 1997 (S3) defines "veterinary practice" as the practice of veterinary surgery and veterinary medicine.