

Introduction

A veterinary practitioner must only perform major surgery (any procedure which according to current standards requires a general anaesthetic or involves a spinal anaesthetic) in premises that are licensed as a veterinary hospital for the type of major surgery being performed.

Exceptions to this requirement exist if the procedure performed was an emergency, if it was impractical due to the size or type of the animal, or if it was dangerous to the health of the animal to move it to a veterinary hospital.

The Veterinary Practitioners Board (Board) issues licences based on an assessment that the premises for the proposed veterinary hospital will be able to provide acceptable levels of care in accordance with current standards for animals before, during and after major surgery. This guideline outlines the minimum requirements for provision of acceptable levels of care. Moreover, premises must be assessed as fit for purpose and conditions may be imposed by the Board in order to limit the types of major surgery which may be performed.

The Board must refuse to grant a licence unless the applicant is a veterinary practitioner or is a corporation or firm in which one or more veterinary practitioners has or have a controlling interest, or is a corporation or firm exempted from this requirement in the *Veterinary Practice Act 2003*.

All premises that are licensed by the Board are referred to as veterinary hospitals.

Types of Licences

The Board issues three main types of licences:

1. Small animal hospital licence
2. Large animal hospital licence
3. Mixed practice hospital licence

Small animals are considered to include dogs, cats, small mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and some wildlife. The minimum requirements for a small animal hospital licence focus on those required for the provision of care for dogs and cats before, during and after major surgery and in accordance with current standards. The performance of major surgery on other animal species is possible if the superintendent is able to demonstrate facilities and equipment fit for this purpose.

Large animals are considered to include Equidae, ruminants, pigs, deer, camelids and some wildlife. The minimum requirements for a large animal hospital licence focus on those required for the provision of care for horses before, during and after major surgery in accordance with current standards. The performance of major surgery on other animal species is possible if the superintendent is able to demonstrate facilities and equipment fit for this purpose.

A mixed practice hospital licence must meet the requirements for a small animal hospital licence and include additional facilities and equipment fit for the purpose of limited types of surgery on large animals as described in this guideline.

General Requirements

1. Licensed premises must be fit for purpose and specifically for the type of major surgery to be performed on the species of animal.
2. The Board may impose conditions on a licence limiting the types of major surgery that can be performed to ensure fitness for purpose.
3. All hospitals must be managed by a superintendent who is a veterinary practitioner.
4. All hospital equipment and fittings must be suitable for purpose, adequate for the needs of the hospital and anyone using this equipment must be adequately trained. All equipment must be appropriately maintained in accordance with the advice of the manufacturer.

5. Facilities and equipment for creating, storing, viewing, provision and retaining of detailed records of any consultation, procedure or treatment in accordance with veterinary practice legislation
6. A sign specifying the type of licence is issued by the Board and this must be displayed in a location that would reasonably be expected to be seen by clients entering the premises.

Specific Requirements

1. General physical facilities

- i. Good condition with the immediate surrounding areas, exterior and the interior of the premises maintained in a clean, orderly and sanitary condition
- ii. Designed and constructed so as to prevent the escape of an animal brought into the premises and to ensure the effective confinement of that animal at all times including self closing devices on doors entering and exiting the premises
- iii. The premises must be a permanent area with no other uses or a permanent area appropriately separated by an internal barrier to ensure security, appropriate disease control measures, and clear delineation of facilities, equipment and staff between the two businesses
- iv. Adequate floor space for the separation of functions and efficient operation of all activity areas
- v. Internal walls and floors that can be easily cleaned and disinfected, adequate ventilation and must be free from offensive odours
- vi. Ventilation and equipment for adequately heating and cooling the interior of the hospital if required to ensure client and patient comfort in terms of temperature and air quality
- vii. Sanitary and aesthetic disposal of all wastes and excreta, cadavers and sharps at intervals to avoid the generation of offensive odours, offensive appearance and health hazards

2. Reception and waiting area

- i. For a small animal hospital and a mixed practice hospital licence:
 - a. A single purpose area of a size and design and with appropriate seating capacity
 - b. Equipment for weighing animals located in this or another area of the hospital
- ii. For a large animal and mixed practice hospital licence:
 - a. Sufficient area to facilitate the safe loading and unloading of large animals and movement of vehicles
 - b. Suitable form of stable or secure yard to hold animals on admission

3. Consultation area

- i. For a small animal hospital and a mixed practice hospital licence a single purpose separate room with adequate lighting for carrying out examinations of small animals equipped with:
 - a. An examination table that is capable of being easily cleaned and disinfected
 - b. A suitable hand wash basin supplied with hot and cold running water
 - c. Instruments and equipment necessary to conduct thorough clinical examinations of animals.
- ii. For a large animal and mixed practice hospital licence
 - a. Secure grassed or suitably surfaced area where horses can be safely examined and which can be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected if needed
 - b. Where warranted by the type of examination to be conducted a set of examination stocks and/or crush

4. Pharmacy and drug storage

- i. A separate area within the premises that is not accessible to the public for the storage of restricted substances (S4 and S8 medications)
- ii. The area must be capable of providing a standard of security for restricted substances as required by the relevant legislation
- iii. A range of restricted substances adequate for the range of procedures undertaken and appropriate for veterinary treatment of animals in accordance with current standards
- iv. The area must be suitable for the storage of restricted substances in accordance with the requirements of the manufacturer including a refrigerator for cold storage as required which is not used for food, drink or noxious samples
- v. Facilities and equipment for recording the purchase and use, and labelling of restricted substances as required by the relevant legislation
- vi. Secure storage of euthanasia solution
- vii. A stocktake of S8 substances is performed at least twice yearly, March and September, and when a veterinarian takes over the role of superintendent for a period of one month or more
- viii. Access to restricted substances limited to only when a veterinarian is on the premises unless authorised in accordance with poisons and therapeutic goods legislation

5. Surgery area

- i. For a small animal hospital and a mixed practice hospital licence:
 - a. A separate surgical room for small animals which is not a thoroughfare
- ii. For a large animal hospital licence:
 - a. A suitable building or separate room free from dust and totally enclosed
 - b. Allowing for safety to animals and personnel and facilitate easy and proper sterilisation
- iii. For a mixed practice hospital licence:
 - a. Secure, grassed or suitably surfaced area fit for the purpose of performing minor surgical procedures on horses and which can be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected
- iv. Adequate instrumentation for the competent performance of surgery
- v. Surgical table of impervious material which can be readily cleaned and disinfected
- vi. Surgical lighting in addition to room lighting
- vii. All furniture and equipment capable of being cleaned, disinfected or sterilised
- viii. All surgical procedures to be carried out under sterile operative conditions within the surgery room. No unnecessary equipment permitted in the surgery room
- ix. Surgery room is not to be used for any other purpose
- x. An area for personal pre-surgical preparation separate from the surgical room
- xi. Equipment available for performing intubation, providing oxygen, administration of fluid therapy, maintenance of body temperature, provision of gaseous anaesthesia, scavenging of waste gases and monitoring of anaesthesia in accordance with current standards
- xii. Anaesthetic recovery area which is a separate area to allow for the constant monitoring of recovery animals, with readily accessible emergency equipment, and which can be readily cleaned and disinfected, and:
 - a. For large animal hospital licences is suitably padded or protected and designed for both animal and personnel safety
 - b. For mixed practice hospital licences is a separate stable or secure yard designed for both animal and personnel safety

6. Treatment and Preparation area

- i. Separate area suitably equipped for the pre-surgical preparation and treatment of hospitalised patients
- ii. An autoclave capable of properly sterilising all surgical instruments and drapes used by the hospital
- iii. Inhalational anaesthetic system available
- iv. Facilities for bathing and grooming of in-patients

7. Laboratory facilities

- i. A separate area with adequate bench and shelf space
- ii. A refrigerator for the storage of laboratory requirements and samples as appropriate and which may be used for the storage of restricted substances
- iii. Facilities for the simple examination of blood, serum, urine and faecal specimens in addition to demonstrable access and usage of a professional service in haematology, chemistry, bacteriology, parasitology and pathology if these services are not carried out on premises

8. Imaging facilities

- i. Radiographic equipment and facilities for the taking, processing and viewing of radiographs and capable of producing radiographs of diagnostic quality appropriate to the range and size of animals seen at the hospital
- ii. Radiographs identified with the name of the practitioner or hospital, client, animal, date and identifying the left and/or right sides of the animal
- iii. Appropriate licences held for equipment and persons taking radiographs as required by the relevant legislation
- iv. Personal monitoring dosimeter must be issued to persons working in equine veterinary radiography and should be issued to all occupationally exposed persons

9. Patient accommodation

- i. Facilities must be adequate in number and size for the species of animals to be individually accommodated
- ii. Constructed of solid impervious material free from rust, readily cleaned and disinfected, adequately drained and maintained in sanitary condition so as to ensure comfort
- iii. Equipped with adequate lighting, heating and/or cooling, ventilation and soundproofing for patient comfort and as required by other relevant legislation
- iv. Processes for the safe and secure exercising and toileting of patients and which are appropriate for the number and species of animals seen at the hospital
- v. Facilities for the storage and preparation of food for consumption by animals and this area must be separated from other areas of the hospital, be free of vermin, and be capable of being easily cleaned and disinfected

10. Disease Control areas

- i. Patient accommodation compliant with general requirements and available for isolating animals that are suffering from suspected infectious diseases providing a physical and air space difference from all other areas of the hospital so as to prevent the spread of disease to those other areas
- ii. There must be a written infection control plan based on current standards for personal biosecurity and including coverage of personal protective actions and equipment, protective actions during veterinary procedures, environmental infection control, and employee health
- iii. Contaminated surgical procedures and necropsies performed under strict disease control conditions in a dedicated area

11. Amenities

- i. Office facilities convenient to staff and clients
- ii. A library containing up-to-date reference material in either hard or soft copy and including access to internet based resources which cover the range of animals and conditions seen at the hospital.