



# Veterinary Practitioners Code of Professional Conduct

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The Veterinary Practitioners Code of Professional Conduct is located in the *Veterinary Practice Regulation 2013* (schedule 2). The Code is reviewed every 5 years under the NSW Government's staged repeal program.

## 1 Basic principles of professional conduct

The basic principles of professional conduct for a veterinary practitioner are:

- (a) a primary concern for the welfare of animals, and
- (b) the maintenance of professional standards to the standard expected by:
  - (i) other veterinary practitioners, and
  - (ii) users of veterinary services, and
  - (iii) the public.

## 2 Welfare of animals must be considered

A veterinary practitioner must at all times consider the welfare of animals when practising veterinary science.

## 3 No refusal of pain relief

- (1) A veterinary practitioner must not refuse to provide relief of pain or suffering to an animal that is in his or her presence.
- (2) In this clause, *relief*, in relation to pain or suffering, means:
  - (a) first aid treatment, or
  - (b) timely referral to another veterinary practitioner, or
  - (c) euthanasia,as appropriate.

## 4 Knowledge of current standards of practice

- (1) A veterinary practitioner:
  - (a) must maintain knowledge to the current standards of the practice of veterinary science in the areas of veterinary science relevant to his or her practice, and
  - (b) must always carry out professional procedures in accordance with those current standards.
- (2) A veterinary practitioner must base professional decisions on evidence-based science or well-recognised current knowledge and practice, or both.

## 5 Utilisation of skills of colleagues

A veterinary practitioner must utilise the skills of colleagues, by consultation or referral, where appropriate.

## 6 Professional conduct

A veterinary practitioner must not mislead, deceive or behave in such a way as to have an adverse effect on the standing of any veterinary practitioner or the veterinary profession.

## 7 Informed consent

A veterinary practitioner must, where it is practicable to do so, obtain the informed consent of the person responsible for the care of an animal before providing veterinary services to the animal.



### 8 Availability to care for animal

A veterinary practitioner must, when accepting an animal for diagnosis or treatment:

- (a) ensure that he or she is available for the ongoing care of the animal, or
- (b) if he or she will not be so available, make arrangements for another veterinary practitioner to take over the care of the animal.

### 9 Referrals and second opinions

A veterinary practitioner must not refuse a request by a person responsible for the care of an animal for a referral or second opinion.

### 10 Provision of records

A veterinary practitioner who has previously treated an animal must, when requested to do so, and with the consent of the person responsible for the care of the animal, provide copies or originals of all relevant case history records directly to another veterinary practitioner who has taken over the treatment of the animal.

### 11 Return of records

A veterinary practitioner to whom another veterinary practitioner has referred an animal for treatment or a second opinion must return records provided by the referring veterinary practitioner as soon as practicable.

### 12 Confidentiality

Except as otherwise required by this code of conduct, a veterinary practitioner must maintain the confidentiality of information obtained in the course of professional practice.

### 13 Skills, knowledge and equipment of assistants

A veterinary practitioner must ensure that all persons assisting in the provision of veterinary services to animals in his or her care have the skills, knowledge and available equipment to enable them to perform their duties according to current standards of the practice of veterinary science, except in the case of an emergency.

### 14 Compliance with codes or rules of animal sporting organisations

A veterinary practitioner must maintain knowledge of and obey any code or rules of an animal sporting organisation when attending on that organisation or working within the industry to which it relates (unless the code or rules are contrary to the Act, this Regulation or any other legislation).

### 15 Records

- (1) A veterinary practitioner must ensure that a detailed record of any consultation, procedure or treatment is made as soon as is practicable.
- (2) The record:
  - (a) must be legible and in sufficient detail to enable another veterinary practitioner to continue the treatment of the animal, and
  - (b) must include the results of any diagnostic tests, analysis and treatments.
- (3) If a record is altered, the alteration must be clearly identified in the record as such.
- (4) A veterinary practitioner must ensure that all records of any consultation, procedure or treatment are retained for at least 3 years after they are made.



### 16 Fees for veterinary services

A veterinary practitioner must, where it is practicable to do so and before providing veterinary services in relation to an animal, inform the person responsible for the care of the animal of:

- (a) the likely extent and outcome of the veterinary services, and
- (b) the estimated cost of those services.

### 17 Certification by veterinary practitioners

- (1) A veterinary practitioner must not certify to any fact within his or her professional expertise or knowledge, or that a veterinary service has been provided, unless the veterinary practitioner has personal knowledge of the fact or has personally provided, or supervised the provision of, the veterinary service concerned.
- (2) Any certification by a veterinary practitioner must contain such detail as is necessary to ensure that it is complete and accurate and that the meaning is clear.

### 18 Correction of genetic defects

A veterinary practitioner must not perform a surgical operation for the correction of an inheritable defect, or provide medical treatment for an inheritable disease, unless the primary purpose of the operation or treatment is to relieve or prevent pain or discomfort to the animal concerned.

### 19 Special interest areas

Before undertaking practice in a particular area of veterinary science, a veterinary practitioner must ensure that he or she has the knowledge and competence necessary to practise in that area.

### 20 Supply of restricted substances

- (1) A veterinary practitioner may supply restricted substances only:
  - (a) to a person responsible for the care of an animal that the veterinary practitioner has physically examined or has under his or her direct care, and only in respect of that animal, or
  - (b) to a person responsible for the care of the animal, with the written authority of another veterinary practitioner who has physically examined the animal concerned or has it under his or her direct care, and only in respect of that animal.
- (2) A veterinary practitioner must not obtain any restricted substance medications in order to take that substance himself or herself.
- (3) In this clause:  
**restricted substance** means a substance that is specified in Schedule Four or Schedule Eight to the Poisons List proclaimed under the [Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966](#).

### 21 Inducements

A veterinary practitioner must not provide a referral or recommendation the request for which is accompanied by an inducement to the veterinary practitioner.