



THE COLLEGE OF
VETERINARIANS
OF ONTARIO

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE STANDARD

Advertising

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Introduction

Veterinarians may undertake marketing activities that are in compliance with this Professional Practice Standard to improve the viability of their practices. However as professionals, veterinarians are held to a high standard. Advertising by veterinarians should convey professionalism as it can affect the public perception of, and respect for, the entire profession of veterinary medicine.

This Professional Practice Standard has been developed to assist veterinarians in understanding their legal and professional responsibilities pertaining to issues of advertising without restricting veterinarians' business practice freedom where it is neither warranted nor the role of the College.

Definitions

Advertising: Advertising is a mode of marketing that might be defined as any message communicated in any public medium (print, internet, television, radio, etc) that is used for the purpose of promoting a member's professional services, goods, practice, or image.

Ancillary services: Ancillary services refer to boarding, grooming, funeral services and sales of foods, supplies and other goods and services used by or with animals that is provided by a member whether as part of, or separately from, his or her practice of veterinary medicine.

Client: Client means, with respect to a veterinarian, the owner of an animal(s), group of animals, or herd(s) that the veterinarian is treating, an authorized representative of the owner, or an individual who the veterinarian reasonably determines is acting in the interest of the animal.

Marketing: In very general terms, marketing is the activity of promoting one's services to members of the general public or any segment of the public. Examples of marketing include (but are not limited to) advertising (see below), making public appearances, issuing press releases, participating in directory listings, and distributing brochures and business cards.

Testimonial: In the context of advertising, a testimonial is a statement from a client, former client, or other person that is solicited (directly or indirectly) by a veterinarian and used in an advertisement for the purpose of demonstrating esteem, admiration, gratitude, or praise for services provided by or experiences with the practice.

Practice Expectations

A veterinarian meets the Professional Practice Standard: Advertising when he/she:

1. Ensures that any communication that he or she permits to be published, displayed, distributed, or used relating to his or her professional or ancillary services or to his or her association with, or employment by, any person adheres to the advertising provisions in Regulation 1093 and this Standard.
2. Understands that he or she may advertise the professional services he or she provides, and any ancillary services, provided that the information in the advertisement:
 - is factual, verifiable, accurate and comprehensible;
 - is not false, misleading or deceptive;
 - contains no testimonials;
 - contains no comparisons to, or claims of superiority over, another member's practice or expertise;
 - contains no endorsement or promotion of specific products, brands of products, brand-name drugs or third-party service providers; and
 - could not reasonably be regarded by members as likely to demean the integrity or dignity of the profession or to bring the profession into disrepute.
3. Does not make a misrepresentation to a client or prospective client.

4. Does not make a claim respecting the utility of any remedy, treatment, device or procedure other than a claim which can reasonably be supported as professional opinion.
5. Does not guarantee a cure, or make a statement which a client would reasonably understand as a guarantee of a cure.
6. Does not engage in conduct that may be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional or conduct unbecoming a veterinarian.

Legislative Authority

R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 1093: General, s. 1, 17(1)(8), 17(1)(9), 17(1)(10), 17(1)(44), 17(1)(45), 35, 36 (*Veterinarians Act*)

Other References

The following can be found on the College's website at www.cvo.org:

Policy Statement: Steering

College publications contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all Ontario veterinarians in the care of their patients and in the practice of the profession. College publications are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained. The College encourages you to refer to the website (www.cvo.org) to ensure you are referring to the most recent version of any document.