



SPEAKING FRANKLY

A Report on the Public Community Reference Panel

May 2023

BACKGROUND

As a component of its Strategy 2020 objectives, the Council of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario formed a public advisory panel to assist with its work. The Public Community Reference Panel is the second iteration of this group which has now existed since 2017. The Public Community Reference Panel's specific mandate includes:

- to provide early advice to the College on emerging policy matters
- to provide feedback on the clarity of draft policy to the general public
- to provide input on the public communication strategy
- to identify emerging trends related to the animals, animal care and public perspective

The panel is intended to meet at least three times a year, once face-to-face with Council.

This report summarizes key areas discussed by the panel at its most recent meeting in May 2023 and outlines opportunities for College consideration.

KEY AREAS

(A) Navigator Role

The College was interested in hearing the Panel's initial reactions to the ongoing pilot project of an Investigations and Hearings Navigator. Comments from the Panel included:

- To minimize burnout of the Navigator, additional conflict resolution training is encouraged.
- The role is critical for conflict resolution.
- Similar programs in other areas have been a success.
- General support for the pilot project.

(B) Compassion in Regulation

The College was interested in hearing from the Panel how it currently perceives the College and what changes it believes could be made to assist with the goal of regulating with care and compassion. Panel members were provided with a series of existing web pages and publications for consideration. Comments from the Panel included:

- Web page examples seem neutral in tone, but do not display a lack of care.

- Newsletter example depicts compassion and care very well.
- Filing a complaint web page is clear, and the infographic is helpful.
- Suggestions to clarify the different ways a complaint can be filed (mail, fax, email).
- Showing care and compassion in writing is difficult.

(C) Access to Pharmacies

The College was interested in understanding the Panel's awareness of the requirement for veterinarians to, if requested, provide clients with prescriptions to have filled at a pharmacy as an alternative to having the medication(s) dispensed from a veterinary clinic. Comments from the Panel included:

- Majority of the Panel is aware of this requirement.
- Requesting prescriptions to be sent to a pharmacy is less common in large animal practice.
- Average person may not know of this requirement.
- Clinics do not make this requirement common knowledge.
- Consistency across clinics is lacking.

(D) Trends for Consideration

Panel members have the opportunity to raise any current trends or issues within the veterinary sector that they believe should be raised for the College's consideration. Comments from the Panel included:

- Telus has started to offer telemedicine veterinary services in Ontario.
- Multiple professions are aware of the open consultation on the *Veterinarians Act*.
- Recent [CBC Radio program](#) related to the shortage of veterinarians.

SUMMARY

The Council is grateful to the members of the advisory panel for their candid comments and willingness to engage with the profession as it aims to instill confidence in veterinary regulation. All information and identified opportunities will be considered for both immediate and future planning.