



SPEAKING FRANKLY

A Report on the Public Community Reference Panel

February 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. Due to the pandemic, temporary amendments to this approach have been made.

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

KEY AREAS

(A) Open Consultation: *Veterinarians Act*

The College was interested in sharing details about its ongoing work related to the modernization of the *Veterinarians Act* that was announced by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in November 2022. Comments from the Panel included:

- There is an opportunity for RVTs to be more involved in large animal practice
- Timely changes considering ongoing shortages
- Changes could aid the process of licensing internationally trained veterinarians
- May strengthen veterinary teams

(B) Returning to In-person Meetings with College Council

In previous years, before the COVID-19 pandemic, College Council welcomed the Public Community Reference Panel to one in-person meeting annually to engage in discussion. College staff were interested in hearing the Panel's feelings about returning to one in-person meeting with Council each year. Comments from the Panel included:

- Returning to in-person once annually was welcomed by the Panel



(C) Veterinary Dentistry – Radiography Requirements

The College recently began the process of reviewing the *Professional Practice Standard: Veterinary Dentistry* (PPS) following discussion centered around whether radiography (i.e., x-ray equipment) should be mandatory for all veterinary facilities who offer veterinary dentistry services. The College was interested in hearing thoughts on this potential requirement. Comments from the Panel included:

- Lack of awareness about the requirements for dental radiographs
- Clients may face limitations based on cost of radiographs
- Concerns for missing issues by not having radiographs
- Expectation in equine to have dental radiographs

(D) The Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR)

The College was interested in hearing the Panel's insight on how best to circulate and clarify the information found in the updated *Professional Practice Standard: Establishing, Maintaining and Discontinuing the Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship* with the public. Comments from the Panel included:

- A document with the main points of the relationship would be helpful
- A welcome kit for new clients may be effective
- Materials cannot be exclusively at the clinic
 - In large animal, the veterinarian needs to bring materials to the farm with them
- Starting the relationship with a conversation helps everyone understand its parameters

(E) 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:

- Recruiting professionals for practice in Northern Ontario is difficult
- Latest [online article](#) in Slate on mental health of veterinarians
- Increased equine animal welfare issues

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.