

Summary of Discipline Committee Hearing



DR. EUGENE ALEXEEV

Hearing Dates: July 22, 23 and 24, 2014

FINDINGS OF PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT

- failed to recognize an early corneal sequestration
- failed to properly treat the cat's left eye
- failed to follow up with his clients on a timely basis
- failed to refer the cat to an ophthalmologist on a timely basis
- failing to maintain the standard of practice of the profession
- an act or omission relevant to the practice of veterinary medicine that, having regard to the circumstances, would be regarded by members as unprofessional

BRIEF SUMMARY

The client purchased a female Persian cat from the member's spouse, a breeder. The member first treated the cat three months later for a nasal discharge. A month after that, the member went to the client's home to examine the cat who was experiencing repeated squinting, stickiness, irritation and brown discharge from the left eye. The member diagnosed conjunctivitis of the left eye, with a number of possible causes. The member prescribed topical ophthalmic tetracycline to be applied to the left eye twice a day for 14 days.

The client asked the member to see the cat again two months later for discolouration of the left cornea. The member examined both eyes as the right eye was showing signs of conjunctivitis.

The member's records state he performed Schirmer Tear Tests on both of the cat's eyes to rule out Keratoconjunctivitis Sicca (KCS), and that both eyes had readings of 5 mm. The records also document Fluorescein staining of both corneas which ruled out corneal ulceration.

The member diagnosed conjunctivitis in the right eye. With respect to the left eye, the member noted yellow-brown discolourization of the left cornea which he said could be the result of the administration of tetracycline. He prescribed Optimyxin cream twice a day to the right eye for 10 days. Treatment of the left eye with tetracycline was discontinued.

The member saw the cat again a month later and diagnosed corneal sequestra in both eyes. He then arranged for an ophthalmic referral.

PLEA AND DECISION

The member pleaded not guilty to all allegations.

PENALTY

- Reprimand
- Suspension of the member's licence to practise veterinary medicine for two months, six weeks to be suspended if the member completes a two-day ophthalmology refresher course or mentoring sessions with a mentor specializing in ophthalmology
- Imposing a condition and limitation on the member's licence that the member is required to complete a two-day ophthalmology refresher course or mentoring sessions with a mentor specializing in ophthalmology.
- The member will pay costs to the College of \$3,000.
- Pursuant to legislation, this matter is published including the member's name

PANEL'S REASONING

The panel found the member considered topical tetracycline administration to be one possible cause of the discolouration found in the cat's left eye. The member also considered corneal ulcer and conjunctivitis in his assessment, thus he did not definitively attribute the discolouration to tetracycline administration.

The College's expert witness and the member who treated the cat both testified that given the predilection of the Persian breed to corneal sequestrum, this should have been considered by the member during his examination.

The panel found the member had two opportunities to diagnose corneal sequestrum. A reasonably prudent practitioner should have considered corneal sequestrum among the rule outs initially, particularly given the Persian breed's predilection to the condition. The member recognized corneal sequestrum but the panel did not find the lesion to be reasonably considered as "early" by this point. The veterinarian who saw the cat at the member's

referral said the corneal sequestrum in the left eye was "fairly large" and "more advanced", too advanced to treat conservatively without surgery.

The panel found the member treated the cat's left eye appropriately at the initial appointment (tetracycline for conjunctivitis) and again several months later (immediate ophthalmologic referral), however the treatment of the left eye, at the second eye examination appointment, was inappropriate.

The panel was not convinced that there was scientific evidence supporting or rejecting any association of brown discolouration with topical ophthalmologic use of tetracycline. While the member believed that such an association was possible and chose to discontinue tetracycline treatment at that time, the cat still had conjunctivitis in the left eye and the member chose to not treat the eye with an alternate therapy. Rather, the member chose only to discontinue treatment on the left eye.

The panel found the lack of timely and appropriate follow-up very disturbing. The member relied on the owner's assessment as to the progress of the cat's eye problems. While the follow-up was timely, the quality of the follow-up fell below the standard of care of a reasonably prudent practitioner. The College's expert witness said a recheck at seven days or even 14 days would have been more timely.

The panel found that, following a re-examination, the member appropriately diagnosed corneal sequestrum in both eyes and quickly referred the cat. However, the member's failure to insist upon re-examination earlier precluded a more timely referral.