

Summary of Discipline Committee Hearing



DR. LAURA PALUMBO

Hearing Date: September 18, 2014

ALLEGATIONS OF PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT

Spay and Dental Surgery through a Mobile

- failed to meet the standards of practice of the profession by:
 - performing procedures contrary to the Minimum Standards for Veterinary Facilities – Companion Animal Hospital
 - performing procedures outside a properly accredited facility
 - failing to place a peripheral intravenous catheter
 - failing to place an endotracheal tube
 - using an inappropriate anaesthetic protocol
 - failing to arrange for appropriate surgical assistance

London Animal Care Centre (LACC)

- prescribed, dispensed and/or administered controlled substances, in particular Euthanyl, without recording details of use
- administered anaesthesia without first weighing patients
- failed to maintain proper records

BRIEF SUMMARY

Spay and Dental Surgery through a Mobile

The member went to the clients' home and performed a dental cleaning and extracted several teeth from the clients' cat. The member performed these procedures on the clients' kitchen table with the assistance of an untrained auxiliary. The member returned to the clients' home and performed a spay surgery on the cat on the kitchen table with the assistance of an untrained auxiliary. Neither was performed as a result of an emergency.

London Animal Care Centre (LACC)

When providing veterinary services at LACC, the member euthanized pregnant cats by means of intraperitoneal injection. On a number of occasions the member left LACC after she administered pentobarbital (Euthanyl) to cats, before verifying that they died. Further, on these occasions the member left various quantities of Euthanyl with LACC staff to administer in her absence should any cats remain alive. The member left the Euthanyl in syringes that were not secured.

When performing spays and neuters on cats, the member administered isoflurane by mask rather than through an endotracheal tube.

DECISION

The member pleaded and was found guilty with respect to the allegations. The College and the member had negotiated an Agreed Statement of Facts, including an admission of professional misconduct.

PENALTY

- Reprimand
- Suspension of the member's licence to practise veterinary medicine for two months, one month of which shall be remitted if the member completes two days of mentoring addressing the standards and requirements relating to euthanasia and controlled substances; completes one day of mentoring addressing the shelter medicine issues raised in this matter; and prepares a research paper addressing the proper management and documentation of the use of controlled substances, shelter medicine best practices, the importance of accreditation and describing what was learned during the period of mentoring
- The member is responsible for the costs, including the costs of the mentor's time, but not charged more than \$1,000 for any single meeting or report that is required by the mentor or the reviewer
- The member will pay costs to the College of \$2,250
- Pursuant to legislation, this matter is published including the member's name

PANEL'S REASONING

During deliberations, the panel asked the Independent Legal Counsel (ILC) whether they were bound to the expert evidence regarding the standards of practice of the profession. The ILC confirmed the panel ought to accept the expert's opinion as to the standards of practice. The parties agreed with the advice provided.

By accepting the Agreed Statement of Facts, the member recognizes that performing dental extractions and dental cleaning and performing an ovariohysterectomy (OVH) in a client's home falls below the standards of veterinary medicine in

Ontario and is contrary to the Minimum Standards for Veterinary Facilities- Companion Animal Mobiles. The panel agreed.

While the experts were cognizant of the moral dilemma faced by the member with regard to the cat's owners' reluctance to take her to a veterinary hospital and threat of euthanasia, they agreed the member failed to take appropriate steps in the circumstances.

The panel finds that while some cats in Ontario may live in less than ideal conditions, veterinarians must maintain the minimum standard of veterinary care for these animals. In the case of the clients' cat, these options for alternative veterinary care were not fully explored. Although the cat's owners refused to take her to a veterinary hospital for dentistry and an OVH, they did take her to a veterinary clinic when she showed evidence of incision dehiscence.

The member admitted that she performed intraperitoneal euthanasia on pregnant cats which was defined as below the acceptable standard of practice by the expert witness. She has also admitted to leaving the facility before confirming the animals had died.

The member has admitted to not properly recording controlled drugs including pentobarbital (Euthanyl) and analgesics and anaesthetics such as ketamine and Torbugesic. The member admitted to leaving pentobarbital with support staff to administer to the animals that were previously euthanized.

The panel noted that proper handling and recording the use of narcotics and controlled substances is an important requirement for veterinarians. Failure to do so is not only dangerous; it could result in criminal sanctions. Of more concern is the possible abuse of such drugs by herself or other staff at LACC. The most serious consequence would be intentional or accidental death.

In addition to keeping inadequate drug logs, the member admitted to keeping inadequate surgery and anaesthetic logs, which is a requirement of the minimum standards of practice. The member did not include the weight of animals in the logs and has admitted that animals over 15 lbs. were not weighed. This is a concern not only due to the lack of proper medical record keeping, but concern over the adequacy and safety of the drugs administered without an accurate measurement of the animal's weight.