



THE COLLEGE OF
VETERINARIANS
OF ONTARIO

POSITION STATEMENT

Pain Management

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Purpose

This Position Statement communicates the expectations of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario regarding pain management in the delivery of veterinary care. Respecting professional judgement in relation to scientific evidence and case context, it provides broad guidance to veterinarians in their clinical decision-making related to pain management.

Background

The prevention and relief of pain and suffering in animals is one of the pillars of veterinary medicine (Veterinarians Oath). As the profession evolves and responds to influences that shape clinical decision-making, stakeholders within and external to the profession benefit from a formal expression of the College's position on matters affecting quality and safety in the delivery of veterinary care.

The issue of pain prevention and management across the vast spectrum of veterinary medicine is multi-layered. Pain prevention and management includes considerations of constantly evolving standards of care, economics, inter-species differences in standards of care, ethics, the application of a veterinarian's clinical judgement, and informed client consent and education. In formulating its position, Council acknowledged the influence of a species group on the factors that influence the delivery of pain management but felt that any position of the College should be applicable in all situations where veterinary care is administered and, at the same time, addressed this existence of context and species-specific standards of care and knowledge.

Position Statement

Attention to the prevention and relief of animal suffering is a cornerstone of ethical and humane veterinary care. This obligation to attend to the prevention and relief of pain applies in all cases, medical or surgical, where the potential for pain exists. The withholding of appropriate analgesic therapy should not be viewed as a justifiable means of reducing treatment costs. Appropriate

pain management, in keeping with current, species-specific standards of care and knowledge, should be delivered as a requisite therapeutic component.

References

Veterinarians Oath:

"As a member of the veterinary medical profession, I solemnly swear that I will use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society. I will strive to promote animal health and welfare, relieve animal suffering, protect the health of the public and environment, and advance comparative medical knowledge. I will practise my profession conscientiously, with dignity, and in keeping with the principles of veterinary medical ethics. I will strive continuously to improve my professional knowledge and competence and to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards for myself and the profession."

- CVMA 2004 -

<http://www.canadianveterinarians.net/about-veterinary-medicine/oath.aspx>

Numerous resources providing guidance on clinical pain management are available. The following list is not exhaustive but contains resources that are indicative of approaches to pain management in a variety of commonly encountered species. The College recognizes that there are acceptable alternative protocols.

Dogs and Cats

http://files.upei.ca/avc/sjdawc/small_animal_anesthesia_poster.pdf

Cattle, Horses and Swine

http://files.upei.ca/avc/sjdawc/large_animal_anesthesia_handout.pdf

National Farm Animal Care Council Codes of Practice

Dairy Cattle

<http://www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/Dairy%20Code%20of%20Practice.pdf>

Beef Cattle

http://www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/beef_code_of_practice.pdf

Equine

http://www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/equine_code_of_practice.pdf

Laboratory Animals

http://www.ccac.ca/en/_standards/guidelines

<https://www.calam-acmal.org/resources/Pictures/StandardsVetCare.pdf>

http://oacu.od.nih.gov/ARAC/documents/Pain_and_Distress.pdf

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