



THE COLLEGE OF
VETERINARIANS
OF ONTARIO

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE STANDARD

Veterinary Euthanasia

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Introduction

The decision to euthanize an animal can be an emotional and difficult time for clients and for veterinarians. It can also raise complex issues for veterinarians when deciding whether to perform euthanasia, refuse to perform euthanasia, or recommend the performance of euthanasia. This Standard sets out the College's expectations for veterinarians performing veterinary euthanasia.

Definitions

Client: Client means, with respect to a member, the owner of an animal that the member is treating, an authorized representative of the owner or an individual who the member reasonably determines is acting in the interest of the animal.

Veterinary euthanasia: Veterinary euthanasia is the practice of deliberately ending the life of an animal using humane methods that eliminate or minimize pain or distress.

Practice Expectations

A veterinarian meets the *Professional Practice Standard: Euthanasia* when he/she:

1. Performs euthanasia only in the context of a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR).

2. Verifies the legal ownership and identification of an animal, to the best of his or her ability, prior to performing euthanasia.
3. Ensures, and documents in the medical record, that a client has provided informed consent indicating that he or she has had treatment options and alternatives presented as appropriate, inclusive of the benefits and prognoses for each. A client must grant permission for euthanasia of an animal or a group of animals before it is performed.
4. Maintains a euthanasia policy within his or her practice that clearly outlines the position of the practice with respect to the performance of euthanasia. Informs clients of the policy at an appropriate point within the VCPR.
5. Refers clients to another veterinarian who performs euthanasia if he or she does not perform euthanasia or refuses to perform euthanasia in a particular case.
6. Adequately explains the process of performing euthanasia, including the visible effects that may occur, the length of time the process will take, and any after-effects that may be expected, if the client wishes to remain present during the process.
7. Follows currently accepted best practices with respect to the method of performing euthanasia, and ensures that the method chosen is humane, causing the least possible pain and distress, and scientifically and professionally acceptable.
8. Ensures appropriate supervision and delegation by making sure that all individuals who perform or assist in veterinary euthanasia are adequately trained to do so.
9. Performs euthanasia as soon as reasonably possible after a decision has been reached with a client to proceed, and does so without delay in the case of an animal that is suffering.
10. Confirms the death of the animal.
11. Understands that there are certain circumstances, defined in legislation, that permit veterinarians to perform euthanasia without client consent.

Disposal of Remains

12. Clearly identifies an animal's remains following the performance of euthanasia, as applicable to the practice context.
13. Assures himself or herself with a reasonable degree of certainty of a client's preferences with respect to the method of disposal of the animal's remains.

14. Understands that disposal of animal remains must be executed in accordance with the provisions of the *Veterinarians Act*, the *Environmental Protection Act*, the *Dead Animal Disposal Act*, Minimum Standards for Veterinary Facilities, any applicable municipal by-laws, and any other legal requirements. Considers and employs biosecurity best practices to avoid biosecurity hazards.

Additional Considerations

15. Understands that he or she has an obligation to report animal abuse or neglect to an inspector or agent of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals when he or she has reasonable grounds to believe that an animal has been abused or neglected in circumstances that require euthanasia.
16. Where rabies is a concern, refers to the College's *Legislative Overview: Rabies* to ensure compliance.
17. Dispenses T-61 only in accordance with Regulation 1093.

Legislative Authority

R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 1093: General, s. 1, 17(1) 21, 17(1) 22, 17(1) 22.1, 18, 19, 27, 28, 33(2)(f) (*Veterinarians Act*)

Animals for Research Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. A.22

R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 557, Communicable Diseases - General s. 2 (*Health Protection and Promotion Act*)

O. Reg. 106/09: Disposal of Dead Farm Animals (*Nutrient Management Act*)

O. Reg. 105/09: Disposal of Deadstock (*Food Safety and Quality Act*)

Environmental Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.19 and regulations

Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.36

Livestock Community Sales Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. L.22

O. Reg. 31/05: Meat, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 20, s. 84.1 (*Food Safety and Quality Act*)

Minimum Standards for Veterinary Facilities, Titles 6 and 12, clause 13.4

Other References

The following can be found on the College's website at www.cvo.org:

Professional Practice Standard: Informed Client Consent

Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Informed Client Consent

Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records

Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records

Professional Practice Standard: Management and Disposal of Controlled Drugs

Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Management and Disposal of Controlled Drugs

Professional Practice Standard: Delegation

Professional Practice Standard: Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship

Position Statement: Reporting Animal Abuse or Neglect

Legislative Overview: Rabies

College publications contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all Ontario veterinarians in the care of their patients and in the practice of the profession. College publications are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained. The College encourages you to refer to the website (www.cvo.org) to ensure you are referring to the most recent version of any document.