



College of Veterinarians of Ontario

Website: www.cvo.org/Council

Council Meeting Highlights: June 16, 2021

The College Council continues to meet by video-conference.

Council was pleased to welcome John Kelly, Deputy Minister with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to the meeting to discuss important topics relevant to our mandate, including the work to modernize our governing legislation and the challenges faced by the shortage of veterinarians in Ontario. College Council appreciated the opportunity to meet with the Deputy Minister.

General Trends

At every meeting, Council members raise topics that are relevant to the College and its activities. Council held considerable discussion about the shortage of veterinarians in Ontario. Discussion centred on quality of care, lack of access to care, the challenge of referring to a specialist and the necessity to send people further away for treatment. Other trends that were discussed included concerns with the anticipated shortage of pentobarbital sodium; a noted increase in client requests for examinations and euthanasia to be performed outside to enable the client to be present; and a decision in the U.S. to ban importation of dogs from several countries due to rabies concerns.

The following policy items were considered by Council at its June meeting.

Public Policy – Use of Non-Conventional Therapies in the Practice of Veterinary Medicine

College Council discussed a draft position statement on the use of non-conventional therapies in the practice of veterinary medicine. Position statements enable Council to take a position on a topic that has polarizing views within the public and the profession. The public is increasingly seeking new forms of treatment and care for their animals and they have become accustomed to having choice and access in selecting a provider for lower risk therapies. The College's existing position on complementary and alternative therapies indicates these therapies must be part of veterinary medicine. For lower-risk therapies, this may not be necessary when thinking of public protection based on risk. Following discussion, Council decided to approve the draft position statement, which will be published soon. Council is also asking the College to develop resources to support public education on accessing lower-risk therapies.

Public Policy - Telemedicine

College Council reviewed its professional practice standard on telemedicine. This standard is reviewed frequently due to ongoing changes in the use of technology in veterinary medicine. In March 2020, the College relaxed its rules related to prescribing via telemedicine alone to enable veterinarians to prescribe non-controlled drugs and substances within a veterinarian-client-patient relationship but without performing an in-person examination. Jurisdiction is also an important consideration. A veterinarian

licensed in Ontario remains accountable to the College regardless of where or how they are practising veterinary medicine. Further, the College expects that a veterinarian who is not licensed in Ontario will comply with the licensing requirements in the jurisdiction in which they hold licensure and provide care in accordance with the standard of care of that jurisdiction. If the College becomes aware of concerns about care provided to an Ontario animal via telemedicine by a non-member, the College may share that information with the regulatory authority that has jurisdiction over the non-member so that appropriate action can be taken by that regulatory authority. The Council also looked at its standard on prescribing a drug in connection with its telemedicine standard. Following discussion, Council approved changes for public consultation which would permit a veterinarian to obtain recent and sufficient knowledge of an animal through a virtual examination in order to prescribe a non-controlled drug to a new patient or for a new condition with an existing patient where there is an immediate, short-term need under certain conditions, as laid out in the standard on prescribing. It is important to note that the additional requirement to be readily available in-person to manage any adverse reactions to a drug, when prescribing a drug, has not been altered. The revised drafts of the telemedicine and prescribing standards will be circulated for public consultation later this summer.

Public Policy – Facility Director

In September 2019, Council decided action was necessary on an identified strategic risk relating to facility director accountability and facility accreditation. The facility director is accountable for ensuring that veterinary facilities are operated in accordance with the facility standards established by the College Council. However, this role and its obligations and responsibilities had not been clearly defined by the College and, as a result, the role was not clearly understood by veterinarians. A draft policy statement was developed to assist veterinarians in understanding the definition of the facility director role and its responsibilities. Following discussion, Council approved the draft Policy Statement on Facility Director – Accreditation – Definition and Responsibilities. The document will be posted on the College website this summer.