

Delegation

Published: November 2015

Introduction

Increasingly, veterinary medicine is adopting a team-based approach to providing veterinary care. Members of the team include veterinarians, veterinary technicians¹, assistants and administrative staff. A team approach recognizes the specific skills, knowledge and competencies that each member of the team brings to the provision of safe, quality care for either a specific animal or a group of animals.

Delegation occurs when a veterinarian, following an assessment of an animal(s) or group of animals, determines that a member of the veterinary team, who is not a veterinarian, is competent to perform a veterinary task under their supervision. Delegation must only occur when the best interest of the animal(s) or group of animals is not compromised. At all times, the veterinarian remains accountable and responsible for any care provided to an animal under delegation. Safe, quality care must not be compromised by the delegation.

¹ Veterinary technician refers to a registered veterinary technician or an individual who is a graduate of an accredited education program.



Definitions

Task: Task is a broad term that refers to procedures, treatments, interventions and other veterinary services.

Immediate Supervision: The member is on the same premises as the auxiliary and can see and hear the auxiliary perform the task.

Direct Supervision: The member is on the same premises as the auxiliary but cannot see or hear the auxiliary perform the task.

Indirect Supervision: The member is not on the same premises as the auxiliary while the task is being performed but where the member communicates appropriately with the auxiliary before and after the auxiliary performs the task, and is accessible to the auxiliary in a timely and appropriate manner while the task is being performed.

Practice Expectations

A veterinarian meets the *Professional Practice Standard: Delegation* when they:

1. Delegate veterinary tasks only when a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) exists.
2. Do not delegate the acts of diagnosis, prognosis, prescribing or performing major surgery.²
3. Only delegate a task(s) where doing so does not increase the overall risk of harm to the animal(s) or group of animals.
4. Determine that a task, when performed under delegation, is as safe and effective as if performed by a veterinarian. The *Veterinarians Act* requires all veterinarians to confine medical practice to those areas of medicine in which they are trained and experienced. A veterinarian must not delegate a task that they are not competent to perform personally.
5. Identify a member of the team who has the appropriate education, skills, training and/or experience necessary to perform the task as competently and safely as a veterinarian. The veterinarian must not assume that the delegate has the knowledge, skill and judgement required to perform the task. The delegating veterinarian must assure themselves that the

² Major surgery is defined in Regulation 1093 as “surgery, (a) in which bone, viscera or an extensive area of subcutaneous tissue is exposed, or (b) the failure of which would endanger the life or organ function of the animal.”



delegate can perform the task competently and safely. The delegate must be able to carry out the task as competently and safely as the delegating veterinarian.

6. Determine the necessary level of supervision (immediate, direct or indirect) for the specific delegated task after considering:
 - The degree and nature of the risks and side-effects to the animal associated with the task(s);
 - The location, facilities and safeguards available to the team member when performing the task(s); and
 - The veterinarian's awareness of the knowledge, skills, training and judgement of the team member.
7. Disclose if auxiliaries or other veterinarians may provide some or all of the care of the animal(s), and obtains informed client consent.

Legislative Authority

Veterinarians Act, R.S.O. 1990, s. 1, 11

R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 1093: General s. 1, 17(1)30, 19(1-4), 33(1), 40(2)(a) (*Veterinarians Act*)

Resources

For more specific information on delegation the following can be found on College's website at cvo.org:

1. *Policy Statement: Use of Forms of Energy in the Treatment and/or Care of Animals*
2. *Position Statement: Use of Forms of Energy in the Treatment and/or Care of Animals*
3. *Professional Practice Standard: Veterinary Dentistry*
4. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Veterinary Euthanasia*

In addition, the following resources can also be found on the College's website:

1. *Professional Practice Standard: Informed Client Consent*
2. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Informed Client Consent*



3. *Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records*
4. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records*
5. *Professional Practice Standard: Establishing, Maintaining, and Discontinuing a Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR)*
6. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Establishing, Maintaining, and Discontinuing a Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship*

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.