



THE COLLEGE OF
VETERINARIANS
OF ONTARIO

Coronavirus: An information update from the College of Veterinarians of Ontario

Update: March 19, 2020

- **After hours care**
- **Transfer of medical record information**

After-hours care services:

The College recognizes that COVID-19 continues to impact a veterinarian's ability to provide veterinary services that are necessary to protect animal and public health. Veterinarians are encouraged to employ their best judgment, and to determine the scope and breadth of veterinary services that they can reasonably and safely provide during this time. This includes after-hours care services.

In Ontario, licensed veterinarians are responsible for providing after-hours care services to animals that they have recently treated or treat regularly. These services may be provided in a variety of ways, and veterinarians can determine which options for providing access to after-hours care best suit their practice and expertise. They are not required to always maintain the same options.

If a veterinarian determines that it is necessary to make alterations to their after-hours care services, they need to notify their clients of the changes as soon as possible and keep a record of the information provided. Such steps may include a telephone message, signage on the door of the facility or electronic notice.

The College acknowledges that veterinarians need to make decisions about provision of services based on the health of all involved in their practice. In these unusual times, the College recognizes that circumstances may arise where a veterinarian is unable to reasonably provide after-hours care services or timely notification to their clients. Attempts to notify clients of these circumstances and a record of the information provided would follow the same expectations as outlined above.

Policy Statement After-Hours Care Services <https://cvo.org/getmedia/f1c3c8d7-9f1e-4117-a6b8-daa699ab442b/PSAfterHoursCare.pdf.aspx>

Transfer of Medical Record Information:

The College is aware that where veterinary facilities are altering services or temporarily closing due to COVID-19 related factors, clients of those facilities are being referred to other facilities for veterinary care. There are things to consider related to obtaining relevant historical information (i.e., medical record information) for continuity of care.

When a licensed veterinarian is presented with an animal(s) that is receiving veterinary services from another member, Ontario Regulation 1093 requires them to notify the other member and obtain relevant

historical (i.e. medical) information as soon as practicable. In turn, the other member is expected to respond to these requests and provide the information in a timely manner.

There are a variety of methods that are used to ensure that relevant historical information is available for continuity of care. Each method must ensure client confidentiality and safeguard records against loss, damage, unauthorized access or disclosure. A request for medical record information may be made by telephone, facsimile, email, regular mail, in-person contact, or by any other means. It is important to remember that:

- A request for historical information may not always require the transfer of the animal's full medical record. A veterinarian uses their professional judgment to determine what information they require (i.e., parts of the animal's medical record, a medical summary, etc.) in order to provide care;
- Relevant historical information can be provided verbally (i.e., over the phone) in advance of the transfer of the copy of the medical record; and
- In situations where relevant historical information is not available in a timely manner (for example, the other practice is closed, urgent or emergency cases), a veterinarian uses their professional judgment to determine what care they will provide to an animal(s). In these circumstances, a veterinarian must inform the client that uncoordinated care may put their animal(s) at risk.

Veterinarians are encouraged to collaborate effectively and interact professionally to help one another and ensure that relevant historical information is available to co-ordinate care.

Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records: <https://cvo.org/getmedia/75c753ca-40d4-459a-8020-fb32e4aa4f1f/PPSMedicalRecords.pdf.aspx>

Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records: <https://cvo.org/getmedia/e4042f00-5772-4932-b4a3-60f2080f574c/GuideMedicalRecords.pdf.aspx>

Practice Advisory Service: The College's Practice Advisory Service is available to answer your questions related to the practice of veterinary medicine. Please provide your e-mail address to ensure a timely response. Please note that inquiries to the Practice Advisory Service are higher than usual; we will respond as quickly as we can. Thank you for your patience. E-mail practiceadvice@cvo.org to contact a Practice Advisor.

General Inquiries: General inquiries can be made to inquiries@cvo.org and the appropriate staff person will get back to you.

Helpful Reference Materials:

Updates from the College on COVID-19
www.cvo.org/coronavirus

Ministry of Health
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>

Infection prevention and control best practices for small animal veterinary clinics (general)

<https://oahn.ca/resources/ipc-best-practices/>

Worms & Germs Blog (COVID-19 posts)

<https://www.wormsandgermsblog.com/tags/covid-19/>

Public Health Agency of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/frequently-asked-questions.html>

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

OIE World Organization for Animal Health

<https://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/>

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