



AGENDA ITEM 7.2

TOPIC: Non-Drug Authorized Activities Performed Under Initiation

Overview

On November 7, 2024, Transition Council reviewed a list of authorized activities (or components of) that were proposed to be able to be performed by a veterinary technician member through a process known as initiation.

For more information on this review, please refer to the reference document at the end of this agenda package.

During this review and discussion, Transition Council flagged the performance of two non-drug related authorized activities (rectal examinations and anal gland expression) as requiring more background research and consideration before determining whether to provide guidance as to whether these procedures should be permissible through initiation.

Additional information was gathered based on this feedback and presented to Transition Council on November 28, 2024, for its consideration.

For more information on this review, please refer to the reference document at the end of this agenda package.

A fulsome discussion ensued, and Transition Council requested that this topic be returned to College staff for further work and development, including engaging with equine practitioners to solicit their experiences in this area.

Additional Information Gathered Since November 28, 2024

Highlighting Previous Initiation Conversations

The proposed authorized activity of “putting an instrument, arm, hand, or finger beyond the anus” was first presented to Transition Council as part of its review of initiation on November 7, 2024. Here, the specific activity of “putting an instrument, arm, hand, or finger beyond the anus for the purpose of checking an animal’s temperature” was proposed as permissible to be

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perform by a veterinary technician member under initiation and was included alongside other procedures of similar risk such as:

- Putting an instrument, arm, hand, or finger beyond the larynx to place esophageal or endotracheal tubing;
- Putting an instrument, arm, hand, or finger beyond the opening of the urethra to place a urinary catheter; and
- Putting an instrument, arm, hand or finger beyond the labia majora to conduct a vaginal or cervical exam or collect a swab sample.

The ability to perform these authorized activities under initiation were proposed to be subject to the following requirements:

- That the veterinary technician member has the knowledge, skills, and judgement to perform the authorized activity safely, effectively, and ethically;
- That the veterinary technician member determines that the animal(s) or group of animals veterinary care needs warrant the performance of the authorized activity, having considered:
 - The known risks and benefits to the animal of performing the authorized activity;
 - The predictability of the outcome of performing the authorized activity; and
 - The safeguards and resources available in the circumstances to safely manage the outcome of performing the authorized activity.
- That the veterinary technician member is accountable for determining that the animal's condition warrants performance of the authorized activity;
- That the veterinary technician member is accountable for the performance of the authorized activity; and
- The veterinary technician member coordinates care of the animal with a veterinarian member at the earliest opportunity.

These activities were proposed based on the core competencies of veterinary technicians upon graduation in Ontario and in recognition of their ability to contribute to team-based care.

A veterinary technician member would only be able to perform an authorized activity under initiation from an accredited facility and would be required to adhere to overarching facility policies set by the Facility Director.

These proposals obtained consensus at the Transition Council table and were marked for public consultation.



Conversation with the Ontario Association of Equine Practitioners

A conversation with Dr. Jackie Henderson from the Ontario Association of Equine Practitioners was held in December 2024. In this conversation, Dr. Henderson confirmed that the performance of rectal examinations in equine is a higher-risk activity related to potential tears than in other species. She also expressed concerns about whether veterinary technicians received training in school related to the performance of rectal examination on equine. While Dr. Henderson believed that some veterinary technician members could be safely trained to perform this activity, she also stated that a uniform and testable approach would be required to ensure consistent application and that unless this training was received that rectal examinations should be a veterinarian-only activity.

Conversation with the Ontario Association of Bovine Practitioners

A conversation with veterinarians from the Ontario Association of Bovine Practitioners (OABP) was held in December 2024. In this conversation, members of the OABP expressed that the performance of rectal examinations in bovine was first and foremost a diagnostic procedure performed by veterinarians. Risks associated with this procedure included rectal perforation and risk to pregnancy if performed improperly. They also shared that the performance of rectal examinations is a specific and in-depth procedure taught during the DVM program and that they were unaware of any veterinary technician education programs offering this training. Based on this information, the members of the OABP expressed that they would not be comfortable with a veterinary technician performing rectal examinations under initiation.

Current Framework for Anal Gland Expression

The performance of internal anal gland expression is currently considered the practice of veterinary medicine in Ontario. External anal gland expression is in the public domain.

RVT Core Competencies and Education

Both the Core Competencies for Veterinary Technicians outlined by the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians (OAVT) and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) do not specifically outline or mention the performance of rectal examinations.

The OAVT List of Delegated Tasks and Curriculum Topics for Veterinary Technician Programs states that a veterinary technician is expected to be able to complete a thorough physical examination of equine and bovine species upon completion of their program. However, in



conversation with a veterinary educator in this area, it was confirmed that this does not include rectal examination and that its performance is labelled as a veterinarian activity within coursework.

The Core Competencies outlined by the OAVT related to internal anal gland expression include:

- Understand the practical and theoretical aspects of anal sac expression.

The OAVT Accredited Curriculum for Veterinary Technician Programs states that a veterinary technician is expected to be able to express anal sacs of dogs.

The CVMA does not outline or mention any specific language related to internal anal gland expression.

Current Considerations

Based on this additional information, Transition Council is asked to consider the following related to authorized activities able to be performed by veterinary technician members under initiation:

1. Putting an instrument, arm, hand, or finger beyond the anus for the purpose of conducting a rectal examination; and
2. Putting an instrument, arm, hand, or finger beyond the anus for the purpose of internal anal gland expression.

As guidance may be different on these two items, they been separated into two categories for ease of reference.

First Area of Consideration – Rectal Examinations

Transition Council is asked to consider whether it wishes to provide guidance that the performance of rectal examinations by veterinary technician members be permitted under initiation.

In this consideration, Transition Council is encouraged to question:

- Whether the majority of veterinary technician members would be able to safely perform this activity upon graduation;
- Whether the allowance should be for all species or for specific species; and



- Whether there are any other high risk or unintended consequences associated with this activity.

Transition Council's guidance related to the performance of this activity under initiation will not affect the ability for a veterinary technician member to perform rectal examinations under a veterinarian's order or delegation as this activity has not been proposed to be non-delegable.

Second Area of Consideration - Anal Gland Expression

Transition Council is asked to consider whether it wishes to provide guidance that the performance of internal anal gland expression by veterinary technician members be permitted under initiation.

In this consideration, Transition Council is encouraged to question:

- Whether the majority of veterinary technician members would be able to safely perform this activity upon graduation;
- Whether the allowance should be for all species or for specific species; and
- Whether there are any other high risk or unintended consequences associated with this activity.

Transition Council's guidance related to the performance of this activity would not apply to external anal gland expressions which would remain in the public domain. It would also not affect the ability for a veterinary technician member to perform internal anal gland expressions under a veterinarian's order or delegation as this activity has not been considered to be non-delegable.

Discussion

Transition Council is asked to review this additional information as well as the associated options related to the delegation of these two activities and to provide its guidance related to their inclusion in a regulatory concept related to the authorized activity model.