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THE COLLEGE OF  
VETERINARIANS  
OF ONTARIO

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# PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE STANDARD

## *Advertising*

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### Introduction

Veterinarians may undertake marketing activities that are in compliance with this Professional Practice Standard to improve the viability of their practices. However as professionals, veterinarians are held to a high standard. Advertising by veterinarians should convey professionalism as it can affect the public perception of, and respect for, the entire profession of veterinary medicine.

This Professional Practice Standard has been developed to assist veterinarians in understanding their legal and professional responsibilities pertaining to issues of advertising without restricting veterinarians' business practice freedom where it is neither warranted nor the role of the College.

### Definitions

**Advertising:** Advertising is a mode of marketing that might be defined as any message communicated in any public medium (print, internet, television, radio, etc) that is used for the purpose of promoting a member's professional services, goods, practice, or image.

**Ancillary services:** Ancillary services refer to boarding, grooming, funeral services and sales of foods, supplies and other goods and services used by or with animals that is provided by a member whether as part of, or separately from, their practice of veterinary medicine.

**Client:** Client means, with respect to a veterinarian, the owner of an animal(s) or group of animals that the veterinarian is treating, an authorized representative of the owner, or an individual who the veterinarian reasonably determines is acting in the interest of the animal(s) or group of animals.

**Marketing:** In very general terms, marketing is the activity of promoting one's services to members of the general public or any segment of the public. Examples of marketing include (but are not limited to) advertising (see below), making public appearances, issuing press releases, participating in directory listings, and distributing brochures and business cards.

## Practice Expectations

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

1. Ensure that any communication that they permit to be published, displayed, distributed, or used relating to their professional or ancillary services or to their association with, or employment by, any person adheres to the advertising provisions in Regulation 1093 and this Standard.
2. Understand that they may advertise the professional services they provide, and any ancillary services, provided that the information in the advertisement:
  - is factual, accurate and verifiable;;
  - is not false, misleading or deceptive by the inclusion or omission of information;
  - contains no comparative or superlative statements;
  - contains no endorsement or promotion of drugs or third-party services ; and
  - could not reasonably be regarded by members as likely to demean the integrity or dignity of the profession or to bring the profession into disrepute.
3. Do not permit their status as a licensed veterinarian to be used in any communication offering a product or service to the public other than products, veterinary services or ancillary services that are offered by the member in their professional capacity.
4. Do not make a misrepresentation to a client or prospective client, including ensuring that the name they use in the practice of veterinary medicine is the same as the

name that is entered in the public register or the name of the professional corporation they use in practising the profession.<sup>1</sup>

5. Do not make a claim respecting the utility of any remedy, treatment, device or procedure other than a claim which can reasonably be supported as professional opinion.
6. Do not guarantee a cure, or make a statement which a client would reasonably understand as a guarantee of a cure.
7. Do not engage in conduct that may be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional or conduct unbecoming a veterinarian.

## Legislative Authority

*Veterinarians Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. V.3 s. 5.1, 19

R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 1093: General, s. 1, 17(1)(8), 17(1)(9), 17(1)(10), 17(1)(44), 17(1)(45), 35, 36, 51, and 52 (*Veterinarians Act*)

## Other References

The following can be found on the College's website at [www.cvo.org](http://www.cvo.org):

*Policy Statement: Steering*

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](http://www.cvo.org)) to ensure you are referring to the most recent version of any document.

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Sections 5.1 and 19 of the *Veterinarians Act* and Sections 17(1)(8), 36(1) 2, 51, and 52 of Regulation 1093.