



THE COLLEGE OF  
VETERINARIANS  
OF ONTARIO

## **REPORT ON CONSULTATION**

**Topic:** Humane Animal Handling and Restraint

**Consultation Period:** October 2, 2018 – November 16, 2018

**Submissions:** 65 submissions

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### **What is the Issue**

As part of its three-year Animal Welfare Agenda, Council identified developing policy guidance for veterinarians on the humane handling and restraint of animals as a priority. To assist in the development of this policy, Council appointed an Advisory Group that was charged with drafting public policy to provide clarity on this topic. The Advisory Group held three meetings to discuss and debate the current educational, organizational, and professional resources and approaches related to the humane handling and restraint of animals. Following these discussions, the Advisory Group agreed a Professional Practice Standard would be the best policy tool to speak to the higher-level requirements of all veterinarians across all species without crossing into specific, clinical expectations. The Advisory Group developed and reviewed numerous versions of the draft standard and all members unanimously supported the draft that was presented to Council.

### **Why is it Important**

While reports of veterinarians mishandling an animal are rare, it is understandably very upsetting for both the profession and public to learn of such incidents. It is for this reason that Council took leadership with directing the development of policy in this important area of public interest.

### **Overview of the Proposal**

For an overview of the draft Professional Practice Standard that the College consulted on, please visit: <https://cvo.org/For-the-Public/Public-Consultations/Humane-Animal-Handling-and-Restraint.aspx>

### **Consultation Process**

At its September 2018 meeting, Council was pleased to approve for circulation the draft *Professional Practice Standard: Humane Animal Handling and Restraint*, which set out the proposed practice expectations for veterinarians across all species. The draft Professional

Practice Standard was sent for public consultation for a 45-day period during which members of the College and members of the public were asked to provide their feedback.

## **What we Heard and How We Responded**

### **(a) Limitation of Species**

There were several comments related to the need to include more information that was relevant to the proper handling and restraint of large and/or exotic animals.

### **(b) Five Freedoms**

There were several comments that expressed concern about the weight given to the five freedoms versus their actual attainability.

### **(c) Neutrality of the Standard**

There were several comments, including from the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, that expressed concern about the document directing to certain sources more than others.

### **(d) Safety of Veterinarians/Veterinary Staff**

There were several comments related to the need to further express the need to ensure the safety of both veterinarians and veterinary staff.

All of these topics was brought forward for Council review and consideration.

## **Sample Comments**

The following quotes, summarized from comments received, reflect suggestions made during the consultation:

- *I feel that the policy as written suggests that the focus is more on small animals than production animals, but the handling of production animals is equally important.*
- *More resources for small mammals (rodents etc), psittacines and other caged birds, for reptiles, amphibians and fish. Caution on Primate handling and large exotic cats.*
- *good draft, well worded, I like that the veterinary oath is listed and gives good context to the policy.*
- *The document lists the Fear Free website as a resource. While Fear Free may be the current gold standard in terms of minimizing fear, only a small percentage of Ontario practices are certified as Fear Free. To ensure that the document provides clear and unambiguous guidance to veterinarians, it is recommended that the CVO clarify its expectations regarding the integration of Fear Free philosophies into veterinary practice.*
- *This policy protects animals and owners' feelings and perceptions but does nothing for the safety and security of the veterinarians or staff that have to deal with these animals.*
- *I am very concerned about the lack of concern for the well-being and safety of veterinarians and staff. It is becoming an ongoing issue and not just with the physicality of this issue but also the mental aspect that seems to be overlooked.*

### **Council December 2018 Decision**

Council reviewed the consultation feedback and the draft *Professional Practice Standard: Humane Animal Handling and Restraint* at its December 2018 meeting and directed that the draft standard be returned to the Advisory Group for further revisions.

### **Council March 2019 Decision**

The draft *Professional Practice Standard: Humane Animal Handling and Restraint* was returned to the Advisory Group for further revisions based upon consultation feedback that included:

- That the standard required further acknowledgement of large/exotic animal practice;
- That the standard required further acknowledgement of the need for veterinarian/veterinary staff protection in dangerous situations;
- That the standard's current wording surrounding the Five Freedoms set too high of a professional expectation and aimed for excellence beyond essential skills; and
- That the standard appeared to have an imbalanced association with Fear Free philosophy.

The Advisory Group considered and incorporated the feedback received into an amended draft that was presented to Council as its March 2019 meeting. Following discussion, Council directed that the amended standard be approved for publication.