



**CVO**  
College of  
Veterinarians  
of Ontario

# Code of Ethics

## Preamble

**As members of a regulated profession,** who have a societal obligation to serve in the public interest, veterinarians earn and maintain the public trust through engagement in principle-guided ethical practice. Veterinarians hold themselves, their colleagues, and their profession to a high standard of ethical conduct, reflecting the core values and principles of the profession. The College and the public have the reasonable expectation that the care and service provided by a veterinarian reflects these values. As societal ethics evolve regarding animals, veterinarians should take a leadership role to assure that such evolution is rational and sustainable.

## Statement of Intent

**A veterinarian has a moral obligation** to animals, to society, to clients, to colleagues, to the profession, and to themselves. On occasion these obligations may conflict. In such circumstances, the Code provides a framework to guide veterinarians in ethical decision making. It reflects the profession's core values which provide the foundation for ethical principles and guidance on how one is to act as a morally responsible member of the veterinary profession.

## Core Values

**These values are the foundation for ethical care and service** in veterinary medicine. The core value of professionalism is defined in the College document *Guidance on Professionalism for Veterinarians*.

- **trustworthiness**
- **compassion**
- **professionalism**
- **transparency**
- **competence**
- **respect**

## Ethical Principles

### **Veterinarians act with compassion and demonstrate respect**

- Recognize their duty to identify the interests of the animal in consideration of the circumstances.
- Strive to prevent and relieve animal suffering and improve animal health and welfare.
- Act with empathy towards clients and colleagues.
- Respect clients' autonomy, privacy and right to confidentiality.
- Treat clients fairly and without discrimination, ensuring that all animals are offered quality care regardless of their owners' background or circumstances.
- Treat colleagues with dignity and respect, fostering a supportive and collaborative environment where every team member feels valued and heard. Colleagues include all learners, animal care partners, and members of the veterinary care team.
- Recognize the importance of self-compassion and personal wellbeing.
- Recognize and mitigate impacts to public health and environmental health.

### **Veterinarians foster transparency and demonstrate trustworthiness**

- Are accountable and truthful in their professional activities.
- Effectively communicate to promote and uphold professional relationships with clients, colleagues, and the public.
- Have open and honest discussions with clients that upholds the interests of the animal and ensures client understanding.
- Are reliable and competent.
- Maintain their competency by actively pursuing continuing professional development so knowledge and skills are current.
- Respect diversity and provide care that is both culturally sensitive and appropriate, recognizing and valuing the unique needs and traditions of each cultural group.
- Support an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere that facilitates access to quality veterinary services for all patients, ensuring that no one is excluded based on their background or circumstances.
- Respect the special history and interests of Indigenous Peoples and commit to collaborative and respectful relationships with Indigenous communities, acknowledging their unique contributions and perspectives.

### **Veterinarians act professionally and demonstrate continuing competence**

- Demonstrate behaviours, attitudes and skills that reflect the core values of the profession and reinforce the social contract between the profession and the public.
- Collaborate with colleagues to ensure comprehensiveness and continuity of patient care when necessary.
- Maintain appropriate and dignified boundaries in client relationships and all professional interactions.
- Adhere to legislated requirements and Professional Practice Standards.
- Engage in ongoing, reflective practice to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are expressed in professional behaviour.
- Apply current knowledge and skills to the delivery of quality care and service and the advancement of veterinary medicine, animal welfare, and public health and safety.