



Policy Guideline on Compliance with Professional Standards

Purpose

This document sets out the Veterinary Council's role in setting and monitoring the professional standards veterinarians must meet. It also provides guidance for veterinarians on situations where compliance may be outside their control

Further detail is available in the [Policy Guideline on the Veterinary Council Framework for Professional Standards](#)

Introduction

VCNZ's statutory purpose is to protect the public interest by ensuring that veterinarians are fit and competent to practise.

The Veterinarians Act 2005 provides VCNZ with a number of ways to achieve this, which include setting and monitoring the professional standards veterinarians must meet.

Section 3(c) (iii) and (iv) of the Veterinarians Act (Purpose) provides for VCNZ to: *set and implement standards for veterinary performance; and monitor performance and, if necessary, discipline veterinarians.*

Section 75(c) of the Veterinarians Act requires VCNZ: *to promote and encourage high standards of professional education and conduct among veterinarians.*

Section 75(i) of the Veterinarians Act 2005 provides for VCNZ: *to prescribe the minimum standards for practising as a veterinarian, including standards relating to either or both of the following:*

- *a person's fitness to practise as a veterinarian;*
- *the maintenance, examination, or improvement of the overall competence of a veterinarian to practise*

VCNZ Professional Standards

The Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians ("the Code") is VCNZ's primary vehicle for outlining the professional and ethical standards veterinarians must meet. Additional Council statements clarify and expand on the principles set out in the Code:

- [Authorisation of Dry Cow Therapy](#)
- [Induction of Dairy Cattle](#)
- [Compounding Veterinary Medicines](#)
- [Manufacturing Veterinary Medicines](#)
- [Competency Standards and Performance Indicators for Veterinarians](#)
- [Discretionary Use of Human and Veterinary Medicines](#)
- [Continuing Professional Development](#)

The Code is prescribed under section 75(i) of the Act and therefore has regulatory status. VCNZ has also prescribed minimum standards in relation to:

- Fitness to practise
- Competency – including recency of practise
- Continuing professional development

Veterinarians must comply with legal, professional and ethical standards. These standards must be met unless there is a good reason for not doing so. Failure to meet the standards without good reason will likely be considered a breach of professional responsibilities.

However, VCNZ recognises that it may not always be possible for an individual veterinarian to comply because of circumstances outside their control. For example, because of practice protocols or resource constraints

Compliance Requirements

Where compliance is outside of their control, veterinarians must take all reasonable steps to comply and document these. What is required to “take all reasonable steps” will depend on the circumstances of each case. However, as a general guide:

- where compliance is not possible, the non-compliance should be brought to the attention of someone (such as the employer or a senior colleague) who is in a position to do something about it
- where local efforts to address this situation have failed, the veterinarian needs to provide the best care possible and bring the non compliance to Council’s attention as soon as possible
- veterinarians must also recognise that the point may come where the “best care possible” should not be provided. For example in circumstances where the proposed treatment is such a deviation from the required standards that it poses unacceptable risks - to animal welfare; to the public interest and to themselves. Veterinarians need to exercise their professional judgement in making such decisions taking into account the particular circumstances of the case.. The client also needs to be involved in the decision in a way that is consistent with the informed consent process Where there is doubt, advice should be sought from senior colleagues, NZVA or the Veterinary Council.

Approved by VCNZ August 2013

Minor revisions approved by VCNZ August 2016