



Policy on Human Health Practitioners Undertaking Surgical Procedures on Animals

1. Purpose

To provide guidance for veterinarians on the acceptability, the circumstances and the necessary conditions around a human health practitioner undertaking what could reasonably be considered significant surgical procedures on an animal under the supervision of a veterinarian.

2. Legislation

Animal Welfare Act requirements around significant surgical procedures.

3. Policy Guidance

This policy outlines the circumstances in which it could be acceptable from a public interest perspective for doctors and dentists to carry out on animals surgical procedures reasonably considered to be significant. The practitioners including the supervising veterinarian who undertake these procedures need to be very aware that they are unlikely to be indemnified in the event of adverse events.

The scenarios which could be acceptable apply in circumstances where the:

- veterinarian concerned does not have the skills to undertake the procedures and there are no veterinary referral options;
- doctor or dentist is judged to have the necessary skills to successfully carry out the surgical procedures;
- procedures are carried out under the direct and observed supervision of the veterinarian concerned;
- procedures are in the animal's best interests and are justified on animal welfare grounds (in accordance with the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act and the VCNZ Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians);
- work is not just cosmetic or carried out for the convenience of the owner;
- health practitioner and veterinarian are aware that in the event of adverse outcomes they could be subject to litigation and liability and that they are unlikely to be indemnified;
- owner has provided their informed consent, with full knowledge of the above points.

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