



Competency Standards and Performance Indicators for Veterinarians

Introduction

The Veterinarians Act 2005 requires the Veterinary Council to:

- register persons and assess whether veterinarians meet the requirements for continued registration or eligibility for a practising certificate
- set and implement standards for veterinary performance
- prescribe minimum practising standards relating to the maintenance, examination or improvement of the overall competence of a veterinarian to practise

The Act also provides the Council with the ability to review veterinarians' competence to practise.

The purpose of this document is to:

- set out the competencies Council expects veterinarians to meet at the point of registration and on an ongoing basis
- provide criteria against which an individual veterinarian's performance may be measured

These standards and performance indicators are based on the current graduating competencies of BVSc (Massey) students and as such are subject to change.

The Council recognises that veterinary practice is complex and encompasses clinical and non clinical activities. The "Competency Standards and Performance Indicators for Veterinarians":

- do not necessarily cover all aspects and areas of a veterinarian's practice; and
- some of the competency standards will not be relevant to the work of veterinarians engaged in non clinical practice.

In considering an individual veterinarian's competence the Council will also take into account the performance standards considered reasonable by informed peers.

The Council considers that a competent veterinarian is one who applies knowledge, skills, attitudes, communication and judgement to the delivery of appropriate veterinary services in accordance with their field of veterinary practice. In considering how well a veterinarian is working, consideration must be given to the demonstration of competence through performing the tasks required in their field of veterinary practice, to an acceptable standard and to be able to do this on a consistent basis.

Competency Standards and Indicators

The veterinarian must:

1. Understand the scientific and evidence basis for veterinary medicine and integrate this knowledge into current practice

Indicators:

- Demonstrates an understanding of the preclinical and paraclinical factors in veterinary practice
- Demonstrates an understanding of recent developments in veterinary practice, the evidential base of veterinary practice and new treatment modalities based on research
- Demonstrates an understanding of relevant pharmacology, drug interactions and adverse reactions
- Demonstrates the ability to find, utilise and manage information
- Uses this to inform effective practice
- Makes valid judgements and deductions on the basis of scientific evidence and information available
- Communicates this knowledge to clients and the wider community

2. Obtain and record relevant information sufficient for analysis, diagnosis and retrieval

Obtain by interview and examination a relevant, accurate and detailed history of animals presented and record this information logically, legibly and securely.

Carry out a thorough systematic physical and clinical examination of the animal presented

Where indicated, carry out or arrange such diagnostic tests and procedures (such as haematology, pathology, radiology and imaging) as are needed to make a diagnosis

Know when to investigate the environment in which the animals under investigation are kept

Indicators:

Records:

- show an adequate and accurate history
- contain an adequate record of the physical and clinical examination
- are legible, time bound and retrievable
- are treated as confidential to the owner or agent and are not divulged to others without consent, unless there is a legal obligation to do so
- contain results of diagnostic tests and procedures as appropriate to diagnose and manage the individual case
- appropriate radiographs or images taken of adequate diagnostic quality
- contain detail, where indicated, on the environment in which the animals under investigation are kept
- contain evidence of adopted treatment strategies
- retain evidence of consent to the treatment plan strategies.
- should be of such detail that another veterinarian could take over the management of the case at any time

3. Analyse information to enable accurate diagnosis and develop appropriate treatment strategies

Assess the history, physical and clinical examination outcomes and diagnostic tests.

Evaluate the effect of the environment in which the animals are kept, if indicated

Identify problems and their causes.

Develop a diagnosis or diagnostic hypothesis

Identify contra-indications and consequences of intervention

Develop appropriate evidence based strategies for dealing effectively with commonly diagnosed conditions and diseases.

Fully inform the client of treatment options, likely outcomes, risks and costs and obtain their informed consent to proceed with treatment or undertake post mortems

Recognise personal limitations in dealing with unfamiliar, complicated or technically difficult cases and seek further advice and assistance, or refer such cases to others

Indicators:

Demonstrates and records:

- adequate analysis of information collected
- accurate diagnosis
- adequate, evidence based treatment strategies, including the appropriate use of veterinary medicines
- client's informed consent
- advice sought from other veterinarians, where appropriate

4. Know when and how to refer

Recognises the limitations of knowledge and experience and refers for advice and/or treatment in situations where the animal requires a greater level of knowledge and/or skills

Indicators:

- Obtains advice from other veterinarians where necessary
- Makes appropriate referrals
- Completes and provides relevant documentation

5. Implement safe and effective veterinary procedures and therapeutic strategies

Indicators:

- Approaches, handles and restrains animals in an effective, safe, humane and ethical way which is appropriate to the circumstances
- Reaches sound conclusions following routine post mortem examination of common domestic animals
- Carries out therapeutic procedures on animals to maximise the likelihood of a satisfactory outcome and minimise the risks of untoward effects for the animals themselves and public health and safety, food safety and quality
- Demonstrates appropriate and responsible use of veterinary medicines
- Records and monitors therapeutic procedures
- Follows up therapeutic responses and modifies approach where appropriate
- Recognises and records requirements for analgesia and/or anaesthesia
- Safely induces, maintains and monitors analgesia and anaesthesia and takes steps to ensure safe and humane recovery
- Carries out surgical procedures using appropriate techniques and procedures before, during and after surgery that minimise the risk to the animal and maximise the likelihood of a successful outcome
- Undertakes accurate pre-operative assessment, uses correct techniques to minimise trauma and gives adequate post operative instructions and follow up care
- Deals effectively with the immediate emergency needs of animals and ensures the relief of pain and suffering
- Evaluates the need for euthanasia and when required carries it out safely and humanely, with the informed consent of the owner (where known) and using procedures appropriate for the species concerned and the circumstances

6. Use veterinary skills and knowledge to:

- **prevent and relieve animal suffering**
- **maintain and enhance the health, productivity and well being of animals**
- **promote and protect public health, animal product safety and certification and New Zealand biosecurity**

Indicators:

- Demonstrates understanding of the importance of the unique disease status of New Zealand
- Recognises exotic and/or notifiable diseases and takes appropriate action, including communicating to those with a need to know
- Understands the principles and practice involved in controlling the spread of diseases
- Provides appropriate first level advice on the public health implications of animal diseases
- Assesses the need for and advises on the implementation of programmes to promote the health, well being and productivity and performance of animals through such means as dietary management and feeding, vaccination, preventive and curative treatments for common diseases, housing and general management, training and behavioural management and modification.
- Understands animal welfare issues and recognises the special responsibilities of veterinarians in safeguarding and promoting animal welfare, including communicating to those with a need to know in the event of concerns
- Understands, advises on, and complies with the procedures and animal welfare, ethical and statutory requirements relating to the transport and hygienic production and processing of animals for food and other animal products
- Understands the regulatory and professional requirements for the inspection and certification of animals and animal products (including germplasm and those products intended for human consumption)
- Understands the basic requirements for the production of safe food and other products of animal origin including the compliance verification and quality assurance procedures involved
- Maintains the integrity of veterinary certification by complying with all legal and professional requirements, ensuring that certified statements are accurate and that there are no conflicts of interest which could impact on professional judgement.

7. Communicate effectively

Indicators:

Demonstrates:

- effective oral and written communication skills
- an understanding of verbal and non verbal means of communication and cultural differences
- good listening skills
- avoidance of jargon
- effective conflict management techniques

With clients demonstrates:

- rapport, sensitivity, empathy, courtesy and respect
- clear and accurate explanations of findings, treatment options and likely outcomes in easily understood language
- client's understanding of the information provided is confirmed
- the need for sensitivity and support for grieving clients in situations of euthanasia

With other veterinarians

- refers where necessary
- seeks advice where necessary
- provides advice on diagnoses, treatment and prognoses to referring veterinarians in a timely manner
- works collaboratively and avoids negative public comment about others

8. Practise in a professional, ethical and legal manner

Indicators:

Demonstrates understanding of, and complies with the professional and legislative requirements relating to veterinary practice in New Zealand including:

- the Veterinarians Act 2005
- the VCNZ Code of Professional Conduct
- the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) Act and related requirements
- Medicine and Misuse of Drugs Act
- Legislative requirements regarding the safe and secure storage of drugs and the recording of their use
- the Animal Welfare Act, relevant Codes of Welfare and in research situations, the Code of Ethical Conduct for the Use of Animals in Research of the organisations responsible for the research
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- Radiation Protection Act
- Employment Relations Act
- Relevant rules of the Racing or Harness Racing Conferences, Greyhound Association or similar bodies
- Nationwide schemes, relevant to their practice, such as the Bobby Calf Antibacterial Residues Prevention Scheme, Tb Quality Assurance Scheme, National Velveting Standards Body Accreditation Programme and the National Bovine Tuberculosis Pest Management Strategy.
- The Resource Management Act 1993 in relation to the disposal of dead animals

Practises ethically and upholds the public's trust in, and integrity of the profession by:

- using knowledge and skills for the benefit of society
- maintaining an appropriate standard of personal and professional behaviour
- ensuring the continuity of clinical services for bona fide clients
- administering emergency first aid and pain relief to sick or injured animals when called upon
- cooperating with and working collaboratively with colleagues, support staff and clients
- maintaining knowledge and skills through continuing professional development
- practising within the boundaries of competence (except in an emergency where immediate relief of pain is required)
- ensuring that newly registered or inexperienced veterinarians are supervised and supported
- reporting to the Veterinary Council in situations where a colleague's competence or health condition appears to be placing the public interest at risk