Specific and limited range of veterinary services

Introduction

The provision of emergency services is a requirement under the Code of Professional Conduct and the ACVM Notice. Veterinarians cannot opt out of this requirement and must not redirect emergency care after hours calls to other veterinarians without prior agreement.

Providing emergency services including afterhours is a challenging aspect of clinical practice and requires significant clinic resources to deliver sustainably. Most practices work to manage this for their staff.

Where a veterinary business operates without providing this service the unmet emergency services workload falls to other neighbouring clinics.

Most clients will have one veterinarian or veterinary business who they consider to be their general veterinary practitioner (GVP). Sometimes clients may choose to use the services of a number of different veterinarians to provide the regular veterinary care for their animals. These veterinarians and veterinary businesses provide a comprehensive range of veterinary care for their clients.

Some veterinary businesses provide a specific and limited veterinary service. These services are normally restricted in scope i.e. they do not include the range of services provided by a GVP. These services may be accessed via a veterinarian or they may be client led.

Section 2 of the Professional Relationships section of the Code covers veterinarians who provide "a specific and limited range of veterinary services". While it requires these veterinarians to arrange for 24 hour emergency care, this is only in relation to the matters consulted on. This can cause confusion as to who is responsible for providing emergency care, particularly when the parameters of the "specific and limited range of veterinary services" are not clear and might be regarded by the client (and sometimes other veterinarians) as a substitute for general veterinary care.

Proposal to amend the Code

We are proposing to amend the Code to address this confusion and make the rules clear for all. This would involve creating a new definition of "specific and limited range of veterinary services" in the Code and inserting three new sections into the Professional Relationships section of the Code.

Proposed wording

We propose inserting the following definition into the Glossary of the Code.

Specific and Limited Range of Veterinary services

The provision of restricted veterinary services, being:

- Group 1 OR Niche services
  Very specific types of service (e.g. house call euthanasia services).
- Group 2 OR Advanced services
  Moderately specific services where the veterinarian has advanced skills or is a specialist (e.g. equine dentistry; artificial breeding techniques such as embryo transplanting; veterinary orthopaedic surgeons etc).
- Group 3 OR Consultancy services
  Less specific yet expert level services (e.g. dairy cattle fertility and reproduction consultancy including advice relating to artificial breeding techniques such as cattle synchronisation for AI, udder health and milk quality consultancy etc).

As the services become less specific, they become more limited in terms of the ability to authorise RVMs and the requirements to engage with the General Veterinary Practitioner.

We also propose adding the following three sections to the Professional Relationships section of the Code.

Section 2A

When veterinarians provide a specific and limited range of veterinary services to the animals under their care, the following general conditions must be met:

1. The veterinarian has advanced training or experience in the specific area of practice covered by the service.
2. The service is limited in its scope so as not to be confused with the services provided by a General Veterinary Practitioner.
3. The veterinarian offers no more than one specific range of services, for example, embryo transplants, equine dentistry, or lameness examinations.
4. The service is not, and is not likely to be seen as, a substitute to the client developing a relationship with a General Veterinary Practitioner. Hence this scope excludes vaccination-only clinics and companion-animal-desexing-only clinics.
5. The specific and limited service business consistently provides those services to all its clients. The business should not selectively provide a 'specific and limited range of veterinary services' to certain clients and general veterinary services to others.

Section 2B

When providing Niche services to the animals under their care, veterinarians must comply with the following conditions:

1. The veterinarian **must** only authorise the use of restricted veterinary medicines for immediate use on specific clinical matters they have consulted on.

2. The veterinarian **should**, with the client's permission, contact the client's General Veterinary Practitioner. Communication between the veterinarians is encouraged because if the total veterinary input is fragmented it may be difficult to achieve the best possible veterinary care outcomes for the animal(s) and the client.
3. The veterinarian must make arrangements for 24-hour emergency cover that is proportionate to the service they offer. This means cover for any adverse event or complication that could be related to procedures or examinations carried out, or veterinary medicines authorised or used.

Section 2C

When providing Advanced services to the animals under their care, veterinarians must comply with the following conditions:

1. The veterinarian **must** only authorise the use of restricted veterinary medicines for immediate use on specific clinical matters they have consulted on.
   a. This specifically excludes the authorisation for future supply[1] in order to hold specific RVMs in anticipation of use
   b. This also specifically excludes the authorisation of vaccines and other RVMs not required for the matter consulted on.
2. The veterinarian **must**, with the client's permission, contact the client's General Veterinary Practitioner. A client's decision to decline permission does not prevent services being provided, but this should be noted in the clinical records.
3. The veterinarian must make arrangements for 24-hour emergency cover that is proportionate to the service they offer. This means cover for any adverse event or complication that could be related to procedures or examinations carried out, or veterinary medicines authorised or used.

Section 2D

When providing Consulting services to the animals under their care, veterinarians must comply with the following conditions:

1. The veterinarian **must not** authorise the use of restricted veterinary medicines.
2. The veterinarian **must** only provide the service after communicating directly with the client's General Veterinary Practitioner about the service they are providing. i.e. if the client declines consent to contact their GVP the consultant must not provide the consultancy services
3. The veterinarian must make arrangements for 24-hour emergency cover that is proportionate to the service they offer. This emergency cover may be provided, if agreed to, by the General Veterinary Practitioner.

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[1] Code of Professional Conduct – Veterinary Medicines Section 3 Authorisation