



## – Coronavirus Update –

### Telemedicine

- The CVBC does not have a Telemedicine Standard or Policy that establishes any special rules for telemedicine practice.
- The Coronavirus pandemic does not alter the ethical, professional and legal obligations of a veterinarian in the practice of veterinary medicine as established in provincial legislation (the *Veterinarians Act*), and the CVBC bylaws and standards. These include (but are not limited to):
  - Licensure
    - A veterinarian must be a registrant of the CVBC with an active class of license in order to provide veterinary services to the BC public;
  - Establishment of a VCPR;
  - Informed client consent;
  - Privacy, confidentiality and security of client and animal information;
  - Medical record keeping;
  - Prescribing; and
  - Follow up care.

Additionally, veterinary services must only be provided in association with (at/from/through) a CVBC-accredited practice facility

**The expectations for a VCPR that are established in the [Professional Practice Standard: Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship \(VCPR\)](#) must remain a priority.**

However, the College recognizes that the current and evolving circumstances of COVID are creating a unique and specific challenge that will require some flexibility in the application of the standard by the College until this public health crisis passes. The CVBC trusts and relies on its registrants to provide services in the best interests of their patients and the public. This includes the continuous application of professional discretion and clinical judgement in responding to individual circumstances of each case and to deviate from the normal standard of care only for the sake of the protecting the public.

- The VCPR Standard itself acknowledges that exceptions to the requirements for establishing a legitimate VCPR may exist in some circumstances – each case needs to be assessed individually on its own merits.
- Registrants must always consider the limits of what can be safely accomplished remotely and registrants must know where to draw the line, as there are risks to the patient when treatment decisions are being made in the absence of a proper physical exam or diagnostic testing. The College respects registrants to use their best judgment in extraordinary circumstances.

- The need for proper informed consent of the client must not be overlooked – registrants will need to explain the limitations of telemedicine and the possible risks of misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatment decisions resulting from incomplete information.
- Prescribing: A veterinarian is required to only prescribe for an animal(s) with whom they have
  - (a) established a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) and
  - (b) obtained recent and sufficient knowledge of through either a physical examination or premise visit.

A veterinarian is expected to use their professional judgement when determining whether they have an appropriate amount of recent and sufficient knowledge in order to provide a prescription. Only if a veterinarian believes that they have this information (within a VCPR) may that veterinarian provide a prescription via telemedicine.

- Proper medical record keeping and security must also remain a priority.