College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

CVBC Professional Practice Standard: Managing Stray or Found Animals

Approved by Council April 21, 2023

Purpose

This standard is intended to clarify CVBC registrant responsibilities under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* and the CVBC Bylaws when presented with a stray or found animal.

Definitions

Assumed Care: a registrant assumes care for an animal when:

- The registrant agrees to provide veterinary services to an animal; or
- An animal is brought to a veterinary practice facility and staff, or a registrant of the facility take custody or control of the animal.

Distress: an animal is in distress if the animal is:

- injured, sick, in pain or suffering, or abused or neglected;
- deprived of adequate food, water, shelter, ventilation, light, space, exercise, care or veterinary treatment; or
- kept in conditions that are unsanitary or not protected from excessive heat or cold.

Critical Distress: distress in an animal of such a nature that immediate veterinary treatment cannot prolong the animal's life, or prolonging the animal's life would result in the animal suffering unduly.

Stray or Found Animal: includes all types of animals except for wildlife, as defined in the Wildlife Act, that is not in captivity.

Standard

A registrant that has assumed care of a stray or found animal must:

1. Care for the animal, including protecting the animal from circumstances that are likely to cause the animal to be in distress.

2. Perform thorough physical examination of the animal to determine whether the animal is in distress or critical distress.

3. Attempt to identify the owner of the animal in order to establish a veterinary-client-patient-relationship and obtain informed consent for any proposed

veterinary services.

4. Contact an appropriate responsible authority if no owner can be identified or attempts to contact the owner are unsuccessful. This will be dependent on the municipality in which the practice facility is located and may be municipal animal control or the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) shelter.

5. Unless an owner or responsible authority directs otherwise, provide the following for an animal that is in distress or critical distress as result of injury, pain, or sickness:
    a. appropriate treatment to stabilize the animal; and
    b. provide appropriate analgesics.

    These steps must be taken even if attempts to contact the owner or appropriate authority are unsuccessful.

6. Consider whether euthanasia is appropriate to relieve critical distress. A registrant may perform euthanasia on an animal in critical distress without the consent of an owner or an appropriate responsible authority: section 12 of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act*.

7. Create a medical record for the animal that contains, in addition to any requirements set out in the CVBC Bylaws and Standards in relation to medical records, the following information:
    a. whether or not the animal is in distress or critical distress and the basis for the finding; and
    b. the attempts made to contact the owner of the animal or the appropriate responsible authority.

References

PCA Act, Definitions, "Person responsible", in relation to an animal, includes a person who (a) owns an animal, (b) has custody or control of an animal, or (c) is an operator in relation to an animal;

PCA Act, s. 9.1 Duties of persons responsible for animals: "(I) A person responsible for an animal must care for the animal, including protecting the animal from circumstances that are likely to cause the animal to be in distress. (2) A person responsible for an animal must not cause or permit the animal to be, or continue to be, in distress."

PCA Act, s.24.02

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, s. 2: "For the purposes of this Act, an animal is in distress if it is (a) deprived of adequate food, water, shelter, ventilation, light, space, exercise, care or vete1inary treatment, (a. I) kept in conditions that are unsanitary, (a.2) not protected from excessive heat or cold, (b) injured, sick, in pain or suffering, or (c) abused or neglected."

CVBC Bylaws, Part 4- Ethics and Standards, Division 4.2- Code of Ethics

CVBC Medical Records Standard General

CVBC Medical Records Standard Companion Animal