College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

Professional Practice Standard: Veterinary Dentistry (Companion Animals)

Revised DATE (originally published October 2018; modified May 2023)

Introduction

Performing dentistry on animals falls within the scope of the practice of veterinary medicine as defined in section 1 of the *Veterinarians Act*. The knowledge acquired during veterinary education and training uniquely qualifies veterinarians to provide preventive and therapeutic oral and dental care to animals.

Dental care in veterinary medicine involves the assessment, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases and disorders of the teeth and associated structures. Competent and safe performance of veterinary dentistry requires extensive knowledge of veterinary anatomy, anesthesiology, pharmacology, physiology, pathology, radiology, neurology, medicine, and surgery. In addition, knowledge of the etiological basis of oral disease is necessary to properly discuss with a client the prognosis, treatment, and preventative procedures.

This standard is meant to set out a non-exhaustive list of the minimum expected requirements in relation to the practice of veterinary dentistry.

This standard is intended to apply to companion animals only and excludes equines.

Definitions

Veterinary dentistry: Veterinary dentistry involves oral health care procedures in any animal species and includes all aspects of evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment (non-surgical, surgical, or related procedures), and prevention of all conditions, diseases, and disorders of the teeth, oral cavity, mandible, and maxillofacial area and adjacent structures provided by a registered veterinarian within the scope of their education, training and experience in accordance with the ethics of the profession, the *Veterinarians Act* and the *CVBC Bylaws*.

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COHAT: Comprehensive Oral Health Assessment & Treatment

Non-Surgical extraction: Extraction of teeth severely affected by periodontal disease where minimal manipulation is required to remove a tooth without the application of extrusive force. Non-Surgical extractions must not involve the creation of a flap or removal of alveolar bone. A Non-Surgical extraction may progress to a Surgical Extraction technique if complications arise.

Surgical extraction: Any extraction that requires more than minimal manipulation including but not limited to extrusive force, elevation, sectioning, drilling, creation of a gingival/mucogingival flap, removal of crown tissue, suturing and alveolectomy (removal of all or some of the alveolar bone).

Practice Expectations To meet the *Professional Practice Standard: Veterinary Dentistry (Companion Animals)* a Registrant must:

1. Diagnose and formulate a treatment plan through direct examination of the animal.
2. Ensure assessment, diagnosis and formulation of a treatment plan is not delegated to a non-registrant.
3. Ensure sufficient and appropriate dental equipment is available in the facility at the time of the dental procedure. This includes the capacity to perform intraoral radiographs.
4. Where necessary to ensure a complete assessment, obtain sufficient intraoral radiographic images
    a. inform the treatment plan and procedures
    b. evaluate outcome of the procedure
    c. record the patient's dental condition pre and post treatment, and
    d. inform the client
5. Administer species- and procedure-appropriate sedation and/or general anesthesia with intubation in combination with appropriate analgesics. For all cats and dogs, a dental cleaning, scaling, or COHAT requires general anesthesia with intubation.
6. Only delegate a non-surgical extraction to a non-registrant if the registrant is satisfied, they are competent to do so.
7. Provide direct personal supervision for any non-surgical extraction delegated to a non registrant to monitor the procedure to determine if a surgical extraction becomes more appropriate.
8. Perform all surgical closure of an extraction site when required
9. Use appropriate and accurate dental charting.

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OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Registrants are also reminded to ensure compliance with, but not limited to, the following standards and bylaws in the context of companion animal dentistry:

CVBC Bylaws:

Division 4.3 General Standards s.211 Informed Consent

Division 4.7 Delegation and Supervision

CVBC Professional Practice Standards:

Professional Practice Standard: The Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR)

- Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship

Professional Practice Standard: Companion Animal Medical Records

- Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records

Professional Practice Standard: Small Animal Anesthetic Monitoring

Use of Titles

"Dentist" and "dental surgeon" are reserved titles, under the *Dentists Regulation* of the *Health Professions Act*.

In veterinary medicine, titles such as "veterinary dentist" are qualifications earned through advanced training and board certification in the field. Veterinarians must not use these, or similar titles in reference to themselves (e.g., "veterinary dentist", "equine dentist", etc.) unless they have achieved board certification in veterinary dentistry. For a BC veterinarian to identify themself as a specialist in *any* field, that veterinarian must register their qualifications with the CVBC by providing proof of their diplomate status with a specialty college recognized by either the American or European Board of Veterinary Specialists.

Legislative Authority

Veterinarians Act, SBC 2010, s. 1, 3(2)(b), 46, 47

Versions of this Standard

- October 2018 – original version approved by Council and published
- May 2020 – inclusion of definitions for surgical and non-surgical extractions, and alveolectomy
- DATE 2023 – revision approved by Council and published

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Reference Materials

American Veterinary Dental College

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association

CVMA Surgical Procedures Performed on Animals. Ottawa, Ontario. Revised 2021

American Veterinary Medical Association. Policy on Veterinary Dentistry

American Veterinary Dental Collage Primary Care Practice Resources

World Small Animal Veterinary Association Global Dental Guidelines

College of Veterinarians of Ontario's

"Professional Practice Standard: Veterinary Dentistry" (March 2015).

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association

"Veterinary Dentistry Position Statement" 2022

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