College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

Companion Animal Dentistry Guidelines

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Introduction

The College's Professional Practice Standard: Veterinary Dentistry (Companion Animals) establishes a non-exhaustive list of the minimum expected requirements that a veterinarian must meet when providing competent and safe companion animal veterinary dentistry.

Using a question-and-answer format, this Guide to the Professional Practice Standard addresses questions and offers suggestions on how to apply the Professional Practice Standard and questions that may arise regarding companion animal in veterinary dentistry.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What Should be Considered to Ensure Sufficient Qualifications and Competence in Companion Animal Dentistry?

A. All veterinarians must strive to maintain and further their level of competence so that they may practice with the level of care, skill and knowledge expected of a competent practitioner. This includes undertaking regular ongoing education and training to stay abreast of advances in all aspects of their chosen scope of practice. To ensure current and ongoing competence in companion animal dentistry it is recommended that:

   i. Any veterinarian who identifies that they have received limited training in veterinary dentistry should be supported through the supervision and coaching of a veterinarian with appropriate skills and experience until such time as hands on continuing education can be undertaken or the supervising veterinarian deems the individual to have achieved an acceptable level of competency.
   ii. All veterinarians who perform veterinary dentistry should endeavor to participate in continuing education relating to veterinary dentistry every 3 years to ensure skills and knowledge remain up to date with respect to dental procedures, appropriate dental equipment, diagnostics, and therapeutics including analgesia.

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iii. As per section 205(1) of the bylaws a registrant must provide only those services for which they are reasonably confident they are qualified and competent to provide, and, when doing so, must not misrepresent their qualifications or competence.

I do not regularly perform companion animal dentistry in my practice; however, my client's pet has a dental condition that requires intervention, and the client has identified limitations that will prevent them from accessing care at another clinic. (Financial limitations, travel limitations, etc.) What are the options?

The health and well-being of your patient is the most important factor to keep in mind, however there are some key considerations provided below that can assist you in determining if it would be reasonable to proceed with providing the necessary care:

A. If a recommended/necessary procedure may be beyond the veterinarian's competence and/or facility capabilities in accordance with the requirements established in the CVBC's Accreditation Standards (Schedule D) and this Professional Practice Standard, but:

   i. The animal is unable to receive treatment elsewhere due to economic hardship geographic limitations, or other extenuating circumstances, and
   ii. It is believed the procedure can be undertaken safely and is in the best interests of the animal's health and welfare.

B. The veterinarian may determine it is reasonable to proceed, but MUST ensure:

   i. Documentation of the reason the veterinarian elected to undertake the procedure.
   ii. Documentation that the client is fully informed by the veterinarian of the recommended standard of care and the options available including referral to another practice.
   iii. Documentation that the client has been made aware of the registrant or practice's limitations and that the procedure may be beyond the registrant's current qualifications or competence.
   iv. The client is enabled to decide based on all available information and treatment options including other practice facilities available, taking into consideration the health and welfare of the animal.
   v. That the client fully understands the options, risks, and potential outcomes, and

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vi. Informed consent for the proposed procedure in accordance with section 211 of the Bylaws is obtained in writing and the discussion is clearly articulated in the medical record.

How do I know if it is appropriate to delegate responsibilities to non-veterinary staff within the practice facility as it pertains to dental care?

To meet the *Professional Practice Standard: Veterinary Dentistry (Companion Animals)* a Registrant: May, in accordance with CVBC bylaws, delegate a non-surgical dental procedure under the following circumstances:

i. The veterinarian is confident that the employee has the education and experience to perform the procedure, such as a Registered Veterinary Technician, whenever possible;
ii. The veterinarian is available on-site to provide appropriate supervision to the competent employee and can provide direct personal supervision; and
iii. The veterinarian confirms that the delegated procedure was correctly performed by personally re-examining the entire oral cavity on completion of the procedure.
iv. The veterinarian always performs surgical closures required.
v. A registrant must not delegate a surgical extraction to a non-registrant.

What do I do if I have an unexpected outcome involving a dental procedure?

Engage in open and transparent discussion with the client under the following circumstances:

A. In advance of the dental procedures (and during, as required, if treatment plans are modified), to achieve proper informed consent; and
B. In the event of an unexpected outcome (e.g., broken tooth, root extending into the sinus, retained root) communication including establishing a plan for next steps should they be required.

Reference Materials

CVBC Bylaws:

Division 4.3 General Standards s.211 Informed Consent

Division 4.7 Delegation and Supervision

CVBC Professional Practice Standards:

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Professional Practice Standard: The Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship 9VCPR)

- 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

Other Resources:

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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