



PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE STANDARD

Telemedicine

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Introduction

Advancements in communication and information technology provide opportunities for new approaches to the delivery of veterinary medicine. The College recognizes the value of utilizing developments in technology to improve access to the provision of veterinary medicine, where appropriate, and supports innovations in the delivery of veterinary medicine.

Definition

Telemedicine: Telemedicine refers to the delivery of veterinary medicine using information and communication technologies where the veterinarian and the patient are not in the same physical location. Telemedicine does not include remote consultation between colleagues in different locations. In cases of consultation, professional obligations and responsibilities rest with the licensed member who is in an established veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR). Telemedicine is a method or mode used to enhance the practice of veterinary medicine in relation to an Ontario animal or animals. As in all circumstances, an individual practising veterinary medicine in Ontario must be licensed with the College of Veterinarians of Ontario.

Practice Expectations

A veterinarian meets the Professional Practice Standard: Telemedicine when he/she:

1. Understands that a veterinarian-client-patient relationship is established via telemedicine in the same circumstances as when the relationship is established in-person.
2. Understands that practising veterinary medicine via telemedicine is only permitted in the context of an existing and valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship.
3. Understands that telemedicine is a method or mode of delivering veterinary medicine, rather than a new model of practice. Further, a veterinarian's existing legal and professional obligations are not altered when veterinary medicine is provided via telemedicine.
4. Employs sound professional judgment to determine whether using telemedicine is appropriate in particular circumstances each and every time he or she considers practising via telemedicine, and only provides advice via telemedicine to the extent that it is possible without a physical examination. In doing so, a veterinarian must consider whether practising via telemedicine will enable him or her to satisfy all relevant and applicable legal and professional obligations, and meet the expected standard of care in any specific case. He or she does not substitute telemedicine technology for a physical examination when a physical examination is necessary, and where he or she could not thereby make an appropriate diagnosis or create a treatment plan.
5. Accepts that he or she cannot prescribe drugs when practising via telemedicine alone, unless the veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal or group of animals by virtue of a history and inquiry and either physical examination or medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animal or group of animals is kept.
6. Practises veterinary medicine via telemedicine only in association with an accredited facility.
7. Ensures that the client is aware of the veterinarian's location, licensure status and the privacy and security issues involved in accessing veterinary care via telemedicine.
8. Ensures that he or she safeguards a client's privacy when practising via telemedicine by taking appropriate precautions and confirming that the technology and physical setting being used by the veterinarian and client have adequate security protocols in place to ensure compliance with the veterinarian's legal and professional obligations to protect clients' privacy and confidentiality.
9. Ensures that the technology used with respect to practice via telemedicine is of sufficient and appropriate quality to assure the accuracy of remote assessment and diagnosis.

10. Ensures that information that is collected when a veterinarian practises via telemedicine becomes a part of the medical record. Maintains all applicable aspects of record keeping, outlined in the College's regulations and standards.

Legislative Authority

Veterinarians Act, R.S.O. 1990

R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 1093: General (*Veterinarians Act*)

Other References

The following can be found on the College's website at www.cvo.org:

Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Telemedicine

Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records

Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records

Professional Practice Standard: The Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship

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

Professional Practice Standard: Delegation

Professional Practice Standard: Informed Client Consent

Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Informed Client Consent

College publications contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all Ontario veterinarians in the care of their patients and in the practice of the profession. College publications are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained. The College encourages you to refer to the website (www.cvo.org) to ensure you are referring to the most recent version of any document.