



VETERINARY BOARD OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

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ADVISORY NOTE TO ALL NORTHERN TERRITORY REGISTERED VETERINARIANS

PROFESSIONAL AND STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS TO BE MET AND BORNE BY VETERINARIANS WHEN PRESCRIBING DRUGS TO NON-VETERINARIANS

This advisory note is issued in response to the Board's concerns that some veterinarians may not be aware of the full extent of the professional and statutory obligations to be met and borne by veterinarians when prescribing and supplying drugs to non-veterinarians and the associated record keeping requirements.

Statutory Responsibilities

It is the duty of registered veterinarians under clause 9 of the Code of Conduct prescribed in the Northern Territory *Veterinarians Regulations* to be familiar with their responsibilities under the laws relating to their professional practice. These include *inter alia* the *Veterinarians Act*, *Veterinarians Regulations*, the *Animal Welfare Act*, the *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act* and *Regulations*. and the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act* and *Regulations*.

Clauses 4(2) and (8) of the Code of Conduct state that "a registered veterinarian shall keep case records in relation to each individual animal in his or her care" and that "a registered veterinarian who provides a client with a drug or a prescription for a drug, for an animal shall give the client proper directions with respect to the administration of the drug, and advise the client of any safety or other precautions that should be taken in connection with the drug and of any withholding period that may be applicable."

Authority to Prescribe

A veterinarian's authority to obtain and prescribe Schedule 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8 substances for therapeutic use on an animal, is provided by the *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act*, which regulates the supply, possession and use of poisons and dangerous drugs and includes specific provisions on storage and records keeping. With this authority comes a responsibility for veterinarians to comply with the legislation and to act in a professional manner. The *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act* and *Regulations* further prescribe the duties and responsibilities expected of veterinarians in relation to controlling the use of veterinary chemical products.

Regulation 7 - Veterinarians Regulations

Regulation Number 7 of the Veterinarians Regulations sets out the circumstances in which a veterinarian may supply drugs to a non-veterinarian as follows:

Clause 7(1)(b) allows for "the administration of an anaesthetic or drug to an animal by a person, where a registered veterinarian has –

- (i) previously examined the animal and decided that the anaesthetic or drug is required to be administered; and
- (ii) satisfied himself or herself that the person is competent to administer it, and the administration takes place under the supervision of the veterinarian."

Clause 7(1)(c) allows for “the administration of a vaccine, or of a drug listed in Schedule 4 of the *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act*, to an animal where a registered veterinarian has

- (i) made enquiries about the animal and decided that the vaccine or drug is required to be administered;
- (ii) satisfied himself or herself that it is not reasonably practicable for a registered veterinarian to administer it, and that the person is competent to do so; and
- (iii) supplied or prescribed the drugs and given full directions with respect to its administration.

A Guide to Compliance with Clause 7 - Veterinarians Regulations

As a general guide to compliance with Clause 7, **in issuing such a prescription, the veterinarian takes full responsibility for:**

- the sale and appropriate use of the medicine and for issuing adequate instructions about its use in order to manage any risks to users, the public, animals, consumers, the environment or trade
- examining or making enquiries of the animal
- establishing that there is a therapeutic need for the drug and that it is in the best interests of the animal/herd/flock
- dispensing only a reasonable amount of the drug to treat the immediate problem
- confirming that the amount dispensed is reasonable if a problem is on-going
- ensuring that the medication/drug will be used properly
- fulfilling requirements for storage and handling
- compliance with documentation, record keeping and labelling protocols
- any after care necessary for the animal’s welfare
- his/her own understanding of the use of the drug and possible cautions
- adhering to any additional requirements for a food producing animal (including advising the client of the withholding period/export slaughter interval)
- having a system of follow up to check on the use of and outcome from the medication/drug.

Appropriate Operational Procedures

It is advisable for registered veterinarians to establish appropriate operational procedures and protocols that comply with the legislation and record keeping requirements, and address fully, the responsibilities borne by prescribing veterinarians in exercising control, oversight and checks on the use of the drugs they prescribe for administration by non-veterinarians.

Access to copies of relevant legislation

Veterinarians may access full copies of all legislation that impacts on veterinary practice at the Veterinary Board’s website at www.vetboard.nt.gov.au or the Northern Territory Government Legislation Website at www.nt.gov.au/dcm/legislation/current.html.

Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) Resource

In addition, the AVA document entitled “*Guidelines for Prescribing, Authorising and Dispensing Veterinary Medicines*” is a usual resource and reference tool that can be viewed and/or downloaded from www.ava.com.au.