

VETERINARY BOARD OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

GUIDELINES ON MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR HOUSE CALL PRACTICES

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Veterinarians Act

The Board is empowered under section 6(e) of the *Veterinarians Act* to issue guidelines on standards in relation to the provision of veterinary services that must be observed by registered veterinarians and veterinary specialists.

Failure to uphold or maintain contemporary professional standards constitutes incompetence within the meaning of misconduct as defined in section 28 of the *Veterinarians Act*.

Code of Conduct – Regulation 9 - Veterinarians Regulations

The Code of Conduct prescribed at Regulation 9 of the Veterinarians Regulations requires registered veterinarians to be familiar with and abide by all legislation pertaining to veterinary practice; to maintain current standards of practice in their chosen areas of veterinary practice; and to carry out all veterinary services in accordance with the Board's guidelines.

Specifically,

Clause 1 – BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

includes the requirement under 1(1)(b) for registered veterinarians to be familiar with and abide by all relevant legislation affecting their professional activity and behaviour (**which includes** the *Veterinarians Act*, Veterinarians Regulations, **the Code of Conduct, and the Board's Guidelines**).

Clause 4 - KNOWLEDGE OF CURRENT STANDARD OF PRACTICE

provides at 4(1) that a registered veterinarian must maintain current standards of veterinary practice in their areas of veterinary practice and **requires at 4(1)(b) that registered veterinarians “always carry out veterinary services in accordance with those current standards and in accordance with the Board's guidelines.”**

GUIDELINES UNDER SECTION 6(e) OF THE VETERINARIANS ACT
MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR HOUSE CALL PRACTICES

Registered veterinary practitioners should ensure that they are familiar with the contents of this Guideline. The Board determines this Guideline to be the minimum standard expected from a registered veterinary practitioner exercising reasonable skill and care in the course of providing treatment to animals.

Definition

A “House Call Practice” is a practice that primarily offers house call veterinary services in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine, not including visits for large animal consultations to farms, stables or other livestock premises. (Darwin includes Palmerston and the rural areas of Howard Springs and Humpty Doo.)

STANDARDS

- (A) A House Call Practice shall provide ready communication for the public with the house call veterinarian(s), including arrangements for out-of-hours and/or emergency cases.
- (B) A House Call Practice shall have access to a fixed veterinary premise which complies with Guidelines on Minimum Standards for Veterinary Premises.
- (C) When performing house calls, the veterinarian shall carry out only those procedures for which they have suitable facilities and equipment, and that do not require general anaesthetic. All other procedures are to be performed at the base clinic or other suitable veterinary premises.
- (D) The vehicle used for house calls shall:
 - (a) be clean and hygienic at all times;
 - (b) have secure storage for carrying drugs as required by the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act) and Regulations and the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act* and Regulations (or any subsequent amendment to these regulations);
 - (c) carry adequate measures to ensure that full and accurate contemporaneous medical records are able to be completed;
 - (d) provide the necessary facilities for the safe transportation of patients when required;

- (e) carry sufficient instruments and equipment for a thorough clinical examination;
- (f) be capable of being locked and meet the requirements of all government regulations, including the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act) and Regulations, and local government regulations.
- (g) provide facilities that allow for the prevention of spread of infectious disease between patients and premises.

Please Note:

Practitioners should read these Guidelines in conjunction with the Code of Conduct prescribed in the Veterinarians Regulations and the additional Guidelines published by the Board under Section 6(e) of the *Veterinarians Act* on the Minimum Standards for:

- Anaesthesia
- Record Keeping
- Staff
- Veterinary Premises

Copies can be accessed from the Board website: www.vetboard.nt.gov.au

Date Last Reviewed - May 2014

Acknowledgement:

In developing these Guidelines, the Veterinary Board of the Northern Territory has drawn from the Guidelines adopted by the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria and acknowledges the assistance provided by the Victorian Board.