

VETERINARY BOARD OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

GUIDELINES ON MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VETERINARY PREMISES

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.”**

Clause 25 – VETERINARY PREMISES - provides that:

“A registered veterinarian shall ensure that any premises at which he or she provides veterinary services, and all equipment that he or she has for use in the carrying out of veterinary services, are kept in a safe and clean condition.”

GUIDELINES UNDER SECTION 6(e) OF THE *VETERINARIANS ACT*

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VETERINARY PREMISES

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

For the purpose of this Guideline the definition of veterinary premises is any building or place in Darwin, Palmerston, the Darwin rural areas of Howard Springs and Humpty Doo, Katherine and Alice Springs, where veterinary procedures are performed. This includes all fixed premises from large hospitals to consulting rooms, and includes rooms embedded in other business premises. Whilst veterinary premises may be owned by any person or company, the Veterinary Board of the Northern Territory determines that it is the responsibility of registered veterinarians employed in or by the practice to ensure that the premises meet certain minimum standards.

GENERAL STANDARDS

All veterinary premises, including consulting rooms, clinics and hospitals shall:

- (A) be clean and hygienic at all times;
- (B) have on prominent display, the telephone number and days and hours of attendance and arrangements for obtaining after hours services;
- (C) have a separate area for use as a waiting room and for the purpose of client reception;
- (D) have internal floors and walls constructed from easily cleaned material in any area or room that is used for animal accommodation, surgical procedures, medical treatment and other procedures, and in the client waiting rooms;
- (E) provide facilities to weigh small animal patients;
- (F) provide for the maintenance of thorough patient records.
- (G) provide in the consulting area:
 - (i) an examination table with impervious surfaces; andprovide either in or immediately adjacent to the consulting area:
 - (ii) a basin with running water and fixed drainage;

- (H) have lockable storage for 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);
- (I) have facilities for any excreta, putrescible waste, soiled bedding and carcasses to be stored in such a way and disposed of at intervals sufficient to avoid:
 - (i) the generation of offensive odours;
 - (ii) offensive appearance; and
 - (iii) those materials becoming a hazard to health;
- (J) provide facilities that allow for the prevention of the spread of contagious disease between patients;
- (K) where general anaesthetics are administered, provide facilities and equipment for inhalation anaesthesia and resuscitation of patients (eg an emergency drug kit and the ability to give positive pressure ventilation) and, for routine procedures within business hours, have a trained assistant present for the purpose of anaesthetic monitoring and to assist in maintaining sterility.
- (L) where surgical services are offered there must be facilities for adequate storage and sterilisation of appropriate surgical instruments;
- (M) meet the requirements of local authority by-laws or other regulations applicable to veterinary premises;
- (N) provide facilities for correct collection and disposal of sharps;
- (O) if radiographic services are offered then the services must comply with Occupational Health and Safety requirements and any other regulations as may be in force;
- (P) provide adequate cooling or heating and ventilation of any area in which any kennel, cage, or stall is situated – individual cage heating is acceptable;
- (Q) provide kennels or cages that comply with current veterinary standards. The cages or kennels should be made from non-porous material, be with appropriate size for the patient, have no sharp edges or points on which a patient can injure itself, and have an adequate latching device so as to hold the patient securely.
- (R) provide appropriate isolation facilities for:
 - (i) animals with suspected infectious diseases
 - (ii) animals treated with chemical or radioactive substances that may be harmful to staff

ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR SHARED PREMISES

Where a veterinary practice is conducted on the same premises as a commercial enterprise, such as boarding kennels and/or a grooming parlour:

- (1) The practice rooms and facilities shall be separate from those of the enterprise.
- (2) Animals coming to the surgery will be kept separate from animals coming to the premises for other reasons.

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
- House-Call Practices

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

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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.