

April 28, 2020

Statement from the Delaware Board of Veterinary Medicine

Re: Covid-19 Emergency Order extending VPCR to 18 months

The State of Delaware Emergency Declaration, and its associated Amendments, due to Covid-19 has closed many businesses and required the public to shelter in place. Veterinary medicine has been deemed an “essential” service by the Governor’s Office and as such veterinarians may continue practice in line with their professional Oath; “ ...to use (my) scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health and welfare, prevention and relief of animal suffering, conservation of animal resources, promotion of public health, and advancement of medical knowledge.”

Preventing spread of Covid -19 and preserving personal protective equipment (PPE) for use in human medicine must be at the forefront of how we practice veterinary medicine today and for the foreseeable future. We must encourage clients to follow the Governor’s orders, which currently include sheltering in place and limiting travel.

The discussions surrounding which veterinary procedures are “essential” should take into consideration patient health and comfort, zoonosis, conservation of PPE, and limiting Covid -19 exposure among clients and staff. The Board does not believe it is practical to list every veterinary medical procedure in an attempt to classify which are necessary, as the circumstances surrounding individual patient history may make the same procedure in one patient a medical necessity and elective in another. We encourage veterinarians to utilize published guidelines from the AVMA and CDC in their decision making process regarding which treatments to continue and which to postpone.

The Board agrees that in order to protect public health it is appropriate to extend existing Veterinary-Patient-Client Relationships (VPCR) with respect to the prescribing of medication. As such, on April 28th, 2020, the Delaware Board of Veterinary Medicine passed an Emergency Order amending Rules and Regulations section 3.1.15 to allow veterinarians to prescribe medications, if medically appropriate, within 18 months of a patient examination. This regulation change only extends the timeframe of the existing VPCR from 12 to 18 months, it does not eliminate the need to establish a VPCR by examination for new patients.

Ultimately the decision to perform a procedure or prescribe a medication falls solely on the practicing veterinarian. Veterinarians should continue to keep detailed medical records and document medical decisions made differently as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Appropriate documentation is essential to ensure appropriate patient care. The Board understands that ambiguity surrounds many medical decisions made during the State of Emergency and trust veterinarians will continue to provide medical care in the best interest of their patients and clients.

Thank you.

Danielle Downs DVM

President; Delaware Board of Veterinary Medicine

