



VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS BOARD
 AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Referrals, second opinions, registered specialists and specialist practices

| Content | ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board – Referrals, second opinions, registered specialists and specialist practices | Date |
|---------|--|-----------|
| Policy | APPROVED BY ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board | July 2023 |

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1.0 Purpose

A veterinary practitioner must utilise the skills of colleagues, by consultation or referral, where appropriate.

If a patient would benefit from specialist care, then referral to a specialist practitioner should be recommended to the animal's owner.

If referral to a specialist is declined by the owner this should be noted in the clinical record.

Veterinary specialists are generally happy to consult with general practitioners about cases. However, if the patient is not under the care of the specialist practitioner, any advice provided can only be generic in nature. If an animal owner declines referral, it would not be appropriate (or collegiate) to expect a specialist practitioner to provide detailed advice about the clinical management of a patient they have not seen or examined.

2.0 Introduction/Context

2.1 A veterinary practitioner must not refuse a request by a person responsible for the care of an animal for a referral or second opinion.

Clients are entitled to seek second opinions about cases already attended to by a veterinary practitioner.

If a client seeks a second opinion from a second veterinary practitioner, it is recommended that the veterinary practitioner contact the original veterinary practitioner to determine which treatments have been provided. This information can only be released with the express consent of the client involved. If the owner does not consent it is important to advise them of possible complications or adverse reactions if they are reluctant to authorise the release of prior medical records before proceeding with additional or altered treatment regimes.

A second opinion veterinary practitioner may have a differing opinion of a particular case, its management or prognosis, and should discuss this with a client in a professional manner.

In the circumstances where a veterinary practitioner is concerned about the treatment or advice provided previously by another practitioner, that veterinary practitioner should, with the owner's permission, seek to discuss the matter with that practitioner and should refrain from making critical or disparaging comments to the client, as they may not be in receipt of all the facts.

2.2 A veterinary practitioner who has previously treated an animal must, when requested to do so, and with the consent of the person responsible for the care of the animal, provide copies or originals of all relevant case history records directly to another veterinary practitioner who has taken over the treatment of the animal.

Where a client has authorised and requested the release of a copy of medical records (this may include case notes, computer printouts, pathology results or medical imaging results) to another veterinary practitioner, it is expected that these are provided to the alternative veterinary practitioner without undue delay. This information transfer may occur via phone discussion, mail, or electronic means. Details of the transfer of records should be documented in the history.

Specialists and referral practitioners have a responsibility to communicate their procedures, findings, and details of any treatments given back to the referring practitioner. A referral veterinary practitioner should maintain communication with the first opinion veterinary practitioner during treatment of a

referral case and respect the on-going relationship between the client and the first opinion veterinary practitioner. At the end of their involvement in the case the animal and client must be formally referred back to the usual veterinary practitioner and full details of treatment and necessary aftercare should be provided to that practitioner. All original records provided by the referring veterinary practitioner (such as radiographs) should be returned as soon as practicable.

A veterinary practitioner to whom another veterinary practitioner has referred an animal for treatment or a second opinion must return records provided by the referring veterinary practitioner as soon as practicable.

Veterinary practitioners should ensure that it is clear to clients who is and who is not a registered specialist.