



VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS BOARD
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Supply of S4 pain management medication for animal husbandry procedures in production animals policy

Introduction

In accordance with the [Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008](#), the prescription or supply of restricted substances is appropriate. Under the [Veterinary Practitioners Code of Professional Conduct 2018](#) (the Code), we as a Board require that a veterinarian must only supply a restricted substance under the following circumstances:

- a) to a person responsible for the care of an animal that the veterinary practitioner has physically examined or has under his or her direct care, and only in respect of that animal, or
- b) to a person responsible for the care of an animal, with the written authority of another veterinary practitioner who has physically examined the animal concerned or has it under his or her direct care, and only in respect of that animal.

With respect to ‘under his or her direct care’ the Board has previously noted that this inclusion enables a veterinarian to physically examine a representative sample of animals on a property, rather than every individual animal as above in accordance with the Code (Supply of restricted substances), establish a diagnosis and then supply a restricted substance for other animals within that herd or flock (i.e., animals which the veterinarian has not physically examined).

The Restricted acts of veterinary science (under Part 1.2 of the [Veterinary Practice Regulation 2018](#)) requires that the establishment of a diagnosis is in accordance with current standards and this aligns with the requirement for a physical examination prior to the supply of a restricted substance.

The Board appreciates that the performance of routine animal husbandry procedures by animal owners and carers does not involve the diagnosis of a physiological or pathological condition and accordingly it is possible to extend the definition of direct care in these circumstances.

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to clearly define the circumstances in which S4 pain management medication may be supplied for routine animal husbandry procedures in production animals in addition to circumstances whereby a veterinarian has physically examined an animal or animals in accordance with the Code (Supply of restricted substances) or in accordance with the [Telemedicine Policy](#).

Policy

1. The provision of pain-relieving medication for animals undergoing routine animal husbandry procedures should be encouraged and the requirement to physically examine an animal prior to supplying this medication may create an unnecessary barrier for primary producers and lead to poor animal welfare outcomes.
2. The need for pain management in such circumstances is self-evident and a physical examination will generally not be required to establish a therapeutic need in accordance with current standards (Restricted acts of veterinary science).

Application of the Code

1. Veterinarians must carry out professional procedures in accordance with current standards and must base professional decisions on evidence-based science or well recognised current knowledge and practice or both (Restricted acts of veterinary science):
 - a. The veterinarian must have attended the property prior to any initial supply of pain management medication in order to establish sufficient knowledge in relation to the number, species, and conditions in which the animals are kept.
 - b. The veterinarian must be aware of the nature of the specific animal husbandry procedure and the number of animals to be treated.
 - c. The medication supplied must be registered for this purpose in the species being treated and the medication and quantity supplied must not be in excess of that required for the number of animals being treated at a given time.
 - d. Subsequent to the initial property visit, the supply of pain management medication beyond any given 12 month interval must be following either a property visit or suitable technology based consultation in accordance with veterinary practice and poisons and therapeutic goods legislation.
 - e. Property visits and or suitable technology based consultations every 12 months are required to determine whether there have been any changes to the species or conditions in which the animals are kept or the animal husbandry procedures or methods used. If changes have occurred, the veterinarian must assess whether current standards indicate that a property visit rather than a technology based consultation is required prior to repeating the supply of pain management medication.