



VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS BOARD
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Use of expert review policy

Complaints made under the *Veterinary Practice Act 2018*

The Board may seek independent expert review on one or more clinical aspects of a complaint. The use of an expert assists the Board to consider a complaint against an objective technical spectrum and standard of practice.

Experts are chosen by the Board based on the specific nature of the complaint and demonstrated experience/pre-eminence in the field of veterinary science. To ensure expert reviews are independent the Board must not engage an expert unless the following is satisfied:

- the expert does not have a conflict of interest in respect of a complaint; and
- the expert does not practice as a veterinary practitioner within the ACT.

The cost of expert review is borne by the Board.

Expert review is not intended to be, nor is used as the sole measure of the clinical conduct of a practitioner. The Board takes into account all relevant circumstances in respect of a complaint, including contemporary standards of practice in the Australian veterinary profession, the context of a complaint and the conduct of a complainant. The Board considers if other similarly qualified veterinary practitioner would have acted in the same way in the same circumstances.

Subject to complainant protections and the requirements of the *Veterinary Practice Act 2018* (ACT), where an expert review is commissioned by the Board, a copy of that review is to be made available to the practitioner who is the subject of the respective complaint and the complainant. This applies whether or not an adverse finding is made against a practitioner by the Board.

Procedures for Board:

- In the case where the complaint is about a general practitioner, the review may be conducted by a peer review or if it is decided that expert advice is required the Board may engage a specialist to review part or all of the complaint.
- In the case where the complaint is about a specialist veterinary practitioner, wherever possible, the case will be reviewed by an expert with specialist qualification in the area of practice that the complaint relates to.
- Both the veterinary practitioner and the complainant to be notified of the expert that the Board has selected and to indicate if there is any conflict of interest or other issue prior to engaging the expert.
- The expert to be told that the report will be shared with the both the veterinary practitioner and the complainant.
- Expert reviewers to be given clear directions by the Board as what they are expected to report on and how (the following may assist <https://www.hccc.nsw.gov.au/health-providers/information-for-expert-reviewers>)