

The Professional Standard for the Delegation of Veterinary Medicine

Introduction

Veterinary care is most effectively delivered by a highly trained veterinary team working together to provide an optimum patient and client experience. A team approach recognizes the specific skills, knowledge and competencies that each member of the team brings to the provision of safe, quality care for either a specific animal or a herd. Veterinarians are encouraged to delegate to veterinary technologists to maximize job satisfaction, job retention and practice profitability.

The *Veterinary Profession Act* grants exclusive scope of practice of veterinary medicine to registered veterinarians and permit holders. The Act grants an exemption to a *“technologist practising under the direction or control of an unrestricted veterinarian and in accordance with the regulations.”*

Under the Veterinary Profession General Regulation, sec 9(2), veterinarians may delegate veterinary medical services to registered veterinary technologists. A veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) must exist prior to delegation of any medical task. The VCPR exists by virtue of the registered veterinarian having sufficient knowledge of a person’s animals by examination of the animals, and/or medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animals are kept.

The scope of practice that may be delegated to a veterinary technologist, pursuant to a VCPR being in place between the client and the veterinarian, is defined as:

- (2) A technologist may practice all aspects of veterinary medicine other than**
 - (a) making a diagnosis**
 - (b) determining a course of treatment**
 - (c) applying surgical techniques**

Practice Expectations for Delegation to an RVT

1. A veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) exists prior to delegation of any medical task. The VCPR exists by virtue of the registered veterinarian having sufficient knowledge of a person’s animals by examination of the animals, and/or medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animals are kept. The VCPR is described in the Veterinary Profession General Regulation.
2. Registered Veterinary Technologists (RVTs) are allowed, by legislation, to perform a number of primary animal health care tasks and veterinary practice activities. RVTs are precluded from making a diagnosis, determining a course of treatment (which includes prescribing medications), or performing any surgical procedure. RVTs may appropriately perform triage and physical examinations in the absence of a VCPR.
3. Whether a task is delegated and the level of veterinary supervision required for RVTs performing various tasks is determined by the veterinarian’s assessment of the competency of the technologist, the complexity of the task and the risk to the patient and client.
4. The veterinarian is responsible for verifying the competency or skill level of the employee to whom any procedure is delegated. Verification is achieved by observing and evaluating to the satisfaction of the individual registered ABVMA member.

5. The veterinarian is ultimately responsible for case management and veterinary medical outcomes.

Practice Expectations for Delegation to a final year veterinary student

Final Year veterinary student:

A veterinary student who is enrolled in and eligible to begin the final year of a professional degree program in veterinary medicine that is accredited by the Council on Education of the American and Canadian Veterinary Medical Associations.

Final Year veterinary students from Accredited Veterinary Colleges

- The supervising veterinarian shall ensure that they review with the student member on a daily basis all services performed by the student
- Direct or immediate supervision by a registered veterinarian, which may be in consultation with an RVT, is required for veterinary procedures restricted to registered veterinarians (i.e. making a diagnosis, determining a course of treatment (which includes prescribing medications), or performing any surgical procedure)
- The final year veterinary student and supervising veterinarian will have professional accountability
- Tasks normally delegated to an RVT may be performed under indirect supervision
- A final year veterinary student must not perform a veterinary service unless the owner of the animal has given consent (written consent is recommended) for student involvement

Veterinary medical procedures cannot be delegated to non-final year veterinary students and animal health/veterinary technology students.

See the Appendix for additional information on delegation.

Legislative Authority

Veterinary Profession Act

Veterinary Profession General Regulation

The Standards of Practice of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association (ABVMA) are the minimum standards of professional behaviour and ethical conduct expected of all regulated members registered in Alberta. It is important to note that these standards may be used by the ABVMA or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained.

Appendix

Resource Document Delegation of Veterinary Medicine – Professional Standard

The following skills list is provided to promote discussion between veterinarians and technologists in determining workflow that best suits the needs of their veterinary practice, their team, patients and clients. Workflow and engagement are increased when veterinarians and technologists focus on the skills and procedures they are competent to do.

Veterinarians are encouraged to delegate to veterinary technologists to maximize job satisfaction, job retention and practice profitability.

Whether a task is delegated, and the level of veterinary supervision required for technologists performing various tasks, is determined by the veterinarian's assessment of the competency of the technologist, the complexity of the task and the risk to the patient and client.

The scope of practice that may be delegated to a veterinary technologist, pursuant to a VCPR being in place between the client and the veterinarian, is defined as:

- (2) A technologist may practice all aspects of veterinary medicine other than**
- (a) making a diagnosis**
 - (b) determining a course of treatment**
 - (c) applying surgical techniques**

Responsibility and Accountability in a Veterinary Practice Entity

Registered veterinarians and technologists are held accountable under the *Veterinary Profession Act* (VPA). Corporations that are approved as permit holders are also responsible under the VPA.

Complaints

27(1) A person may complain to the Complaints Director in writing about the conduct of a registered member, permit holder or student, and the complaint shall be dealt with in accordance with this Part and the regulations.

Permit holders and individual members maintain their own professional responsibilities and accountabilities.

A veterinarian who delegates a procedure to a veterinary technologist has a responsibility to ensure that the technologist is appropriately trained and qualified to perform the procedures and that there is effective collaboration and support. The technologist has a professional responsibility to be competent in the areas in which they practice, which includes declining to perform a procedure if they are not competent. In the case of a complaint related to an adverse event associated with the delegated procedure, the veterinarian may be held accountable for inappropriately delegating the procedures and the technologist for performing it incorrectly.

The level of supervision is up to the supervising professional to decide based on their level of confidence in the persons' competence, the complexity of the task and the risk to the patient. The following activities require direct or immediate supervision:

- Anesthesia
- Peri and Intra-operative surgical procedures

- Dental prophylaxis (Comprehensive Oral Health Assessment and Treatment)
- Breeding soundness (with the exception of RVTs trained to perform Bovine and Small Ruminant Pregnancy Detection using Ultrasound)

Delegation to a Registered Veterinary Technologist

Below is a comprehensive (but not exhaustive) list of skills that can be delegated to an RVT.

The following skills are medical in nature, constitute the practice of veterinary medicine, pose a risk to the patient and the public, and can only be delegated to a registered veterinary technologist.

Client Relations/Practice Management
Obtain informed consent
Administer and maintain Infection Prevention and Control and biosecurity protocols and staff education with a focus on limiting hospital-acquired infection, recognition of potentially infectious patients, isolation protocols
Develop and provide client education on topics including clinical nutrition, tube feeding care, diabetes management, behaviour, post chemotherapy care
Discharge medical/surgical patients with communication of medical instructions
Participate in the development, implementation and review of practice policies, protocols and procedures
Perform patient triage including teletriage
Pharmacy
Prepare and dispense pharmaceuticals, including performing final check
Prepare and administer medications i.e. calculate, reconstitute, dilute oral and parental, IV fluid rates, constant rate infusions
Educate clients regarding prescribed drugs i.e., indications and contraindications, handling, storage, administration, side-effects, drug interactions, safety for patient and humans
Use and explain the 5 rights of pharmaceuticals and biologics
Respond to abnormal and normal responses to medication
Handle, measure and administer controlled substances
Maintain controlled substance acquisition and usage logs
Nursing Procedures
Perform a comprehensive physical examination including assessments and documentation of findings including mentation, heart rate, pulse rate, respiratory rate, heart/lung sounds, body condition score, pain score, hydration
Perform venipuncture for treatment or blood sampling including identifying appropriate and inappropriate sites and blood volumes
Administer oral and parenteral medications
Administer biologicals (including rabies)
Express anal sacs
Perform fluorescein staining, Schirmer tear test and tonometry
Establish and manage intravenous access sites as determined by the patient conditions and therapy required
Administer and maintain fluid therapy
Assess volume status and administer crystalloid and colloids via infusion pump or drip set. Assess response to fluid therapy plan

Collect and administer blood and blood products , monitor administration and adjust administration as required
Place and maintain of advanced catheters such as PICC lines, intraosseous, arterial, central, catheters
Perform and evaluate invasive (pressure transducer or aneroid manometer) and non-invasive blood pressure measurement. (oscillometric, Doppler, etc)
Perform thoracocentesis and non-surgical chest tube placement
Maintain chest, tracheotomy, pharyngostomy, nasogastric, esophagostomy tubes
Place and care for urinary catheters
Collect urine samples including by cystocentesis (including ultrasound guided)
Setup and evaluate normal vs abnormal ECG
Apply established emergency protocols for CPR e.g. RECOVER CPR Algorithm
Perform appropriate wound care
Administer enemas
Perform tattoo
Insert microchip
Trim hooves
Clean sheath
Calculate and administer nutritional support using a variety of techniques (esophagostomy, nasogastric, parenteral)
Perform nasogastric intubation
Use esophageal feeder
Apply and remove bandages and splints
Remove sutures or staples
Remove casts
Perform rehabilitation techniques including massage therapy, cryo/heat therapy, range of motion, low level laser therapy, shockwave therapy
Explain timing and types of pregnancy testing
Semen collection
Electrostimulation and semen collection for breeding soundness examination
Perform artificial insemination
Assist and prepare for large animal reproductive procedures including embryo flush, oocyte aspirations, endometrial biopsies etc
Assist with birthing , both routine and dystocia
Provide resuscitation and nursing care to neonates
Peri and IntraOperative Procedures
Organize medical records/consent forms , review pre-operative evaluation, evaluate current patient status, organize and implement anesthesia
Perform a surgical clip and aseptic prep application
Perform set-up, maintenance, troubleshooting and operation of surgical equipment including suction, cautery, laser and fiberoptic equipment
Aseptically handle tissues, instruments and supplies during surgery
Administer post-operative care including hydrotherapy, orthopedic, and neurological care
Perform the role of laser safety officer
Dental Prophylaxis
Perform scaling and polishing, subgingival scaling, root planing and curettage
Probe, measure, and chart pockets with a periodontal probe; grade periodontal disease; complete dental chart
Obtain diagnostic images using intraoral radiology positioning
Perform dental anesthesia blocks
Perform flotation of equid teeth
Rabbit and rodent non-surgical occlusal adjustment and correction

Anesthesia
Review patient history, PE and diagnostic results in collaboration with a veterinarian to assign patient anesthetic status score (ASA)
Assign appropriate numerical pain score after reviewing patient history and physical examination in conjunction with evaluation of any prescribed analgesic plans to provide effective pain management
Set up, test, and/or troubleshoot anesthesia machines and breathing circuits
Develop patient-specific anesthetic protocols for veterinarian review and implementation to provide effective pain management and maximum anesthetic
Calculate dosages for and administer injectable analgesics and anesthetics as prescribed by the veterinarian
Perform regional nerve blocks i.e. dental, biopsy site, testicular, linea, distal limb
Perform epidural anesthesia
Utilize ECG, capnography, pulse oximetry, blood pressure monitors and thermometers to assess patient status and anesthetic depth
Use clinical signs and monitoring equipment to monitor patient status in all stages of anesthesia
Record and maintain anesthesia and operative medical records
Evaluate the effects of common pre-anesthetic, induction, and maintenance drugs , recognize and respond to adverse reactions, complications or emergencies
Use and assess peripheral nerve simulation
Monitor and evaluate appropriate extubation time, anesthetic recovery, postoperative care and pain management during the recovery period
Diagnostic Procedures
Perform urinalysis
Perform CBC
Identify blood, external and internal parasites
Perform blood chemistry tests
Perform serologic tests
Perform bacteriologic procedures
Examine canine vaginal smears
Assist in collecting, preparing and appropriately evaluating transudate, exudates & cytologic specimens e.g. joint, cerebrospinal, airway and body cavity
Perform and evaluate fine needle tissue aspirates and impression smears
Perform point of care tests e.g. lactate, blood glucose, ketostix
Collect and evaluate skin scrapings
Perform blood type and cross match , and evaluate results
Prepare and stain bone marrow specimens
Examine semen
Evaluate blood gases
Perform California mastitis test
Perform necropsy procedures including collecting photographs, videos and tissue samples
Prepare samples for analyses and submission
Perform the role of lab quality assurance officer
Diagnostic Imaging
Operate and maintain xray, CT and MRI machines to produce diagnostic images
Calculate and administer contrast media via different routes for contrast studies
Maintain and utilize ultrasound to obtain diagnostic images*
Perform the role of radiation quality assurance officer
Euthanasia
Discuss quality of life assessments with client
Administer premedication and euthanasia solution with or without client present
Confirm patient is deceased

* Council has established policy for pregnancy detection by ultrasound in beef cattle and small ruminants

Practice Expectations for working with a final year student

Final Year veterinary student:

A veterinary student who is enrolled in and eligible to begin the final year of a professional degree program in veterinary medicine that is accredited by the Council on Education of the American and Canadian Veterinary Medical Associations.

Final Year Veterinary Students from Accredited Schools

- The supervising veterinarian shall ensure that they review with the student member on a daily basis all services performed by the student.
- Direct or immediate supervision by a registered veterinarian is required for veterinary procedures restricted to registered veterinarians (i.e. making a diagnosis, determining a course of treatment (which includes prescribing medications), or performing any surgical procedure)
- Tasks normally delegated to an RVT may be performed under indirect supervision.
- A final year veterinary student must not perform a veterinary service unless the owner of the animal has given consent (written consent is recommended) for student involvement.

Practice Expectations for assigning tasks to a non final year veterinary student or AHT student

Non-Final Year veterinary student:

An individual enrolled in a professional degree program in veterinary medicine that is accredited by the Council on Education of the American and Canadian Veterinary Medical Associations, at a level prior to the final year of study. A final year student in a non-accredited program leading to a professional degree in veterinary medicine is permitted to engage the same as a non-final year student in an accredited program.

Animal Health/Veterinary Technology (AHT) student:

An individual who is enrolled in a Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) or American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) accredited program of study in animal health/veterinary technology.

1. The student must be a current student member of the ABVMA before engaging in veterinary activity, regardless of whether they are engaged as an employee or volunteer.
2. The certified practice must apply for permission from the Registrar to employ a student. The application must provide the employment location, program of study, educational institute, anticipated year of graduation and the name of the responsible veterinarian or veterinarians, terms of employment, and a brief outline of the duties and responsibilities the student will be required to assume.
3. It is recommended that a generic statement is included on clinic consent forms that inform the animal owner that students may be involved in the treatment of their animals.
4. A registered veterinarian or permit holder may charge and collect fees for the services performed by a student employed in the practice.
5. A student member shall not be left in charge of a practice.
6. A student member may not sign documents that require the signature of a graduate veterinarian.
7. A student must not be represented to the public as being a fully registered veterinarian through the use of Dr., DVM or veterinarian.

Veterinary (non-final year) and Animal Health/Veterinary Technology students

These students may participate in veterinary medical procedures **in an instructional capacity**, meaning that these procedures are undertaken **in concert** with a fully registered veterinarian or veterinary technologist. Students of veterinary technology or AHT programs (including distance learning) may

receive direct instruction and experience in veterinary medical procedures through their volunteering or employment in a certified veterinary practice. No veterinary procedure may be delegated to these individuals in an independent fashion. They may:

- Perform all tasks normally delegated to an unregistered person
- Assist the active registered veterinary technologist (RVT) in their regular activities
- Assist the active registered supervising Veterinarian (DVM) in their regular activities
- Participate in medical procedures, in a learning capacity, under the direct instruction of and in concert with an RVT or registered veterinarian
- Be instructed in all activities that an RVT may engage in (see Skills List)
- Provisional RVTs fall into this category. Once they have both diploma and VTNE results they are transferred to general licensure

Practice Expectations for Assigning Tasks to an unregistered auxiliary

An unregistered auxiliary is any person working within a veterinary practice entity (VPE) who is not a registered veterinary technologist (RVT) or registered veterinarian and who is assigned to do tasks within the veterinary practice. This includes receptionists, assistants and other lay personnel, whether formally or on-job trained.

Veterinarians and technologists from non-accredited veterinary colleges who are not registered with the ABVMA fall into this category.

Tasks that are generally not considered to be medical procedures can be performed by an unregistered auxiliary. Examples of these include:

Client Relations
Make appointments
Communicate with clients , including responding appropriately to emergency situations
Check in an appointment
Check out medical/surgical case where the patient has been released by the veterinarian/RVT
Discharge medical/surgical patients with communication of medical instructions where veterinarian/RVT has already spoken with client
Medical and Surgical admission of a patient where informed consent already in place
Maintain records , and prepare appropriate certificates for signature
Perform basic filing of medical records, radiographs, lab reports, etc.
Maintain x-ray, surgery, anesthesia, and laboratory logs
Recognize and respond appropriately to veterinary medical emergencies (triage client communications)
Maintain basic cleanliness and orderliness of a veterinary facility (including hospital, clinic, practice, or laboratory)
Perform basic veterinary medical record keeping procedures using electronic or paper-based record systems.
Scribe/transcription of medical records dictated (live or recorded) by vet or RVT i.e. dental charts
Maintain biosecurity protocols of the veterinary practice entity
Communicate basic nutritional information including life-stage counselling
Write business letters , reports, and client education handouts
Pharmacy

Perform logistical services in relation to dispensing, including inventory management, counting pills, and preparing labels, completing the sale
Manage biomedical and hazardous waste , including storage, handling and disposal
Handle and dispose of biomedical sharps
Perform inventory management , including receiving, storage and handling
Hospital Support
Read common animal identification methods i.e. read tattoo, scan microchip, ear tag, RFID
Provide care and maintenance of equipment
Place in, and remove small animals from cages
Restrain animals including the use of restraint equipment
Prepare surgical equipment/supplies
Sterilize instruments & supplies using appropriate methods
Prepare gowns, masks, gloves and drapes
Clip and initially prepare surgical sites
Operate & maintain autoclave
Provide operating room sanitation & care
Position patients (common procedures)
Open sterile pack and gown for surgery
Perform post-surgical clean-up of equipment, patient and surgical suite
Perform therapeutic bathing , basic grooming, and dipping of small animals
Provide routine record-keeping, husbandry, and observation of hospitalized patients
Feed routine and prescription diets to hospitalized animals
Clean & disinfect cages, kennels and stalls
Trim nails on companion animals
Apply non-therapeutic equine leg & tail wraps
Collect voided urine and fecal samples
Maintain emergency medical supplies
Follow recommended radiation safety measures
Assist in positioning patients for radiology, ultrasound
Label, file and store diagnostic images
Complete radiographic logs , reports, files and records
Properly clean, maintain and stock laboratory area
Package lab sample for shipment
Routine start up, shut down and maintenance of lab equipment
Handle disposal of dead animals
Assist CPR team by recordkeeping (and chest compressions, if formally trained such as through the RECOVER program)

The ABVMA recognizes that it is acceptable for a veterinary practice entity to employ specifically qualified individuals as part of the health care team. The services provided by these individuals may have an important impact on animal health. While these services are commonly performed outside of a VPE, when these services are performed by an employee of the veterinary practice, the veterinarian is responsible for the outcome.

Examples of such qualified individuals might include nutritionists, dog groomers, equine farriers, cattle hoof trimmers etc. It is unacceptable for these individuals to engage in tasks that are considered the practice of veterinary medicine.

In the event a veterinarian or permit holder employs a non-registered individual for the provision of veterinary related services, the following conditions **must** be met:

- The individual is employed by the veterinarian or permit holder
- The individual has documented unique or advanced education that the veterinarian accepts as appropriate in order to delegate the tasks
- The area / scope of the veterinary service is related to the education
- The informed consent of the client / animal owner is documented
- The veterinarian must provide an appropriate level of supervision
- The veterinarian assumes liability and remains responsible for the outcomes and overall management of the case / care of the animal(s)
- The veterinarian **must not** delegate any service that is considered a medical service performed on an animal

Legislative Authority

Veterinary Profession Act

Veterinary Profession General Regulation

Related Documents

Apply as a student: <https://abvma.in1touch.org/site/mainapplicant/student?nav=applicant>

Delegation of Veterinary Medicine – Professional Standard

Supervision of Veterinary Medicine – Professional Standard

The Standards of Practice of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association (ABVMA) are the minimum standards of professional behaviour and ethical conduct expected of all regulated members registered in Alberta. It is important to note that these standards may be used by the ABVMA or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained.