

Professional Standard for Telemedicine for Veterinary Surgeons Practising in South Australia

Veterinary surgeons providing veterinary treatment in South Australia must be registered with the Veterinary Surgeons Board of South Australia (VSBSA). Veterinary Telemedicine (VTM) uses telecommunication technology to undertake remote consultation without the patient being physically present. VTM does not include consultation between veterinary surgeons in which colleagues in different physical locations consult with each other.

The VSBSA supports the adoption and utilisation of technology that can deliver positive healthcare outcomes for patients in remote locations. The VTM consultation must be practised according to the legal requirements set by the *Veterinary Practice Act 2003 (Act)*, the *Code of Professional Standard for Veterinary Surgeons* prepared by the VSBSA under the Act, and any relevant Professional Standards. Veterinary surgeons providing veterinary treatment in South Australia must use their professional judgement to decide whether using VTM is appropriate and necessary in particular circumstances.

Giving veterinary advice to a client without physically examining an animal / herd may lead to an increased risk of error in clinical diagnosis and treatment.

VTM Requirements:

1. The veterinary surgeon providing VTM consultations must:
 - a. only conduct VTM within an existing Veterinary Surgeon-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR, i.e. a *bona fide* veterinary surgeon – client – patient relationship), with the exception of advice given in an emergency until the patient can be physically seen by a veterinary surgeon

- b. assume responsibility for making clinical judgements and ensure that he or she has sufficient knowledge of the patient to make a differential or preliminary diagnosis of the disease, illness or condition
 - c. be readily available for follow-up evaluation, or arrange for alternative continuing care and treatment
 - d. document the patient's diagnosis, treatment and continuing care in the patient's clinical record:
 - i. If another veterinary surgeon takes over the treatment of an animal / herd after a VTM patient consultation has been performed, all relevant records must be provided to this veterinary surgeon directly after receiving consent from the client
 - e. ensure that client is aware of:
 - i. the shortcomings of VTM, and accept the risks that come with these shortcomings, e.g. that it is not a perfect substitute for physical examination
 - ii. the provider's identity, location, registration status and any potential privacy and security issues involved in accessing veterinary services by telemedicine
 - f. obtain and document in the patient's clinical record the owner's informed consent for the use of VTM
 - g. provide oversight of treatment, client compliance and patient outcome
 - h. take reasonable precautions to protect client privacy and the right to confidentiality
2. In the absence of a VCPR:
- a. VTM should not be practiced except in an emergency situation
 - b. Any advice given must remain in general terms, not be specific to an individual animal / herd and not specify a diagnosis or treatment

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