



# Advisory Note to all Northern Territory Registered Veterinarians – Professional and Statutory Obligations on Prescribing Drugs to Non-Veterinarians

This advisory note is issued in response to the Board's concerns that some veterinarians may not be aware of the full extent of the professional and statutory obligations to be met and borne by veterinarians when prescribing and supplying drugs to non-veterinarians and the associated record keeping requirements.

## Statutory responsibilities

It is the duty of registered veterinarians to be aware of their responsibilities under the laws relating to their professional practice. Clause 1(1)(b) and clause 28 of the Code of Conduct prescribed in the Northern Territory Veterinarians Regulations require registered veterinarians “to be familiar with and abide by all relevant legislation affecting their professional activity and behaviour”, including the *Veterinarians Act*, *Veterinarians Regulations*, the *Animal Welfare Act*, the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act* and *Regulations* and the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act* and *Regulations*

The Code of Conduct requires that:

- “A registered veterinarian must ensure that a detailed record of any consultation, procedure or treatment is made as soon as is practicable” - Clause 16(1).
- The record must be legible and contain “sufficient detail to enable another registered veterinarian to continue the treatment of the animal” - Clause 16(3).
- A registered veterinarian who provides a client with a drug, or a prescription for a drug, for an animal, must give the client proper directions with respect to the administration of the drug, and advise the client of any safety or other precautions that should be taken in connection with the drug and of any withholding period that may be applicable” - Clause 21.
- A registered veterinarian must, when accepting an animal for diagnosis or treatment, ensure that he or she is available for the on-going care of the animal or make arrangements for another registered veterinarian to take over the care of the animal – Clause 9.

## Authority to prescribe

A veterinarian's authority to obtain and prescribe Schedule 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8 substances for therapeutic use on an animal, is provided by the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act*, which regulates the supply, possession and use of poisons and dangerous drugs and includes specific provisions on storage and records keeping. With this authority comes a responsibility for veterinarians to comply with the legislation and to act in a professional manner. The *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act* and *Regulations* further prescribe the duties and responsibilities expected of veterinarians in relation to controlling the use of veterinary chemical products.

## Regulation 7 - Veterinarians Regulations

Regulation Number 7 of the Veterinarians Regulations sets out the circumstances in which a veterinarian may supply drugs to a non-veterinarian as follows:

Clause 7(1) (b) allows for “the administration to an animal by a person of the following:

- (i) a substance in accordance with a permit under the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act*;
  - (ii) a registered or unregistered veterinary chemical product in accordance with the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act*; or
- (c) the administration by a person of a Schedule 4 substance as defined in of the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act*, to an animal where a registered veterinarian:
- (i) has made enquiries about the animal and decided that the Schedule 4 substance is

- (ii) required to be administered; and (ii) is satisfied that the person who is to administer the Schedule 4 substance is competent to do so; and (iii) has supplied or prescribed the Schedule 4 substance and given full directions with respect to its administration

## A guide to compliance with Clause 7 - Veterinarians Regulations

As a general guide to compliance with Clause 7, in issuing such a prescription, the veterinarian takes full responsibility for:

- the sale and appropriate use of the medicine and for issuing adequate instructions about its use in order to manage any risks to users, the public, animals, consumers, the environment or trade
- examining or making enquiries of the animal
- establishing that there is a therapeutic need for the drug and that is in the best interests of the animal/herd/flock confirming that the amount dispensed is reasonable
- dispensing only a reasonable amount of the drug to treat the immediate problem
- ensuring that the medication/drug will be used properly
- fulfilling requirements for storage and handling
- compliance with documentation, record keeping and labelling protocols
- any after care necessary for the animal's welfare
- his/her own understanding of the use of the drug and possible cautions
- adhering to any additional requirements for a food producing animal, which includes horses and crocodiles (including advising the client of the withholding period/export slaughter interval)
- having a system of follow up to check on the use of and outcome from the medication/drug.

### Appropriate Operational Procedures

It is advisable for registered veterinarians to establish appropriate operational procedures and protocols that comply with the legislation and record keeping requirements, and address fully, the responsibilities borne by prescribing veterinarians in exercising control, oversight and checks on the use of the drugs they prescribe for administration by non-veterinarians.

**Access to copies of relevant legislation** - Veterinarians may access full copies of all legislation that impacts on veterinary practice at the [Veterinary Board's website](http://www.vetboard.nt.gov.au) at [www.vetboard.nt.gov.au](http://www.vetboard.nt.gov.au) or the [Northern Territory Government Legislation Website](http://www.nt.gov.au).

Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) Resource

In addition, the AVA document entitled "Guidelines for Prescribing, Authorising and Dispensing Veterinary Medicines" is a usual resource and reference tool that can be viewed and/or downloaded from the [Australian Veterinary Association](http://www.vetboard.nt.gov.au).

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