



New Zealand Veterinary  
Nursing Association (Inc.)

P.O. Box 1314, Palmerston North

# **NEW ZEALAND VETERINARY NURSING ASSOCIATION (INC)**

## **GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR VETERINARY NURSES 2007**

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## Introduction

1. In these Notes “Veterinary Nurse” means a person whose veterinary nursing qualification is recognised by the New Zealand Veterinary Association (N.Z.V.A.), and a “veterinarian” means a veterinarian appropriately qualified, currently registered by the Veterinary Council of New Zealand in terms of the Veterinarians Act 2005 and holding a current practicing certificate

2. The Code of Professional Conduct for veterinarians in New Zealand, issued by the Veterinary Council of New Zealand to all veterinarians registered with the Council (2006, Clause 6.9) reminds them that they are responsible for the acts and conducts of their veterinary nurses and lay staff in the performance of their duties and any default by the veterinary nurse may, in appropriate circumstances, be reckoned the default of the employing veterinarian, thus rendering him/her liable to disciplinary proceedings. It follows that every veterinarian employing a veterinary nurse will take every step possible to see that he/she is not open to criticism in respect of the latter’s conduct within his/her practice. If he/she feels the veterinary nurse’s conduct puts him/her at risk, the veterinary nurse will, without doubt, be in danger of dismissal

3. In particular every veterinarian will ensure that his/her nursing staff do not act in breach of the Veterinarians Act 2005. This means, among other things, that no veterinary nurse should use the title, practice or hold himself/herself out as being a veterinarian

4. When a veterinary nurse, in an emergency, gives first aid to any animal for the purpose of saving life or relieving pain (under the direction of the employing veterinarian) a report must be made, and the case handed over to the employing veterinarian at the first possible opportunity. According to Section 6.10(i) of the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians, “Under the direction of a veterinarian” means that the registered veterinarian gives direction in regard to the treatment to be carried out, but is not necessarily present when it is performed

5. Responsible veterinarians must not allow a veterinary nurse to perform any procedure where there is a risk of adverse consequences which may lead to the death of an animal or prejudice its future well being, unless adequately supervised. When considering whether a procedure could be delegated the following criteria should be applied:

- (i) there must be no increased risk of pain or stress to the animal or breach of animal welfare legislation or code
- (ii) the training required to satisfy the above must be specified, courses of instruction should be available and should have been satisfactorily completed by persons carrying out each procedure.

The veterinarian, whether present or not, is held ultimately responsible for the technical competence of any veterinary nurse who has been delegated such duties

# **PART 1 – YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO YOUR PATIENTS**

(Patient, in this context, means any animal cared for by a veterinary nurse acting in his or her professional capacity)

## **1. A veterinary nurse must:**

- a) make animal welfare the primary consideration
- b) treat all patients, of whatever species, humanely and with respect
- c) provide suitable veterinary nursing care
- d) assist with the maintenance of proper standards in relation to in-patient care and supervision
- e) report to the veterinary surgeon any suspected adverse reaction to medication
- f) not cause any patient to suffer –
  - i. by excessive restraint or discipline
  - ii. by failing to assist with the maintenance of adequate pain relief and prevention of suffering
  - iii. by neglect

## **PART 2 – YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO CLIENTS**

(The client in this context is the person who requests veterinary nursing services for an animal. This is usually in the context of a request for veterinary services to be provided by a veterinary surgeon)

### **1. A veterinary nurse should:**

- a) ensure that clear information is provided about the arrangements for the care of in-patients
- b) take all reasonable care in using their professional skills to administer nursing care and treatments to patients
- c) keep their skills and knowledge up to date
- d) treat the client with respect and observe professional courtesies
- e) maintain client confidentiality
- f) ensure the client is kept informed of patient progress
- g) give due consideration to the client's concerns and wishes where these do not conflict with the patient's welfare
- h) facilitate communication between the veterinary surgeon and the client, to assist the client's understanding of any issues relating to their animal's treatment
- i) recognise situations where the client should speak to the veterinary surgeon in charge of the case
- j) not suggest a diagnosis to the client or discharge a patient until requested to do so by the responsible veterinary surgeon
- k) recognise that the client has freedom of choice
- l) recognize that clients are entitled to fully itemized accounts if requested

## **PART 3 – YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

(The veterinary nursing profession has a vital part to play in terms of education and protection in matters of animal welfare and public health.)

### **1 Veterinary nurses must:**

- a) promote responsible animal ownership
- b) at all times be trustworthy and honest and uphold the good reputation of the veterinary nursing profession
- c) co-operate with other health professionals when appropriate
- d) use their professional status to provide only factual information to the general public about veterinary products and services
- e) accurately represent their qualifications by using the post-nominal letters CVN or DVN, as appropriate
- f) continue their professional education by keeping up to date with the general developments in veterinary nursing, particularly in their area of professional activity and should maintain a record of continuing professional development (CPD) undertaken as evidence of so doing

## **PART 4 – YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO YOUR PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUES**

### **1 Veterinary nurses must:**

- a) always liaise with colleagues where one or more veterinary surgeons or veterinary nurses are involved in caring for an animal
- b) assist with the provision of all relevant clinical information promptly to colleagues taking over responsibility for a case
- c) assist with the provision of proper documentation for all referral or re-directed cases
- d) assist with the responsible referral of cases
- e) be satisfied that the person to whom a task is delegated is competent
- f) treat as confidential, and refrain from divulging, any information acquired during the course of employment. Such information must not be disclosed to anyone except where they are required to do so in a court of law
- g) carry out a veterinarian's orders intelligently and loyally assisting in the provision of veterinary care. He/she shall, however, act at all times in the interests of the animal and in such a manner as to justify the trust and confidence of the public and to uphold the good standing of the veterinary profession
- h) be prepared to explain and justify to clients or colleagues any action or decision taken in the course of their professional activities
- i) keep within their own areas of competence save for the requirement to provide emergency first aid

### **2 Veterinary nurses must not:**

- a) speak or write disparagingly about another professional colleague
- b) obstruct a client from changing to another veterinary practice
- c) discourage a client from seeking a second opinion

## **PART 5 – YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO THE LAW**

### **1. A veterinary nurse must:**

- a) be fully aware of, and abide by, all Acts and Regulations affecting them professionally and seek to clarify any areas that are of confusion or are not clearly understood
- b) Be mindful of his/her responsibility to report to his/her employer any circumstances where the health and safety of staff or animals is put at risk
- c) when dispensing products or medications, ensure the client is aware of the correct method of use, route of administration, withholding times and special precautions relevant to that animal remedy
- d) not take part in any illegal or unethical conduct. Any veterinary nurse who may be in difficulty or trouble may contact the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association in confidence
- e) The Veterinary Nurses' Complaints Committee will comprise of four members, including two veterinary nurses (one of which is the NZVNA President) an NZVA veterinarian and a layperson. The committee will be decided upon by the NZVNA Council. Veterinary nurses may contact the Veterinary Nurses' Complaint Committee through the NZVNA National Secretary

The Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses was adopted by the members of the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association on 5 August 1994 and updated in 2007

The Guide to Professional Conduct is issued to all members of the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association and all members of said Association must abide by this Guide to Professional Conduct