

**811—12.1(169) Veterinarian/client/patient relationships.**

**12.1(1)** The board shall determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether a valid veterinarian/client/patient relationship exists. This relationship is deemed to exist when all of the following criteria have been met:

*a.* The licensed veterinarian has assumed the responsibility for making medical judgments regarding the health of the patient and the need for medical treatment, and the client has agreed to follow the instructions of the licensed veterinarian;

*b.* The licensed veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the patient to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition of the patient. Sufficient knowledge means that the licensed veterinarian has recently seen or is personally acquainted with the keeping and care of the patient by virtue of any of the following:

- (1) A physical examination of the patient within the past 12 months;
- (2) A professional visit within the past 12 months to the premises where the patient or representative patients are housed, kept, located or grazed; or
- (3) The licensed veterinarian has been temporarily designated by a licensed veterinarian, who has a prior veterinarian/client/patient relationship, to provide reasonable and appropriate medical care. The veterinarian making the designation must meet the requirements of either subparagraph 12.1(1) “b”(1) or 12.1(1) “b”(2), and the designated veterinarian must have access to the patient’s medical records.

The 12-month time period in paragraph 12.1(1) “b” does not apply until June 14, 2023;

*c.* The licensed veterinarian is readily available or provides for follow-up care in case of adverse reactions or failure of the regimen of therapy, or, if unavailable, has designated another available licensed veterinarian who has access to the patient’s records to provide reasonable and appropriate medical care.

**12.1(2)** A valid veterinarian/client/patient relationship cannot be established by contact solely based on a telephonic or electronic communication.

**12.1(3)** In the absence of a veterinarian/client/patient relationship:

*a.* Advice that is provided through electronic means can only be general and not specific to a particular animal or its diagnosis or treatment.

*b.* Advice and recommendations may be provided via veterinary telephonic or electronic communication in an emergency, but only until the animal can be examined in person by a licensed veterinarian.

**12.1(4)** Both the licensed veterinarian and the client have the right to establish or decline a valid veterinarian/client/patient relationship. Once the licensed veterinarian and the client have agreed and entered into a relationship, and the licensed veterinarian has begun patient care, the licensed veterinarian cannot neglect the patient and must continue to provide professional services related to the patient’s injury or illness within the previously agreed limits. As subsequent needs and costs for patient care are identified, the licensed veterinarian and the client must confer and reach agreement on the continued care and responsibility for fees. If the informed client declines future care or declines to assume responsibility for the fees, the relationship may be terminated by either party.

**12.1(5)** If no ongoing medical condition exists, a licensed veterinarian may terminate a valid veterinarian/client/patient relationship by notifying the client that the licensed veterinarian no longer wishes to serve that patient and client. However, if an ongoing medical or surgical condition exists, the patient should be referred to another licensed veterinarian for diagnosis, care and treatment and the former attending licensed veterinarian should continue to provide care as needed during the transition.

**12.1(6)** Concerns about licensed veterinarian or staff safety may result in immediate termination of the veterinarian/client/patient relationship.

**12.1(7)** In emergencies, a veterinarian has an ethical responsibility to provide essential services for an animal when necessary to save the animal’s life or relieve extreme suffering, subsequent to a client agreement (or until such agreement can be obtained when a client is not present or cannot be reached). Such emergency care may be limited to relieve extreme pain or suffering, or to stabilization of the patient for transport to another source of animal care or euthanasia when deemed necessary by the veterinarian. When a veterinarian cannot be available to provide services, the veterinarian should provide readily accessible information to assist a client in obtaining emergency services, consistent with the needs of

the locality. In an emergency, if a veterinarian does not have the expertise or the necessary equipment and facilities to adequately diagnose or treat a patient, the veterinarian should advise the client that more qualified or specialized services are available elsewhere and offer to expedite referral to those services.

**12.1(8)** A licensed veterinarian who in good faith engages in the practice of veterinary medicine by rendering or attempting to render emergency or urgent care to a patient when a client cannot be identified, and a veterinarian/client/patient relationship is not established, is not subject to discipline based solely on the veterinarian's inability to establish a veterinarian/client/patient relationship.

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