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in veterinary regulation.

## Consultation Summary

# Draft Accreditation Standards for Veterinary Facilities in Ontario



September 25, 2023

Facility Accreditation is an integral part of the College's quality practice program, ensuring veterinary facilities provide a professional environment and contain the essential equipment required for patient care. There are currently 1700 veterinary practices operating 2400 facilities (including mobiles) in Ontario. All veterinary facilities must meet the requirements described in the Minimum Standards for Veterinary Facilities in Ontario.

The College Council, under section 8 of the Veterinarians Act, establishes standards for veterinary facilities which must be met to qualify for the issuance or renewal of a certificate of accreditation.

## **BACKGROUND**

In June 2014, Council established an Accreditation Models Task Force (AMTF) which was appointed to complete a review of current and emerging models for facility accreditation with an aim to assuring public safety and supporting the delivery of quality professional services in the future.

In October 2015, the AMTF made recommendations to Council on a cost-effective contemporary model for facility accreditation and an inspection process which would be effective, flexible, and responsive to the evolution of veterinary medicine. Council supported the proposed model recommended by the AMTF because this facility accreditation model is driven by the opportunity to enhance standards within the veterinary profession that reflect the services and scopes of practice that are relevant to a specific facility.

There are several reasons for moving to a new accreditation model and new facility standards:

- The current model assumes that a full scope of services is being provided and restricts the facility to treating only one species type (companion animal, equine, food-producing animals, or poultry).
- Over the past 30 years, the practice of veterinary medicine has evolved, and scopes of practice are changing. Some practices have narrowed the scope of services they provide. Some practices have broadened their scope of practice to treat multiple species.
- To narrow their scope or treat multiple species, the current model is cumbersome. It was evident that the current model lacked nimbleness to respond to evolving practice.
- The change to the model eliminates the need to have multiple facilities at one practice to treat multiple species. The whole practice is accredited whether it is a hospital/office or mobile, or a combination of these.
- The new standards move to a more customized approach that acknowledges the unique ways that veterinary services are being delivered in Ontario.
- It recognizes that practices may meet the standards for their scope of practice in multiple different ways.
- It moves away from a one-size-fits all approach and focuses on mitigating risks in facilities that are both common among them and unique to their scope of services.
- An annual accreditation fee is paid by each practice. It supports a cost recovery model by covering the costs associated with the accreditation program including continuous improvement of the standards. It supports having veterinarian inspectors and their ongoing training and equalizes geographical costs of conducting inspections.

Based on recommendations made by the Accreditation Models Task Force, College Council at its June 2017 meeting approved a new accreditation model for a modern approach to accreditation of facilities and an inspection process that is flexible and responsive to evolving models of delivery of veterinary services. The outcomes-based approach to the standards for facilities includes inspectors who are veterinarians. At this meeting, Council directed the establishment of an Expert Advisory Group to draft new facility accreditation standards to support the new model. The group was tasked with drafting standards which reflect an outcomes-based approach and the services and scope of practice of the veterinary facility. The Expert Advisory Group, which consisted of 12-15 veterinarians representing different facility types and species groups, met for 18 months.

The Expert Advisory Group drafted new accreditation standards where a veterinary practice will need to meet and maintain a set of Essential Standards (ES), and Additional Scope of Practice Services (ASPS) standards selected by the Facility Director. The Additional Scope of Practice Services are standards that apply to a practice based on the scope of services they provide. If an Additional Scope of Practice Service does not apply to their scope of services, they do not select it for accreditation. If a standard does not specifically state the species type, it is assumed that it applies to all species.

In September 2019, Council reviewed the draft Standards for Veterinary Facilities in Ontario which were drafted by the Expert Advisory Group and are comprised of the Essential Standards and the Additional Scope of Practice Services. Council provided preliminary approval of the draft standards for pilot testing in 2020. Due to the pandemic, the pilot was postponed, however, was finally able to take place between April 1- October 12, 2022. The intent of the pilot was to permit on-the-ground feedback, provide a training opportunity for the new veterinarian inspectors, and based on pilot participant feedback, make potential revisions to the draft standards.

In July 2022, the proposed regulatory language related to accreditation sections of Regulation 1093 was approved by the Ontario government. The implementation of the new regulatory language streamlines the accreditation process and paves the way for introducing the new accreditation model and standards.

In December 2022, Council reviewed the pilot participant feedback and approved the draft standards and proposed amendments to the College's fee by-law be circulated for stakeholder consultation. The College recognizes the importance of stakeholder relationships and in addition to the broader consultation, the College did reach out to groups of members working with different species.

The draft Standards for Veterinary Facilities in Ontario and the proposed amendments to the College's fee by-law were out for public consultation, as directed by Council, from February 8 – April 8, 2023.

The College Council at its June 2023 meeting approved the by-law changes to the accreditation fees as proposed with an implementation date of October 1, 2023.

The College Council approved the proposed changes to the standards for veterinary facilities in Ontario and decided to circulate them for a second targeted consultation to facility

directors. Staff corresponded with the professional associations to inform them of the second targeted consultation.

### Response Rate

The second consultation period was from July 2 to August 16, 2023.

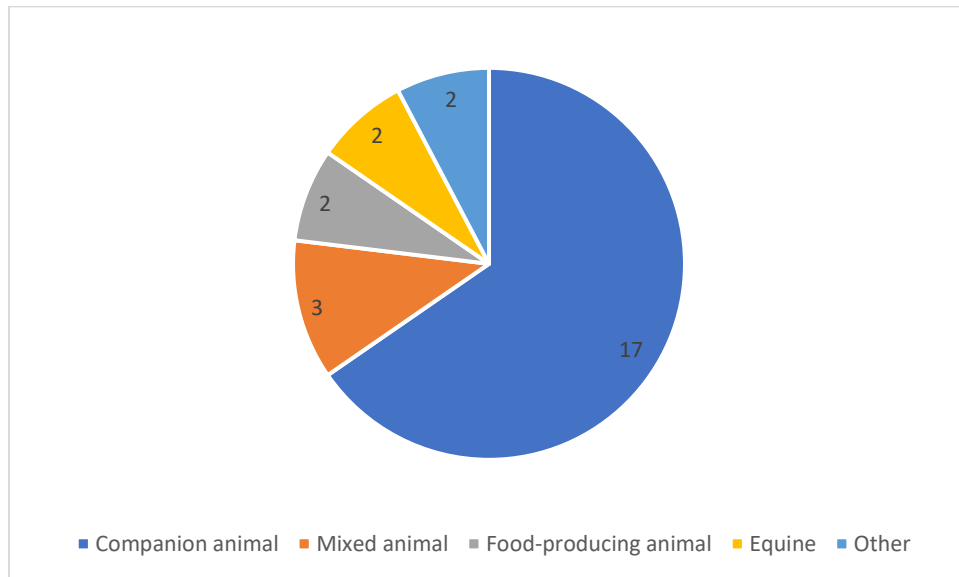
The total number of respondents was 24. There are 1673 facility directors. Respondents to the consultation could provide their comments and/or answer survey questions.

The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA) also provided a letter of feedback. The College recognizes the importance of stakeholder relationships and did reach out to groups of members working with different species.

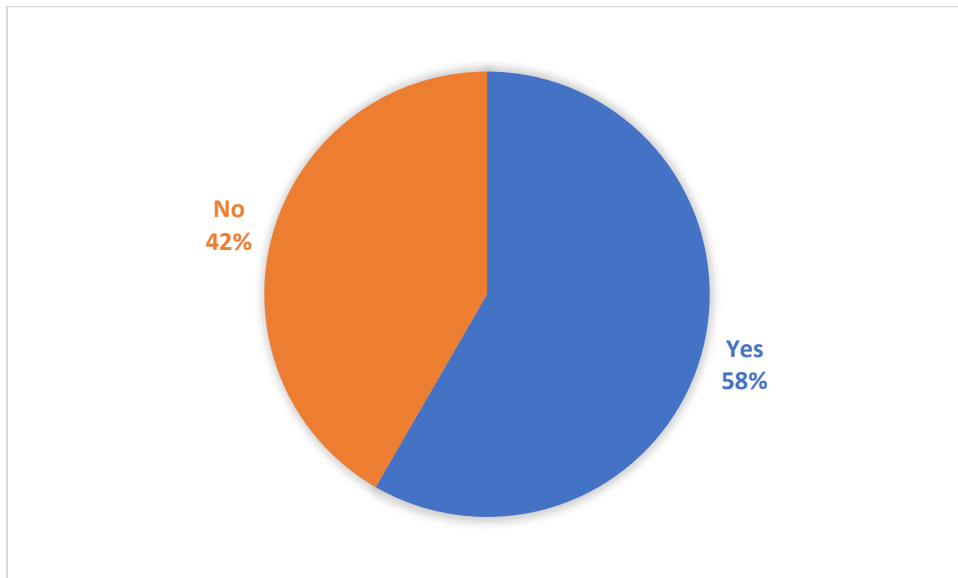
While the response rate is low, 87% of the respondents indicated that the new standards are relevant to the types of veterinary services delivered from Ontario veterinary facilities. The College is pleased to receive all feedback including feedback from the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association.

### Demographics of Respondents

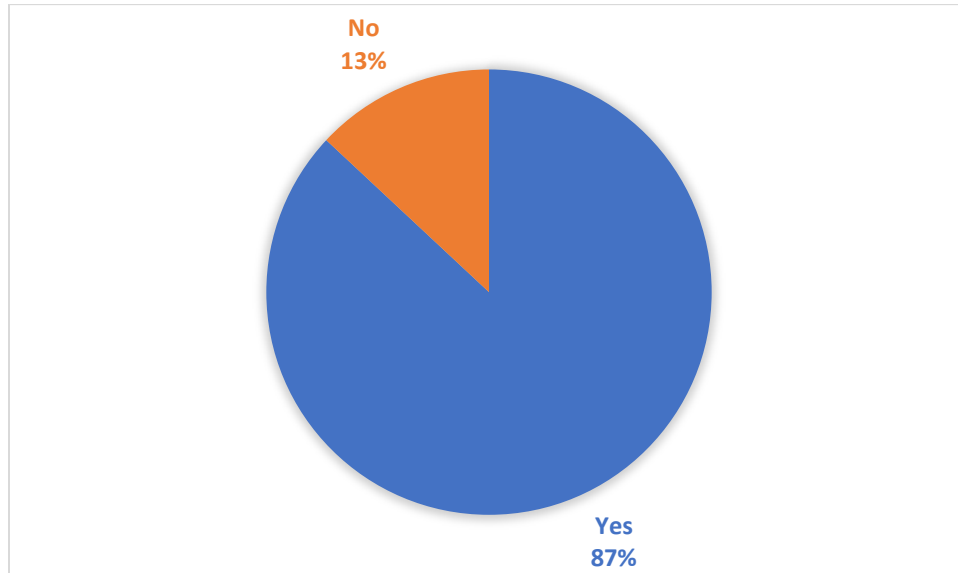
i. Area of Practice: I am a...veterinarian



ii. Are the new standards clear?



iii. Are the new standards relevant to the types of veterinary services delivered from Ontario veterinary facilities?



### Findings from Consultation

The focus of the second consultation was on the draft standards for veterinary facilities, however, the College did receive comments related to the annual accreditation fees, which Council already approved. The College has implemented a special edition of eUpdate for Facility Directors, which will provide guidance to facility directors regarding the annual

accreditation fee. In addition, correspondence will be sent to facility directors and the College's website will be updated to provide further information.

Analysis:

The following is a summary of the main themes of the feedback and comments received about the proposed standards:

- Support for companion animal practices performing dentistry should have dental x-ray.
- Concern about no consistency in how to meet the standards.
- Too much legal language and way too long.
- Concern with complying with the need for negative air flow system in isolation room.
- Concern that large animal guidelines are still not clear for mobile care.
- Believe the updates are satisfactory.

Most of the comments indicated uncertainty about what was needed to meet the requirements, and the College will develop educational supports and resources for Facility Directors to assist with clarity on compliance.

Based on the feedback, Council considered recommendations for revision to two requirements in the draft standards.

#### Highlights of revisions to the proposed draft standards:

- i. Essential Standards: Pharmaceutical Management.
  - a. Requirement #2: A current verifiable monthly inventory of controlled drugs is required (a controlled drug audit is performed every 21 to 31 days).
- ii. Additional Scope of Practice Service: Isolation Facilities
  - a. Requirement #2: There is a ventilation system in place to prevent cross-contamination from room to room.

#### Council September 2023 Decision

Council approved the revised draft accreditation standards for veterinary facilities, as amended, effective as of October 1, 2023, with the exception of Additional Scope of Practice Services – Isolation Facilities, Requirement #2. This requirement was returned to College staff for further review. This will be returned to Council for its December 2023 meeting.

### **SUMMARY**

The College of Veterinarians of Ontario has had a robust accreditation process in place for decades. While the current accreditation model has served the public and the profession well, there were emerging issues which raised questions as to its suitability for the future. Such areas of concern included:

- The increasing categories of facility types raise questions as to the accreditation model's complexity;
- The need for some licensed members in mixed practice to hold multiple facility types;

- The ever-evolving practice environment which requires a nimble and responsive approach to accreditation;
- The increasing requests at the Committee level for exemptions, speaking again to nimbleness in a changing environment; and,
- The challenge of setting reasonable fees that assure program sustainability.

This accreditation model meets the recommendations of the Accreditation Models Task Force for a modern approach to accreditation of facilities and an inspection process that is flexible and responsive to evolving models of delivery of veterinary services. The outcomes-based approach to the standards for facilities includes inspectors who are veterinarians, and practices are accredited based on the scope of services they provide. Further, the emphasis will be on the standards being a “living” document and the standards will be reviewed regularly by the Accreditation Committee to ensure they are evolving with practice over time.

The College recognizes that the new model is a substantial change from the current accreditation process. The College is developing a variety of resources, tools, and supports for Facility Directors to assist them in understanding the new model of accreditation, how to comply with the new standards, and how to prepare for an inspection.