



CVO
College of
Veterinarians
of Ontario

Code of Ethics

Preamble

As members of a regulated profession, who have a societal obligation to serve in the public interest, veterinarians earn and maintain the public trust through engagement in principle-guided ethical practice. Veterinarians hold themselves, their colleagues, and their profession to a high standard of ethical conduct, reflecting the core values and principles of the profession. The College and the public have the reasonable expectation that the care and service provided by a veterinarian reflects these values. As societal ethics evolve regarding animals, veterinarians should take a leadership role to assure that such evolution is rational and sustainable.

Statement of Intent

A veterinarian has a moral obligation to animals, to society, to clients, to colleagues, to the profession, and to themselves. On occasion these obligations may conflict. In such circumstances, the Code provides a framework to guide veterinarians in ethical decision making. It reflects the profession's core values which provide the foundation for ethical principles and guidance on how one is to act as a morally responsible member of the veterinary profession.

Core Values

These values are the foundation for ethical care and service in veterinary medicine. The core value of professionalism is defined in the College document Guidance on Professionalism for Veterinarians.

trustworthiness
professionalism
competence

compassion
transparency
respect

Ethical Principles

Veterinarians act with compassion and demonstrate respect

- Recognize their duty to identify the interests of the animal in consideration of the circumstances.
- Strive to prevent and relieve animal suffering and improve animal health and welfare.
- Act with empathy towards clients and colleagues.
- Respect clients' autonomy, privacy and right to confidentiality.
- Demonstrate civility and collegiality towards colleagues and all members of the veterinary care team to support and enhance animal care.
- Recognize the importance of self-compassion and personal wellbeing.
- Recognize and mitigate impacts to public health and environmental health.

Veterinarians foster transparency and demonstrate trustworthiness

- Are accountable and truthful in their professional activities.
- Effectively communicate to promote and uphold professional relationships with clients, colleagues, and the public.
- Have open and honest discussions with clients that upholds the interests of the animal and ensures client understanding.
- Are reliable and competent.
- Maintain their competency by actively pursuing continuing professional development so knowledge and skills are current.
- Act in an unbiased manner and demonstrate openness to other perspectives.

Veterinarians act professionally and demonstrate continuing competence

- Demonstrate behaviours, attitudes and skills that reflect the core values of the profession and reinforce the social contract between the profession and the public.
- Collaborate with colleagues to ensure comprehensiveness and continuity of patient care when necessary.
- Maintain appropriate and dignified boundaries in client relationships and all professional interactions.
- Adhere to legislated requirements and Professional Practice Standards.
- Engage in ongoing, reflective practice to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are expressed in professional behaviour.
- Apply current knowledge and skills to the delivery of quality care and service and the advancement of veterinary medicine, animal welfare, and public health and safety.