



## MANDATORY REPORTING OF SUSPECTED ANIMAL ABUSE OR NEGLECT NOW LAW IN ONTARIO

---

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, proposed amendments to animal welfare legislation in Ontario passed into law. The CVO worked closely with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) and the OSPCA on these changes, which include the following:

- It is now mandatory for veterinarians in Ontario who have reasonable grounds to suspect abuse or neglect of an animal to report that suspicion to an appropriate branch of the OSPCA.
- We understand those who make such reports in good faith will be protected from civil liability in the courts.
- While the OSPCA now has authority to inspect places where animals are kept for exhibit, entertainment, sale, hire, or boarding, veterinary facilities accredited by the CVO are exempt from this provision.

### **What does “mandatory reporting” mean?**

While sec. 17.(1)6.iv of Ontario Regulation 1093 under the *Veterinarians Act* contains an exception to the duty of confidentiality that veterinarians owe their clients, thereby granting permission for veterinarians to report apparent abuse, it does not specifically mandate veterinarians to so report, nor offer the veterinarian protection from civil liability when reports are made.

To clarify what responsibilities veterinarians now have under the law, Council of the CVO is considering the development of a new Position Statement outlining the College's interpretation of the new requirement that veterinarians report suspected abuse and neglect. That document would advise veterinarians that they must report such cases under the law, and that failure to report such cases will be considered professional misconduct. The Position Statement will also provide guidance to veterinarians on the definition of distress, on recognizing abuse and neglect, on client education, and on reporting protocols.

In due course Ontario Regulation 1093 may also be amended to reflect the mandatory reporting requirement.

Updates on the development of the document will be posted on the CVO's website and published in Update as progress is made.