



THE COLLEGE OF
VETERINARIANS
OF ONTARIO

INFO SHEET

CVO Guidelines Respecting Professional Advertising

INTRODUCTION

What is professional advertising?

CVO staff is happy to review member advertising before publication, as a member service.

Regulations on advertising are found in Ontario Regulation 1093, Part IV Holding Out

Professional advertising includes information that is published, displayed, distributed or used by a member directly, or on a member's behalf.

There are two distinct types of advertising: client-directed and global. While client-directed advertising includes all communications directed to regular clients (e.g., client newsletters), global advertising includes all forms directed to the general public.

Global advertising includes, but is not limited to, information found in the yellow pages, brochures, newspaper ads or articles, flyers, open house announcements, letterhead, business cards, Welcome Wagon participation, TV or radio broadcasts, or the Internet, including "Links" to other sites.

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Why is the CVO involved with the issue of professional advertising?

The college is involved with the issue of professional advertising in order to:

- Protect the public's interest from false and/or misleading communications, and
- Ensure that advertisements by members do not demean the integrity and dignity of the profession.

Media of Advertising

Any medium of professional advertising must be equally accessible to any member choosing to use it. A member may not use a medium where advertising space is sold on the basis that only one of each occupation will be included. For example, this is a marketing strategy for some "mini directories."

GLOBAL ADVERTISING

A member may communicate information that is factual, accurate, verifiable, readily comprehensible, dignified, in good taste, contains no testimonial or comparative statements and is not false, misleading or deceptive by inclusion or omission.

Words or phrases that are not objectively verifiable include, but are not limited to, these examples: **total, full, complete, quality, caring, loving, gentle, safe, and state of the art.**

Mission Statements and Slogans

Mission Statements are designed for internal use for staff strategic plans and regular clients, and are acceptable for use inside the facility, but should not appear in global advertising, including business cards and letterhead. Likewise, slogans are acceptable for in-house and client-directed use only but should not be used in global advertising.

Fees, Prices and Discounts

Global professional advertising may not contain information respecting fees, prices or discounts. "Free" and "complimentary" are considered prices. Payment methods such as Master Card, VISA, Interac, Medicaid or the like may be advertised, as can availability of payment plans.

However, a member may display or distribute a fee schedule for some or all professional or ancillary services and/or an explanation of their calculation within the veterinary facility. This includes client courtesies such as senior, multi-pet or student discounts. The location and size of a displayed fee schedule shall be such that it cannot be read by a person outside the facility. (see page 4 client-directed advertising)

A request for an estimate of fees by an individual for a specific service or procedure may be communicated to that individual by any medium.

Defining Facilities and References to Equipment

The CVO accredited “type of facility” may be used, for example: “CVO accredited Companion Animal Hospital.”

Names of pieces of equipment required by accreditation for a type of facility may be used. For example, a hospital can advertise the availability of an x-ray machine or that they have an in-house laboratory. However equipment such as Ultrasound, Endoscope, EKG equipment, ICU or isolation room are not required by accreditation and thus may only be used in communications directed to regular clients.

Services and Procedures

You may advertise services and procedures which make reference to equipment by way of the name of the procedure, for example: **ultrasonography, laryngoscopy, laser surgery, dental x-rays, arthroscopic surgery, and/or endoscopy.**

Product or service promotion

A member shall not be associated, directly or indirectly, with the advertising or promotion of any product or service other than the member’s professional services and ancillary services.

However, in a publication intended to be read principally by veterinarians, a member may be associated with, and permit his or her name to appear with, the advertising of a product or service.

Steering

A member shall not participate directly or indirectly in a system in which another person steers or recommends clients to a member for a professional or an ancillary service.

Soliciting

A member shall not contact or attempt to contact or communicate with any person in order to solicit patronage of professional or ancillary services.

A person who uses the professional services of a member who is in the employment of another member is deemed to be a client only of the employer.

A person who uses only the ancillary services of a facility (for example, grooming) is deemed to be a client of the ancillary service and not the professional veterinary service.

Open House

Global advertisements of open houses must conform to the professional advertisement guidelines, and may include the term “refreshments” (but **not** prizes, contests, draws or other free things).

Including the word “Advertisement”

The word “advertisement” does not need to appear on flyers and brochures. However, information distributed by a third party (e.g., newspaper, magazine) that includes text and is paid for by the member (commonly known as an advertorial) should include the word “advertisement.”

CLIENT-DIRECTED ADVERTISING

Client communications, including newsletters, may contain the type of information that would be provided in an office or farm visit, or in one-to-one veterinary/client communication.

This includes but is not limited to: **fees, prices, discounts, seasonal specials, equipment and services (ultrasonography, endoscopy, EKG), client education, information about professional and auxiliary staff, recommended procedures and treatments, ancillary services and products.**

Regular Client

A regular client is defined in the following way: A person is a regular client of a member if:

- (i) the person uses the professional services of a member regularly and with reasonable frequency, and
- (ii) the person has not requested the transfer of the records for the person's animal to another member.

Company Sponsorship

The printing or mailing of client directed advertising, including client newsletters, may be sponsored by companies.

Provision of your client list for these purposes or any other company mailing would be a breach of client confidentiality.

Facilities and Professional Corporation Names

It is the policy of the College that, to avoid confusion, the approved name of the accredited facility must appear on all signage, advertisements, newsletters, business cards, and invoices. In addition, if the member practices as a professional corporation, the approved name of the corporation must appear on all invoices and consent forms to ensure that clients are made aware of that fact.

Please note that the professional corporation name does not replace the approved facility name, and the professional corporation name may not be abbreviated to "PC". The professional corporation is operating under the accredited facility.

INFO SHEETS of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario provide veterinarians and the public with information about the governance of veterinarians in Ontario or contain practice parameters and standards that should be considered by all Ontario veterinarians in the care of their patients, dealings with their clients and the welfare of their staff.

It is important to note that these INFO SHEETS may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional activities have been maintained.

The College of Veterinarians of Ontario regulates veterinarians in Ontario in the public interest.