



POSITION STATEMENT

Quality Assurance Program for Members of the CVO

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Related Topics:	Accreditation, Licensure
Legislative References:	<i>Veterinarians Act R.S.O. 1990</i> , sections 3, 7(1) O. Reg. 1093, sections 17, 18, 50 CVO By-Laws, section 28.1-(1); 41(1)(k) [see Appendix 1]
College Contact:	Quality Assurance Program Manager
Reference Materials:	Quality Assurance page of the CVO website (http://www.cvo.org/member-enhancement.cfm); CVO legislation (http://www.cvo.org/about-legislation.cfm)

College publications contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all Ontario veterinarians in the care of their patients and in the practice of the profession. College publications are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained.

Purpose

The College's published Mission, which derives from its legislated mandate, is "To protect the public by regulating and enhancing the veterinary profession in Ontario." Its vision is "Complete public trust through professional excellence," and its strategic plan outlines three key areas it focuses on, in order to achieve its objectives. One of these key areas is Quality Assurance (QA), including the continued development and implementation of its QA program components for members.

This Position Statement outlines the College's definition of Quality Assurance (QA), summarizes its current program components and offerings, and states what expectations it has regarding member participation. It is in keeping with requirements for other self-regulated health professions, and it supports the CVO's mission of enhancing the veterinary profession in Ontario.

Scope

This Position Statement applies to all veterinarians licensed to practice in Ontario.

Background

Self-Regulation in Ontario

The *Veterinarians Act* was modelled on the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)*, which governs 21 human health professions in Ontario.¹ The *RHPA* requires colleges to develop and maintain a mandatory, comprehensive Quality Assurance Program for their members (authorized by a Quality Assurance Regulation), which must include, at minimum, components of peer review, practice review, and continuing education. The purpose of these requirements is to ensure there are mechanisms in place to measure practitioners' ongoing professional competence and maintenance of current standards of knowledge and skill.

Similarly the *Veterinarians Act* (s.3) requires the CVO:

1. To establish, maintain and develop standards of knowledge and skill among its members.
2. To establish, maintain and develop standards of qualification and standards of practice for the practice of veterinary medicine.
3. To establish, maintain and develop standards of professional ethics among its members.

Since the *Veterinarians Act* does not stipulate how the College of Veterinarians must carry out these specific duties under the *Act*, the CVO has flexibility in designing its QA program in order to meet its statutory obligations. Council has determined that this Position Statement should serve as a statement of College interpretation on matters of QA and set out the professional parameters for CVO members, until such time as an amendment to the *Act* and Regulation might occur. Further, draft Regulations that will make participation in various components of the CVO's Quality Assurance Program mandatory will be developed by the Quality Assurance Committee and Council in full consultation with the membership over the next 2-3 years.

¹ As of 2007, an additional 5 professions were added to the list of self-governing health professionals and these will fall under the *RHPA* once their own Acts are proclaimed.

QA Program Goal

The goal of the Quality Assurance (QA) Program for members is to enhance and maintain exemplary veterinary practice by:

- supporting our members in their continuing professional development; and
- providing public assurance in a proactive manner.

To help the College meet this goal, the Quality Assurance Committee of the College develops and implements QA program components for members that are linked to attainment of quality care and excellence in practice.

QA Committee

A QA Advisory Committee functioned at the CVO for many years until the By-Laws were changed in 2008 to establish the Quality Assurance Committee. Membership is established by Council each year. The QA Committee is mandated (By-Law 28.1-(1) to research, develop, review, and make recommendations to the Council respecting matters of quality assurance program components for members, including:

- a) continuing education,*
- b) professional development,*
- c) practice review, and*
- d) peer-review.*

QA program components that the QA Committee recommends to Council represent one segment of the CVO's overall Quality Assurance Program.

College Position

Definition and Philosophy

The Quality Assurance Program of the CVO is a cooperative effort between the CVO and its members, and is designed as a constructive, practice-enhancement initiative that has a positive effect on the profession.

The College currently partners with its members to provide quality assurance measures to the public across all of its activities. Many of these are *pro-active* measures, including registration and licensure, accreditation certification, and components of the QA Program for members.

Other aspects of self-regulation including investigations, complaints, and disciplinary processes also contribute to quality assurance, but they are *reactive* measures. The CVO does not consider these functions to be part of its QA Program for members.

Those pro-active QA Program components that are administered by the Quality Assurance Committee are expressly separate from the reactive obligations and activities of the College. The QA Committee's work with members is generally confidential and separate from the complaints and disciplinary functions of the CVO. Exceptions are rare and include cases where the College:

- is required to do so by law;
- has reason to believe there is risk of serious harm to a person or animal; or

- has reason to believe serious misconduct or incompetence requires action in the public interest,

and in cases where the member

- provides false information to the QA Committee, or
- fails to cooperate with the QA Committee,

in which cases QA Committee can disclose the nature of the concern to the Registrar, but cannot disclose any of the evidence in support of it obtained through the QA program.

QA Program Components for Members and College Expectations

The CVO bases its Quality Assurance Program and expectations on the belief that the vast majority of CVO members are professional, committed to excellence, and active in maintaining their knowledge, skill, and expertise. In fact the CVO is well aware that most members consistently engage in numerous activities with a view to maintaining, updating, and developing their knowledge and skill. The QA Program is designed to provide a means of demonstrating and enhancing these characteristics of the profession to the public at large by way of measuring and reporting on the continuing competence of the membership in aggregate.

The Quality Assurance Program for members is a grouping of specific components under the proactive category. Some components are mandatory, while others are voluntary; yet all QA program components support the commitment of CVO members to provide high quality medical care to their patients and services to their clients.

The following table provides a description of each component and the College’s corresponding expectation of its members:

COMPONENT PROVIDED BY THE CVO	RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEMBERSHIP
Accreditation Inspections	
<p>During the inspection, facilities are evaluated on criteria set out in the <u>Minimum Standards for Veterinary Facilities</u>.</p> <p>Medical records are also checked to verify that all required components are in place.</p> <p>Additional inspections may be directed by the Registrar (see sec. 50 of the Regulation).</p>	<p>Veterinary facilities must meet the requirements set out in the <u>Minimum Standards for Veterinary Facilities</u> and undergo reinspection every 5 years, and on change of ownership or sale of practice.</p> <p>On inspection, facilities must provide inspectors with access to medical records for verification that they meet the minimum legislated requirements for record keeping as per Regulation 1093 (sections 22-25).</p>
Workshops on Regulatory Matters	
<p>Several sessions on Medical Records are delivered in face-to-face sessions around Ontario each year to support members’ efforts to provide the best medical care possible. An on-line version is available on the CVO website. (Other topics and are under development.) The CVO trusts that members will attend workshops according to their self-identified learning goals and needs.</p>	<p>Attendance at CVO workshops is voluntary and should be included in members’ reports of their Continuing Professional Development activities.</p>

COMPONENT PROVIDED BY THE CVO	RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEMBERSHIP
Practice Guidance	
<p>Publications include Position Statements, Guidelines, INFO Sheets, and items posted on the website and/or in <u>Update</u>, all of which are issued to clarify legislation, regulation, and practice parameters for CVO members. It is expected that all CVO members will carefully read and review the publications of the College to ensure they are meeting accepted standards of practice as set by their peers. Further, the CVO has a Practice Resource Officer on staff who will answer members' questions by phone or email during regular office hours.</p>	<p>Guidelines provide recommendations that members should follow; Position Statements outline the CVO's interpretation of legislation and consequently explain requirements of members in the context of the issue at hand. All CVO publications may be used by committees in assessing alleged complaints and making disciplinary decisions.</p>
Peer Review of Medical Records	
<p>The peer review of medical records is considered a partial practice review, because records are a strong indicator of the quality of medicine practiced. This program is available to members on a self-initiated basis anytime. Members submit a series of complete records to the QA Program Manager, who assigns the review to a trained peer reviewer. Detailed feedback on the quality of records submitted is provided in order to assist members with maintaining and/or improving record-keeping standards. The peer reviewer's report is generally considered confidential.</p>	<p>The Peer Review of Medical Records program is voluntary. Records are measured against both legislated requirements and recommended guidelines.</p>

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Tools and Resources	
<p>CPD is the process through which licensed veterinarians maintain and enhance their post-graduate level of knowledge, skills, and judgment, and thereby maintain professional standards of practice and individual competence. CPD entails both organized, structured learning events and self-directed, unstructured learning activities that directly impact the practice of veterinary medicine.</p> <p>CPD is self-directed and any activity undertaken to further one's knowledge and/or skills to maintain and enhance professional competency "counts" as CPD.</p> <p>CPD planning and reporting tools provided to members are updated by the College regularly. An Annual CPD Summary Sheet is provided to members with licence renewal packages. A CPD Activity Log to assist members with tracking CPD is available on the CVO website. To see these tools and instructions for their use, see http://www.cvo.org/member-enhancement.cfm</p> <p>Others will be added as the QA Program develops.</p>	<p>Members must record and report on all of their continuing professional development (CPD) activities and submit the CPD Summary Sheet to the CVO annually. Members should participate in professional development activities that they deem relevant and pertinent to their practice and/or licensure. Based on the average number of hours members report each year (using data collected over the past several years), the CVO <u>recommends</u> that members complete at least 50 hours of CPD each year, or 150 hours over a 3-year period.</p> <p>Members should maintain a CPD Log to track and reflect upon their learning. Maintenance of a CPD Portfolio (including reflection and planning for future activities) using tools provided to members is currently recommended. The CVO expects that members will conduct such activities in order to maximize their own CPD each year.</p> <p>Participation in random reviews/audits is a voluntary way for members' to obtain feedback from peers on their CPD plans and outcomes as reflected in their CPD portfolios.</p>

Conclusion

The CVO will continue to develop program components that will support members in their efforts to maintain high standards for themselves and the profession in the delivery of veterinary services in Ontario. Future initiatives may include:

- the development of additional CPD Cycle tools to assist members in documenting their ongoing professional development; and
- an enhancement of the medical records review component of the Accreditation Inspection process.

Relevant Legislation

The *Veterinarians Act, 1989* is the profession specific *Act* which governs the practice of veterinarians in Ontario. O. Reg. 1093 is the regulation under that *Act*.

Mandate of College and Continuing Professional Development of Members

Section 3 of the *Veterinarians Act* states the mandate of the College as “objects”:

Objects

3. (1) The principal object of the College is to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine and to govern its members in accordance with this Act, the regulations and the by-laws in order that the public interest may be served and protected.

Idem

(2) For the purpose of carrying out its principal object, the College has the following additional objects:

1. To establish, maintain and develop **standards of knowledge and skill among its members**.
2. To establish, maintain and develop standards of qualification and **standards of practice** for the practice of veterinary medicine.
3. To establish, maintain and develop standards of **professional ethics** among its members.
4. To promote **public awareness** of the role of the College.
5. To perform such other duties and exercise such other powers as are imposed or conferred on the College under any Act.

Regulations re: Qualifications and Requirements for Licenses

Section 7 of the Act stipulates the authority of the College to establish regulations regarding what requirements members must meet in order to obtain licensure as follows:

7. (1) Subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council and with prior review by the Minister, the Council may make regulations with respect to the following matters:

1. Prescribing classes of licences and governing the qualifications and **requirements for the issuance of licences** or any class thereof and prescribing the conditions and limitations thereof.
2. Respecting **any matter ancillary to the provisions of this Act** with regard to the issuance, cancellation, suspension and revocation of licences.
3. Respecting any matter ancillary to the provisions of this Act with regard to the issuance, renewal, suspension and revocation of **certificates of accreditation**.
4. Prescribing classes of certificates of accreditation and governing the qualifications and **requirements for the issuance and renewal of certificates of accreditation** or any class thereof and prescribing the conditions and limitations thereof.
8. Prescribing and governing **standards of practice** for the profession.

18. Requiring and providing for the **inspection of veterinary facilities and of the records kept** by members of the College in connection with the practice of veterinary medicine.
21. Prescribing and requiring **the making and keeping of records** by members of the College in respect of the practice of veterinary medicine.

Professional Activities Information

CVO's By-Laws stipulate the collection of information relating to professional development of its members as follows:

- 41(1)(k) a record of professional reflection and development activities completed by the member during the 12-month period ending on the 31st day of October using the form or forms (paper or electronic) provided by the Registrar.

Role of the Quality Assurance Committee

By-law sections 28.1-(1) and (2) were established by Council in March 2008, creating the Quality Assurance Committee:

- 28.1-(1) The quality assurance committee shall be composed of 5 persons, of whom
 - a) at least two shall be elected councillors,
 - b) at least one shall be a councillor appointed to the council by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and
 - c) no more than two may be members of the college who are not councillors.
- (2) The quality assurance committee shall research, develop, review, and make recommendations to the council respecting matters of quality assurance programs for members, including
 - a) continuing education,
 - b) professional development,
 - c) practice review, and
 - d) peer-review.

Member Obligations to Maintain Competence

O. Reg. 1093 states:

17. (1) For the purposes of the Act, professional misconduct includes the following:
 1. An act or omission inconsistent with the Act or this Regulation.
 2. Failing to maintain the standard of practice of the profession.
18. A member shall exercise generally accepted standards of practice and procedures in the performance of veterinary services. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 1093, s. 18.

Registrar's Obligation to Inspect Facilities and Records

O. Reg. 1093 states:

50. (1) The Registrar shall cause, and the members shall permit, the inspection of facilities and of the records kept by members in connection with the practice of veterinary medicine, in order to determine if,
 - (a) the facility is being operated under and in accordance with a certificate of accreditation;
 - (b) the facility and the applicant or holder of a certificate of accreditation meet the qualifications and requirements for a certificate of accreditation;
 - (c) the records in respect of the practice of veterinary medicine are being kept as required; and
 - (d) the veterinary medicine being practised is generally in accordance with the standards of practice of the profession. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 1093, s. 50 (1).