



POSITION STATEMENT

Temporary Emergency Facilities

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Related Topics:	licensure, delegation, records
Legislative References:	<i>Veterinarians Act</i> , s.15; Ontario Regulation 1093, s.22 (1-6) (on records); s. 17-22 (on practice standards); s. 25-33 (on dispensing drugs and VCPR); s. 18(1)(40); <i>Minimum Standards for Veterinary Facilities in Ontario</i> .
Reference Materials:	CVO Guidelines on Informed Owner Consent; CVO Position Statement, "Licensure of Veterinarians in Emergency Situations"; CVO Position Statement, "General Principles of Delegation"; AVMA's <i>Emergency Preparedness and Response</i> Guide (April 2009); the CVMA's Canadian Veterinary Reserve program (www.canadianveterinarians.net)

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

This document serves to inform veterinarians of Ontario of the College's position on the actions of members who might choose to provide services to animals in a community-wide emergency situation.

Scope

This document applies to all veterinarians in Ontario who provide professional services to animals in a volunteer or other capacity during an emergency wherein the response is coordinated, supervised, or overseen by a municipal, provincial, or federal government authority.¹

The College's authority is limited to regulatory matters and its mandate does not include providing members with legal advice about private law matters or advising its members about civil or personal liability. Members should obtain their own legal advice about those aspects of their participation in any organized emergency response situation.

Background

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) in cooperation with Emergency Management Ontario (EMO) is developing a strategy to facilitate for the volunteer-based care, management and medical treatment of animals in Ontario during mid-size to large community-wide emergencies. During an emergency, the appropriate emergency management authority would act as a coordinating body that would activate trained, inter-professional response teams.

The Veterinarians Act s.15 requires all facilities from which veterinary services are provided to hold a valid Certificate of Accreditation from the CVO. However, it would not be possible for temporary facilities set up by the government during an emergency to be accredited by the CVO before becoming operational. While a regulation change establishing a Temporary Facilities category for accreditation purposes will be pursued by the College, the possibility of an emergency occurring before such a change is made necessitates the publication of this document, in order to guide and direct veterinarians who might participate in such initiatives.

Position Statement

General

The Council of the CVO believes that it is in the public interest that licensed veterinarians are permitted to provide services from a temporary, unaccredited facility during emergencies, and therefore the CVO will refrain from enforcing compliance with

¹ It would also apply to any Canadian Veterinary Reserve (CVR) veterinarian granted a short-term Ontario licence under the CVO's Position Statement, "Licensure of Veterinarians in Emergencies."

s. 15 of the *Veterinarians Act* during the provision of emergency services from such a facility, when operated in accordance with the requirements outlined below. In addition, other requirements, such as standards of practice and Minimum Standards for Facilities, will be interpreted within the realities of the emergency context.

Requirements for the Provision of Emergency Services by a Veterinarian from a Temporary Facility

The expectation of the CVO is that

- appropriate emergency management authority will officially designate a lead veterinarian licensed to practice in Ontario for each and any temporary facility it sets up;
- appropriate emergency management authority or, failing that, the lead veterinarian, will notify the CVO as soon as possible about the location of the facility and the name of the lead veterinarian appointed, as well as the names of other veterinarians assigned to the response team;
- all medical decisions will be made by veterinarians working on the team assigned to the facility;
- the designated lead veterinarian will oversee the facility and will ensure, working with the organization supplying resources, that professional practice standards are complied with to the best of his or her ability under the circumstances, including the following:
 - *Consent:* every effort will be made to obtain informed consent from owners who may be in the vicinity; animals for which the owner is unknown and/or which the OSPCA has brought to the facility² will be deemed to be held in the custody of the Society [Reg. s.33(1)(a)];³ ideally animal identification technology (e.g.: a microchip scanner) will be made available to expedite owner identification.
 - *Records:* records will be kept indicating reasonable animal ID, assessment and plans, procedures and treatments, to the best of the veterinarian's ability under the circumstances, and kept in a systematic manner. [Reg. s. 22(1-6)].
 - *Veterinarian identification:* each animal's record will include the name and address or licence number of the treating veterinarian for continuity and coordination of future care.

² OSCPA Act, s. 14(1) An Inspector or agent of the Society may remove an animal from the building or place where it is and take possession thereof on behalf of the Society for the purpose of providing it with food, care, or treatment to relieve its distress where (b) the inspector or agent has reasonable grounds for believing that the animal is in distress and the owner or custodian of the animal is not present and cannot be found promptly.

³ The Guidelines on Informed Consent, under the section subtitled "Emergencies," state: "For emergency situations where no VCPR exists, or when veterinarians are unable to make contact with the client or the authorized alternative contact person, then veterinarians are not required to obtain consent for procedures or treatments carried out wherein the animal(s) would suffer or risk significant harm without the performance of the procedure or treatment."

- *Co-ordination of care:* Notification of the primary-care veterinarian for the animal need not be attempted where not practical [Reg. s. 17(40)].
- *Standard of Care:* the patients will be treated as humanely as circumstances will allow. If standards are unattainable animals will be treated to minimize pain and suffering, injury to humans, and spread of zoonotic disease.
- *Delegation to Auxiliaries:* veterinarians treating companion animals will not allow auxiliaries to diagnose, prognose, prescribe or perform major surgery.
- *Minimum Standards for Facilities:* Many of the requirements for the appropriate Title (Companion Animal Hospitals, Food Animal or Equine Mobiles, etc) must be met to the extent reasonably possible, including:
 - Refrigeration for vaccines;
 - General cleanliness of the premises;
 - Aseptic surgery and aseptic administration of vaccines and drugs;
 - Drugs and equipment suitable for use in conventional veterinary emergencies should be available on the premises and planned as inventory by the response team ahead of time;
 - Controlled drugs must be kept as securely as possible;
 - Confinement facilities that meet humane standards;
 - Availability of appropriate food as well as feeding and watering devices; and
 - Adequate restraint devices to guard the safety of staff.
- *When the Emergency is Over:* As soon as possible after the emergency is over, the veterinarians will facilitate a smooth transition to full compliance with all legal and professional requirements.