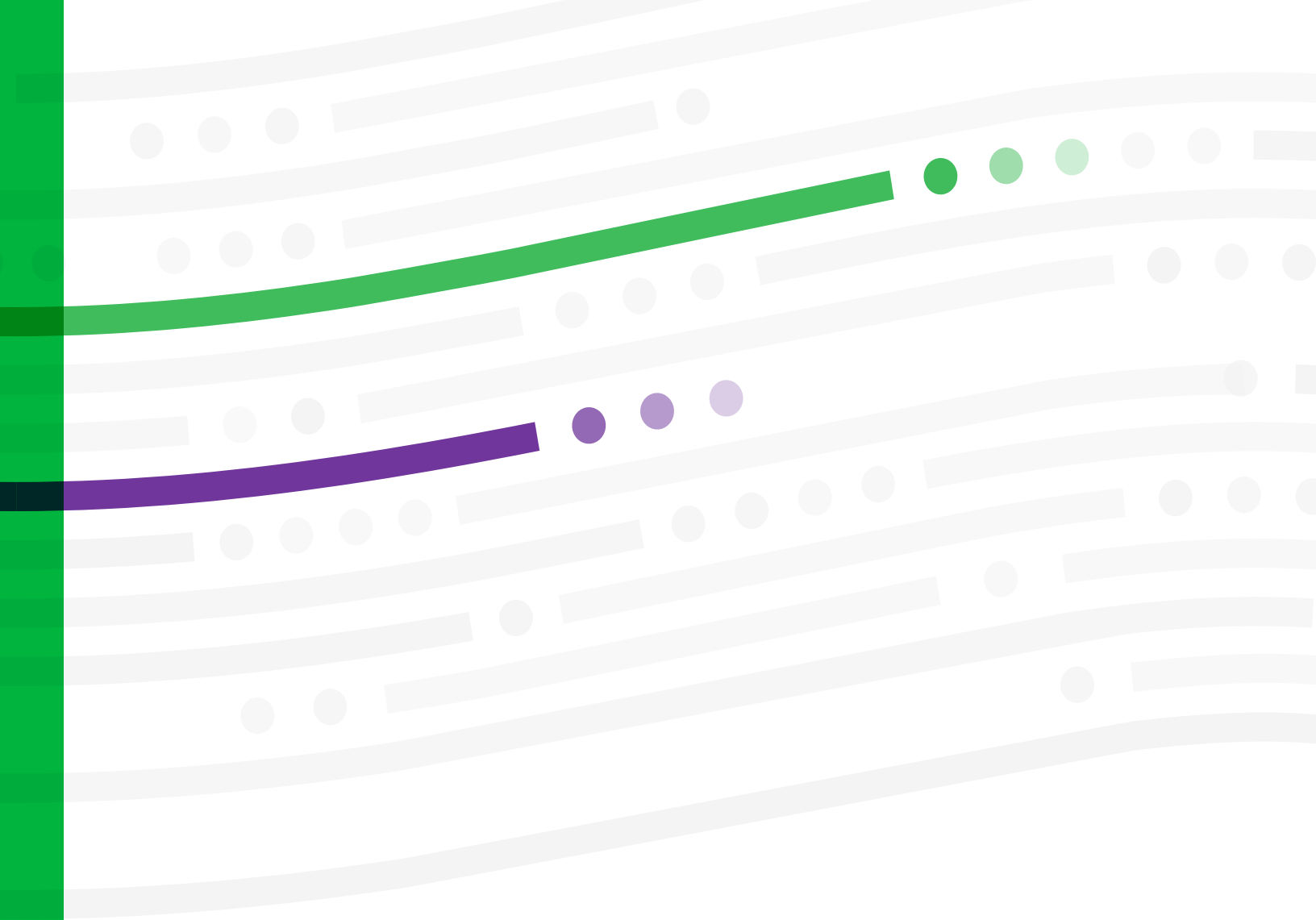




North American **Essential Competency Profile** for Veterinary Medicine



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Preface

The publication of the first *North American Essential Competency Profile for Veterinary Medicine* is an achievement that reflects the vision and leadership within the veterinary medicine regulatory community. This document places competence as a clear and central component of modern regulation. The Profile outlines competencies that are necessary for the safe and effective practice of veterinary medicine throughout a veterinarian's career, regardless of role, setting, or specialization.

This project was initiated in 2018 by the American Association of State Veterinary Boards, the Canadian Council of Veterinary Registrars, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario, and the International Council for Veterinary Assessment. These project sponsors were joined by the Canadian National Examining Board, the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges, and the Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates to create a strong vision for the Profile's widespread distribution and use.

The *North American Essential Competency Profile* is a foundational document and is intended for use by all regulators in Canada and the United States to promote and assure the consistency of the competence of licensed/registered members in their respective jurisdictions.

Acknowledgements

Creation of the *North American Essential Competency Profile for Veterinary Medicine (Essential Competency Profile)* was made possible through the combined efforts of numerous contributors. The 10-member project Advisory Group, representing the Canadian and United States veterinary education, examination, and regulatory communities, provided guidance throughout the effort. The 14-member project Task Force worked tirelessly and thoughtfully across numerous sessions to draft and refine the *Essential Competency Profile*. An additional 43 veterinary practitioners and regulators participated in focus groups and provided crucial feedback on an interim draft. All contributors are listed in Appendix C.

While space and privacy considerations preclude our naming them, we are deeply appreciative of the over 2000 veterinarians who completed the survey to validate the profile elements.

We are grateful to our research partners at ACT — Patricia Muenzen, PhD, Carla Caro, MA, and Sandra Greenberg, PhD — for leading the project, and to Sarah Adams at the College of Veterinarians of Ontario for providing administrative support.

Frank Richardson

DVM, Advisory Group Chair

Jan Robinson

Project Chair

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● Introduction

The competence of a licenced professional is fundamental to the concept of profession-based regulation. For veterinary medicine, competence is what is expected by regulators at the time of licensure/registration and what is expected by the public in every interaction with a veterinarian.

Despite its long and respected history, the profession of veterinary medicine in Canada and the United States has never had a document that expressly describes the specific set of competencies that a veterinarian, dependent on their role or scope of practice, is expected to demonstrate. This gap has left the regulator, the profession, and the public describing competence by other means—bylaws, standards of practice, task analyses, and perhaps other less relevant sources.

The term competence or competency is well defined in the education and organizational psychology literature, and it speaks directly to the essential or significant job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities of an individual to safely practice in an occupation, in this case veterinary medicine. Creating clarity on these essential competencies brings into focus requirements for both initial licensure/registration and ongoing monitoring and assessment to ensure the maintenance of veterinarians' competence throughout their careers.

Essential competencies describe the essence of what makes a good practitioner; identification and validation of competencies facilitate the articulation of consistent expectations about performance within the regulatory community. Because veterinary medicine encompasses a range of clinical and non-clinical practice roles, the *Essential Competency Profile* uses broad language and is meant to be widely applicable. At the same time, given differences in their role, area of focus, and practice context, there is no assumption that every veterinarian actively demonstrates every competency. That said, some competencies always apply (e.g.,

Despite its long and respected history, the profession of veterinary medicine in Canada and the United States has never had a document that expressly describes the specific set of competencies that a veterinarian, dependent on their role or scope of practice, is expected to demonstrate.

Professionalism) and some competencies apply primarily to some veterinarians as a function of their type of practice or the setting in which they work.

The *Essential Competency Profile* is not intended to prescribe universal education or practice requirements. Detailed information on how to perform tasks is normally found in standards of practice, or in bylaws or rules at the jurisdictional level. Its primary purpose is for use by the regulatory community as a foundational document supporting a focus on competence in regulatory initiatives.

Although the scope of practice of a veterinarian may vary by jurisdiction, the competencies detailed in the *Essential Competency Profile* are intended to be a benchmark for use by all regulatory agencies in Canada and the United States.

In providing a common framework that describes veterinary competence, the *Essential Competency Profile* aims to support multiple regulatory programs and initiatives, inclusive of:

- Informing licensure/registration requirements, such as examination and training
- Encouraging the development of self-assessment tools for use by international candidates prior to application
- Facilitating inter-jurisdictional labor mobility and promoting harmonization
- Supporting quality assurance mechanisms including periodic evaluation of essential competencies in practice
- Increasing clarity in discipline decisions related to failure to maintain standards or conduct unbecoming
- Assisting mentors who provide remediation programs
- Identifying learning needs within remediation orders
- Providing expectations related to requests for re-entry or changes of area of practice

Finally, the *Essential Competency Profile* should be considered a living document. The practice of veterinary medicine is dynamic, as are the societal demands on animal health and welfare and its intersection with One Health. Regulators should review the *Essential Competency Profile* periodically to ensure that the articulated competencies remain current and relevant for all its potential purposes.

Overarching Assumptions about the Essential Competencies

The *Essential Competency Profile* provides the veterinary regulatory sector in North America with a description of the competencies that are expected to be demonstrated by veterinarians throughout their careers.

The competencies and indicators describe benchmark expectations of performance from a regulatory perspective. As such, they are not intended to represent aspirational levels of performance or best practices; rather, the intent is to capture the baseline level of competence relevant to regulators who are responsible for ensuring practitioner competence from the first day to the final day of veterinary medicine practice.

The following assumptions guided the creation of the *Essential Competency Profile*:

- The competencies articulated in the profile are expected to be maintained across the career span.
- They apply to veterinary practice in both Canada and the United States.
- They apply across practice settings and species treated, as well as to those in both generalist and specialist practice.
- Not all competencies may be applicable to all practitioners in their various jobs across their careers.

Development of the Competency Profile

Four organizations representing regulation and assessment within the veterinary medical profession in Canada and the United States united in the initiative to create the North American *Essential Competency Profile for Veterinary Medicine (Essential Competency Profile)*. These organizations include the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB), the Canadian Council of Veterinary Registrars (CCVR), the College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO), and the International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA). Representatives from these four organizations were joined by advisors from the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC), the Canadian National Examining Board (NEB), and the Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG). Together, key leadership from these seven organizations made up the Advisory Group for the project.

Under the guidance and oversight of the Advisory Group, a Task Force carried out the work of drafting the elements of the *Essential Competency Profile*. The work of the Task Force was facilitated by ACT, the sponsoring organizations' research partner. Task Force appointments were made following a call for volunteers to participate in the project and were based on careful review of the overall balance of the group in representing different perspectives on veterinary medicine practice. The Task Force included practitioners, educators, and regulators from Canada and the United States.

In creating their first draft of the *Essential Competency Profile*, the Task Force drew upon their own expertise as well as the following resources:

- American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges. *Competency-Based Veterinary Education: CBVE Framework* (2018).
- International Council for Veterinary Assessment and National Board of Medical Examiners. *NAVLE Competency Domains* (2019).
- Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. *Day One Competencies* (2020).
- US and Canadian competency profiles from other health professions including medicine, nursing, and pharmacy.

After the Task Force had created its first full draft of the profile, stakeholder consultation was sought with additional members of the veterinary practitioner, educator, and regulatory communities. Calls for participation in stakeholder

focus groups were initiated by CCVR and AAVSB, and participants were selected from the pool of nominees to represent diverse practice settings and roles. A total of 43 members of the profession provided feedback on the work in progress over the course of seven focus panels. The Task Force finalized the *Essential Competency Profile* after carefully considering and incorporating information provided by the external stakeholders.

A survey was conducted in Canada and the United States to gather validation evidence for all elements in the *Essential Competency Profile*. More than 2000 members of the veterinary profession participated in the survey. The results supported the importance of each element in the profile to safe and effective veterinary practice across the career continuum for Canadian and US veterinarians.

Organization Structure and Elements

The *Essential Competency Profile* comprises Competencies and Indicators within seven defined Competency Areas:

1. Clinical Reasoning and Animal Care

2. Population Health Management

3. Communication

4. Collaboration

5. Professionalism

6. Practice Setting

7. Progressive Practice

Each Competency Area begins with a definition conveying its overall scope and intent. Competency statements are associated with each competency area; these are the ways performance in the competency area is demonstrated in veterinary practice. Competencies are shown in the left column of the *Essential Competency Profile*. Each competency is further illustrated by several indicators, which operationalize how the competency is manifest by a veterinarian. Indicators are shown in the right column of the profile. Terms defined in the glossary (see Appendix A) are shown in purple font the first time they appear.

The *Essential Competency Profile* resulting from the work of the Advisory Group, the Competency Development Task Force, a comprehensive external review and feedback initiative, an iterative refinement process, and a large-scale survey of veterinarians across Canada and the United States follows.

The Essential Competency Profile

1.0 | Clinical Reasoning and Animal Care

Definition: Provides safe and effective care to individual animals and animal groups, applying clinical reasoning and drawing upon current knowledge and clinical skills.

#	Competency	Indicator
1.1	Obtains and integrates relevant information about individual animals or <u>populations</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collects accurate and pertinent history• Gathers information about animals and their environment• Performs clinical examinations appropriate to presenting conditions• Obtains and correctly interprets relevant diagnostics
1.2	Triages situations and allocates resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognizes emergent situations and directs action• Triages cases to address those patients or conditions most in need of urgent care first
1.3	Establishes diagnoses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Synthesizes collected information to identify problems• Develops, actively refines, and prioritizes a list of potential diagnoses until arriving at working or definitive diagnoses
1.4	Establishes and refines diagnostic and therapeutic plans based on best available <u>evidence</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appraises and acts on current and evolving clinical information• Provides justification for diagnostic and therapeutic plans• Monitors and re-evaluates animal progress in a timely manner and determines appropriate actions• Recognizes and addresses unexpected outcomes• Considers prognosis when making diagnostic and therapeutic plans• Consults with other professionals and refers as needed

1.0 | Clinical Reasoning and Animal Care *continued...*

#	Competency	Indicator
1.5	Provides care that incorporates animal welfare, owner's expectations, and economic considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elicits owner's goals, expectations, perspectives, and constraints• Considers disease as it relates to individual animals, populations, and owner(s)• Clarifies risks and benefits of care options so veterinarians and owners can provide needed care within limitations of available resources• Recognizes and takes action to manage pain and distress• Discusses euthanasia as an option when appropriate
1.6	Performs veterinary procedures and provides appropriate post-procedural care to address animal needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performs diagnostic and therapeutic procedures correctly and safely• Safely anesthetizes and recovers patients• Provides appropriate analgesia before, during, and after veterinary procedures
1.7	Manages the physiological, affective, and behavioral needs of patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manages pain and patient comfort• Handles and restrains animals safely and humanely
1.8	Prescribes, dispenses, and administers drugs and biologics correctly and responsibly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses sound clinical judgment when prescribing• Adheres to applicable regulatory requirements• Uses appropriate prescription writing and labeling• Practices safe handling and storage of drugs and biologics• Acts to minimize risks to food safety

2.0 | Health Management

Definition: Develops, applies, and evaluates wellness and disease prevention and mitigation policies and practices to protect animals, people, and the environment.

#	Competency	Indicator
2.1	Promotes comprehensive wellness and preventive care measures in accordance with accepted standards for animal health and welfare, as well as public and environmental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommends appropriate disease prevention and control measures• Provides nutritional and feeding advice appropriate to life stage and health status• Promotes behavioral health and well-being• Counsels owners about housing and husbandry needs• Monitors productivity and health
2.2	Advises owners on practices that promote animal welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides education regarding the physical, affective, and natural needs of animals• Advises on ethical and welfare-related aspects of animal production, handling, and care• Advises on humane animal husbandry and transport/ travel
2.3	Recommends and evaluates protocols to limit exposure to pathogens and disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifies risks for transmission of infectious agents• Recommends and evaluates biosecurity protocols tailored to specific situations that address isolation, disinfection, movement of animals and people, and waste disposal

2.0 | Health Management continued...

#	Competency	Indicator
2.4	Identifies and responds to <u>infectious diseases</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifies the clinical signs, clinical course, transmission potential and pathogen(s) associated with infectious diseases• Formulates patient/herd management or treatment plans for infectious diseases• Educates <u>stakeholders</u> to mitigate risks associated with infectious diseases• Escalates reportable diseases to relevant oversight agencies in a timely manner• Monitors for emerging diseases and changes in incidence or prevalence in existing diseases
2.5	Promotes public and environmental health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practices antimicrobial stewardship• Educates owners regarding safe administration, storage, and disposal of medication and other treatments• Educates owners regarding risks associated with zoonotic diseases• Advises and adheres to published standards and advice related to food safety and withdrawal times• Adheres to rules and provides advice for safe management of animal waste, carcasses, and by-products

3.0 | Communication

Definition: Uses effective strategies to exchange information and to enhance animal care.

#	Competency	Indicator
3.1	Uses verbal and non-verbal communication effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicates with sensitivity, respect, and empathy• Listens actively to elicit expectations, build trust, and foster exchange of information• Uses and responds to body language appropriately• Gives and receives feedback in a constructive manner
3.2	Adapts communication approach to the context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifies learning needs and selects appropriate communication methods and techniques• Uses language appropriate to listener
3.3	Provides clear and accurate information regarding evaluation and treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides timely and sufficient information to enable owners to clearly understand problems and decisions that must be made• Engages owners in critical conversations regarding financial decisions, quality of life, welfare, and end-of-life care
3.4	Provides clear and accurate information regarding owners' care of animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides instructions, written protocols, or training tailored to specific needs of animal(s) and care providers• Takes steps to facilitate owner understanding of information provided
3.5	Prepares thorough, accurate, and understandable documentation and written communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documents medical decisions, inclusive of diagnostic results and the rationale for decisions• Uses professional terminology in medical records• Documents informed consent in medical record• Ensures documentation fulfills professional and legal requirements• Documents communications with owners and others involved in animal care

4.0 | Collaboration

Definition: Works effectively with others to provide intraprofessional- and interprofessional care.

#	Competency	Indicator
4.1	Promotes an integrated approach to decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seeks and acknowledges input from diverse stakeholders as appropriate• Leverages own strengths and strengths of others to achieve shared goals
4.2	Practices <u>inclusivity</u> and respect for differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accommodates needs that arise from <u>diversity</u>• Recognizes own biases and their potential impact on one's practice as a veterinarian
4.3	Works effectively as member of an intraprofessional or interprofessional <u>team</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognizes and respects roles and contributions of other team members• Assumes leadership role as appropriate based on experience, skills, and context• Provides necessary and useful support to team members through supervision, training, or constructive feedback to refine plans of action• Recognizes conflicts when they arise and employs strategies to work toward successful mitigation
4.4	Ensures continuity of care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicates clearly with referral, diagnostic, and other professional services• Ensures timely communication of accurate and relevant information to ensure coordination between internal and external stakeholders• Confirms that others can implement care plans

5.0 | Professionalism

Definition: Practices within legal, ethical, and professional standards, engages in ongoing **professional development**, and monitors the health and well-being of self and colleagues.

#	Competency	Indicator
5.1	Practices within the scope of a veterinarian- client -patient relationship (VCPR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Establishes and maintains a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship with each client
5.2	Provides or directs services in an ethical and professional manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Incorporates ethical considerations into decision-making processesApplies principles of professional conduct to all aspects of practicePractices within scope of professional and personal limitations and abilities
5.3	Complies with legal and regulatory requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Acts in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations related to veterinary practice within a jurisdictionRecognizes and reports animal neglect and abuse as required by lawEnsures that medical records are securely stored, retained, and accessible to the owner and veterinarian for the period of time consistent with regulations
5.4	Attends to own wellbeing and that of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Demonstrates awareness of personal limits and knows how and when to seek support.Recognizes signs and sources of workplace stress and acts to remedy adverse situationsRecognizes potential impairment in self and others and seeks professional advice and support if needed

5.0 | Professionalism continued...

#	Competency	Indicator
5.5	Engages in reflective practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critically evaluates the quality of one's own decision-making and its related impacts• Incorporates constructive feedback to improve performance• Engages in clinical or quality audits or peer review as appropriate
5.6	Maintains and enhances professional knowledge and skills throughout the career	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify strengths, deficiencies, and limits in one's knowledge and expertise• Undertakes professional development, such as continuing education, to meet identified learning needs• Maintains standards of practice through application of new knowledge and skills• Seeks out and applies new knowledge when changing scope of practice

6.0 | Practice Setting

Definition: Acts to safeguard the health and safety of all persons and animals in the practice setting.

#	Competency	Indicator
6.1	Ensures a safe and healthy <u>work environment</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complies with applicable workplace health and safety regulations• Complies with applicable jurisdictional facility accreditation requirements• Complies with applicable laws and regulations regarding management of drugs, biologics, chemicals, and radiation• Implements safety and infection control and waste disposal practices for the practice setting• Implements safe practices for handling hazardous materials and equipment• Implements safe practices for handling animals to reduce risk of injury to people and animals
6.2	Assumes responsibility for veterinary care given by person(s) working under direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides appropriate supervision and training as required by situations• Makes delegation decisions in conformity with scope of practice and regulatory requirements• Ensures that communications of other staff members are thorough, accurate, and timely
6.3	Contributes to risk management related to the veterinary setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipates, recognizes, and manages risks to animals and people within the scope of the veterinarian's authority• Ensures the quality, safety and integrity of materials, equipment, supplies, and products in the practice setting

7.0 | Progressive Practice

Definition: Evaluates and incorporates evidence and technologies to support and enhance practice.

#	Competency	Indicator
7.1	Obtains and critically reviews and evaluates relevant scientific and clinical evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Locates and retrieves scientific and clinical evidence• Critically appraises evidence for validity and applicability
7.2	Integrates scientific knowledge and professional judgment into clinical decision making and actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applies current evidence to solve clinical problems and improve practice• Supports recommendations with critically analyzed evidence and accurate explanations
7.3	Evaluates and utilizes technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintains up-to-date knowledge of relevant technologies• Applies technologies in a safe and effective manner to support and enhance veterinary practice• Uses technologies as needed to meet current minimum standards of practice

APPENDIX A

Glossary of Terms

Biologics – Vaccines, antigens, antitoxins, and other preparations made from living organisms or containing components of living organisms (naturally occurring or genetically engineered) and intended for use in diagnosing, treating, or immunizing animals. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 8](#)

Biosecurity Protocols – A set of management and physical measures designed to reduce the risk of introduction, establishment and spread of animal diseases, infections or infestations to, from and within an animal population (World Organisation for Animal Health). These measures should serve to protect not only the animal population, but also the humans that work with the animals. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 9](#)

Client – A client is one who is using the services of a veterinarian and may be an owner or an agent or authorised representative for the owner of the animal(s). [REFERENCED ON PAGE 13](#)

Diversity – The condition of having or being composed of differing elements and acknowledging group-level differences may relate to race/ethnicity, gender and general identify, sexual orientation, age, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, culture, (dis)ability, religion, spiritual beliefs, military status, etc. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 12](#)

Drugs – Any substances or mixtures of substances manufactured, compounded, sold, or represented for use in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of disease in humans or animals. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 8](#)

Evidence – The critically appraised body of facts, experience, research evidence, or information supporting veterinary decisions. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 7](#)

Inclusivity – An approach that focuses on ensuring that everyone’s voice be heard, and everyone has a sense of belonging, that is, of “being in the room where it happens.” [REFERENCED ON PAGE 12](#)

Infectious Diseases – Disorders caused by organisms, such as, bacteria, viruses, fungi, prions, or parasites. Infectious diseases can be transmissible to animals from the environment (e.g., air, food, fomites, and water), via vectors, directly from animal-to-animal (contagious) and from animal-to-person (zoonoses). [REFERENCED ON PAGE 10](#)

Interprofessional – Activities occurring between individuals from two or more professions to perform a task or to provide services together. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 12](#)

Intraprofessional – Activities occurring within or among a group of professionals from the same profession organized to perform a task or provide services together. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 12](#)

Owner – A person who owns the animal(s). [REFERENCED ON PAGE 8](#)

Populations – Groups of animals including, but not limited to companion animals, food animals, shelter animals, laboratory animals, and wildlife. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 7](#)

Practice Setting – The location at which the veterinarian is practicing veterinary medicine. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 15](#)

Professional Development – Continuing veterinary education and career training post-graduation taken in order to maintain competency, improve knowledge and develop new skills. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 13](#)

Stakeholders – Parties with an interest or concern relating to an individual animal or population. Stakeholders may include owners of animals (and agents acting as authorized representatives of owners), governments, regulatory agencies, other professions or trades, and members of the public. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 10](#)

Standards of Practice – A standard of practice is a broad term which includes both the published and unpublished current standards of a profession. A standard of practice may include a compilation of rules or policies of a regulator, peer reviewed literature, clinical guidelines, and generally accepted expectations of peers. Standards of practice evolve over time. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 14](#)

Team – Individuals (veterinarians, colleagues within the profession, technicians, other professionals, support staff) who work together as a group to accomplish a task. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 12](#)

Technologies – The collective medical, surgical, information technology, and communication techniques, tools, methods, and equipment/materials used in the provision of veterinary services. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 16](#)

Work Environment – The practice setting, social features, and physical conditions in which the practice of veterinary medicine occurs. [REFERENCED ON PAGE 15](#)

APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C

Advisory Group and Task Force Members

Advisory Group Members

Heather Case, DVM, MPH, DACVPM, CAE
Karen Brandt, DVM
Kristin Chaney, DVM, DACVIM (LAIM), DACVECC
Darrell Dalton, DVM
Nancy Grittman, MBA
Tim Kolb, DVM
Mark Olson, DVM
Jack Wilson, DVM
Frank Richardson, DVM
Jan Robinson

Task Force Members

Aja Senestraro, DVM
Alexis Bryce, BVMS
Christina Tran, DVM
Diane McClure, DVM, PhD, DACLAM
Gretchen Schoeffler, DVM
Jason Stanhill, DVM
Katie Hoddinott, DVM, DVSc, DACVS-SA
Keri Reykdal, DVM
Mark McConnell, BVMS
Paula Menzies, DVM, MPVM, DECSRH
Ron Carsten, DVM, MSc, PhD
Taylor Whitcombe, BVMS
Tim Ogilvie, DVM, MSc, DACVIM
Virginia Fajt, DVM, PhD, DACVCP

