

SPEAKING FRANKLY

A Report on the Public Community Reference Panel

October 2022

BACKGROUND

As a component of its Strategy 2020 objectives, the Council of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario formed a public advisory panel to assist with its work. The Public Community Reference Panel is the second iteration of this group which has now existed since 2017. The Public Community Reference Panel's specific mandate includes:

- to provide early advice to the College on emerging policy matters
- to provide feedback on the clarity of draft policy to the general public
- to provide input on the public communication strategy
- to identify emerging trends related to the animals, animal care and public perspective

The panel is intended to meet at least three times a year, once face-to-face with Council. Due to the pandemic, temporary amendments to this approach have been made.

This report summarizes key areas discussed by the panel at its most recent meeting in October 2022 and outlines opportunities for College consideration.

KEY AREAS

(A) Informed Client Consent

The College was interested in gaining a better understanding of the public's experience during the process of providing informed client consent. Comments from the Panel included:

- Things expected before giving informed consent:
 - Options for treatment, and benefits and risks of each
 - Cost
 - Duration or length of stay/procedure
 - Before and after care
 - Drug protocols
 - Realistic expectations from treatment
- Consent can be written or verbal, but is given to the veterinarian

(B) Shared Care in Animal Rehabilitation

The College has a Working Group on Shared Care in Animal Rehabilitation. One of the goals of the Working Group is to promote collaboration in animal rehabilitation. To assist in delivering this message, two infographics and a joint statement have been developed. Comments on the developed materials from the Panel included:

- Clarity is needed on who the joint statement is from
- There may be fear of informing the veterinarian that other care providers are being seen
- Reads very small animal focused, equine is large in this area but not reflected
- As a pet owner, the joint statement is appreciated
- The idea of collaborative care is positive
- Clarity is needed on:
 - forms of energy
 - direct access

(C) *Position Statement: Balancing Client Access to Veterinary Care and Available Animal Care Options*

The College has been working on the development of a position statement that acknowledges a spectrum of care that supports varied public access to veterinary medicine in Ontario and sought the Panel's guidance on how best to assist the public in understanding this new position statement. Comments from the Panel included:

- The position is well written and clear
- Consider distributing on the website, social media, and veterinary facilities
- The position reads for veterinarians, not the public
- This conversation might come up when obtaining informed client consent

(D) Community Connection Newsletter

The College was interested in hearing the Panel's reaction to the past two issues of Community Connection, the electronic public newsletter developed in 2018. Comments from the Panel included:

- Heavily small animal focused; needs more large animal for relevant topics
- The quiz is interactive and interesting
- Lack of awareness of the newsletter
- Potential for veterinarians to share this with clients
- Look and design is contemporary
- Suggestion to add a link to the main homepage of the website

(E) Trends

Panel members have the opportunity to raise any current trends or issues within the veterinary sector that they believe should be raised for the College's consideration. Comments from the Panel included:

- Pharmaceutical companies' joint investments in veterinary facilities and in pharmaceuticals
- Public unaware that veterinarians are required to provide a written prescription when requested
- Positive experiences with telemedicine
- Ongoing backorders of pharmaceutical drugs in both pharmacies and veterinary facilities

SUMMARY

The Council is grateful to the members of the advisory panel for their candid comments and willingness to engage with the profession as it aims to instill confidence in veterinary regulation. All information and identified opportunities will be considered for both immediate and future planning.