



SPEAKING FRANKLY

A Report on the Veterinary Practice Community Reference Panel

February 2023

BACKGROUND

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

- to provide early advice to the College on emerging policy matters
- to provide feedback on the implementation of draft policy
- to provide input on the communication strategy with the veterinary community
- to assist in the identification of risk areas in practice
- to identify emerging trends and challenges in practice

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 February 2023 and outlines opportunities for College consideration.

KEY AREAS

(A) Open Consultation: *Veterinarians Act*

The College was interested in sharing details about its ongoing work related to the modernization of the *Veterinarians Act* that was announced by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in November 2022. Comments from the Panel included:

- These are good changes that need to be communicated to the veterinary community
- Multiple communication tools are needed to help veterinarians understand this topic
- General uncertainty over how large the project is
- This is an opportunity to improve access to care
- Unaware that some items could be moved into by-laws

(B) Returning to In-person Meetings with College Council

In previous years, before the COVID-19 pandemic, College Council welcomed the Public Community Reference Panel to one in-person meeting annually to engage in discussion. College staff were interested in hearing the Panel's feelings about returning to one in-person meeting with Council each year. Comments from the Panel included:

- Strong support for the return to in-person meetings
- Request to consider a hybrid option

(C) Veterinary Dentistry – Radiography Requirements

The College recently began the process of reviewing the *Professional Practice Standard: Veterinary Dentistry* (PPS) following discussion centered around whether radiography (i.e., x-ray equipment) should be mandatory for all veterinary facilities who offer veterinary dentistry services. The College was interested in hearing thoughts on this potential requirement. Comments from the Panel included:

- Radiography should be a part of any regular dentistry service
- Dentistry should almost not be performed without a dental x-ray
- A regular x-ray unit is difficult to use and not time efficient; a dental unit is needed
- An x-ray is the only way you can assess many things
- Extractions typically require a follow-up x-ray
- Exceptions may need to be applied to emergency situations
- Some caution in becoming too prescriptive

(D) The Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship

The College was interested in hearing the Panel's insight on how best to circulate and clarify the information found in the updated *Professional Practice Standard: Establishing, Maintaining and Discontinuing the Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship* with the public. Comments from the Panel included:

- Everyone is busy; difficulty getting people to read additional materials
- People are beginning to ignore virtual information
- Items suggested as ways to share information:
 - post cards,
 - additions to invoices,
 - advertisements in trade journals,
 - posters placed in clinics
- Infographics have a visual impact
- The lower the barrier to accessing this information the better



(E) Trends for Consideration

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:

- Increase in corporate ownership in Northeastern Ontario
- Shortage of veterinary professionals
- Two podcast episodes were shared by Panel members
 - <https://freakonomics.com/podcast/nurses-to-the-rescue/>
 - <https://freakonomics.com/podcast/should-you-trust-private-equity-to-take-care-of-your-dog/>

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.