Introduction

Advancements in communication and information technology provide opportunities for new approaches to the delivery of veterinary medicine. The College recognizes the value of utilizing developments in technology to improve access to the provision of veterinary medicine, where appropriate, and supports innovations in the delivery of veterinary medicine.

Definition

Telemedicine refers to the delivery of veterinary medicine using information and communication technologies where the veterinarian and the patient are not in the same physical location. Telemedicine does not include remote consultation between colleagues in different locations. In cases of consultation, professional obligations and responsibilities rest with the licensee who is in an established veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR). Telemedicine is a method used to enhance the practice of veterinary medicine in relation to an Ontario animal or animals. As in all circumstances, an individual practising veterinary medicine in Ontario must be licensed with the College of Veterinarians of Ontario.

Practice Expectations

A veterinarian meets the Professional Practice Standard: Telemedicine when he/she:

1. Understands that a VCPR cannot be established via telemedicine.
2. Understands that practising veterinary medicine via telemedicine is only permitted in the context of an existing and valid VCPR.

3. Understands that telemedicine is a method of delivering veterinary medicine, rather than a new practice methodology, and that a veterinarian’s existing legal and professional obligations are not altered when veterinary medicine is provided via telemedicine.

4. Employs sound professional judgment to determine whether using telemedicine is appropriate in particular circumstances every time he or she considers practising via telemedicine, and only provides advice via telemedicine to the extent that it is possible without a physical examination. He or she does not substitute telemedicine technology for a physical assessment when a physical assessment is necessary, and where he or she could not thereby make an appropriate diagnosis or create a treatment plan.

5. Ensures that he or she safeguards a client’s privacy when practising via telemedicine by taking appropriate precautions and confirming that the technology and physical setting being used by the veterinarian and client have adequate security protocols in place to ensure compliance with the veterinarian’s legal and professional obligations to protect clients’ privacy and confidentiality.

6. Ensures that the technology used with respect to practice via telemedicine is of sufficient and appropriate quality to assure the accuracy of remote diagnosis and assessment.

7. Ensures that information that is collected when a veterinarian practises via telemedicine becomes a part of the medical record.

8. Ensures that he or she has sufficient knowledge regarding the competency, education, and skill level of the staff at a remote location, when this exists, to ensure appropriate delegation.

**Legislative Authority**

*Veterinarians Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. V.3 and R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 1093: GENERAL*
Other References

The following can be found on the College’s website at www.cvo.org:
Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records
Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records
Position Statement: The Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship
Position Statement: Delegating to Auxiliaries in Companion Animal Practice
Position Statement: Delegating to Auxiliaries in Food Animal & Equine Practice
Position Statement: General Principles of Delegation
Professional Practice Standard: Informed Client Consent
Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Informed Client Consent

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. The College encourages you to refer to the website (www.cvo.org) to ensure you are referring to the most recent version of any document.