

VETERINARY COUNCIL OF IRELAND

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## **ETHICAL VETERINARY PRACTICE**





**VETERINARY COUNCIL OF IRELAND  
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Dear Colleague,

This booklet contains an updated version of the Veterinary Council's guidance note on Ethical Veterinary Practice which has been amended to take account of the [European Communities \(Animal Remedies\) \(No 2\) Regulations 2007](#). This guidance note has been published on the Council's website and will also be incorporated in the Council's Code of Professional Conduct

You are reminded that the provisions of the Veterinary Council's [Code of Professional Conduct](#) apply to all registered veterinary practitioners, regardless of the nature of your employment.

A number of enquiries have been made by veterinary practitioners in relation to the European Communities (Animal Remedies) (No 2) Regulations 2007. A set of the most frequently asked questions together with the considered opinions of the Veterinary Council have been included.

Yours sincerely,

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President  
Veterinary Council

### **Ethical Veterinary Practice**

The term “Ethical Veterinary Practice” is a wide ranging one, implying as it does, compliance with the totality of the Veterinary Council’s [Code of Professional Conduct](#) and encompassing more than the provision of service and/or drugs. However, in the context of the [“European Communities \(Animal Remedies\) \(No 2\) Regulations 2007”\(ARR 2007\) \(S.I. 786 of 2007\)](#) Regulation 43 (8) (c) it is the view of Council that to comply with the requirements of “Ethical Veterinary Practice” a registered veterinary practitioner must ensure the following at a minimum:

- (1) That the animal (herd or flock) is under the care of the registered veterinary practitioner (or another member of the group veterinary practice of which he/she is a member) as set out in Regulation 43 (8) (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e).
  
- (2) In relation to Regulation 43 (8) (c) that the registered veterinary practitioner (or other member of the group veterinary practice) is
  - (a) available, or
  - (b) has made alternative arrangements for another veterinary practice which is situated sufficiently close to the animal or animals in question to respond to requests (at the holding, where appropriate) on a 24 hour Emergency Service basis to provide services of veterinary medicine on the animal or in the herd or flock for the normal requirements of client “follow up” or monitoring for conditions.
  
- (3) Where a veterinary practitioner is requested, in the absence of a clinical examination, to provide services to animals under his/her care, the provision of service would be based on;
  - (a) the records of disease in the herd or flock, or
  - (b) an assessment of laboratory test results on the animal or cohort animals in question, or
  - (c) a request by another veterinary practitioner, under whose care the animal was/animals were and, who has carried out an assessment of their condition and has requested another veterinary practitioner by way of prescription to dispense or administer an animal remedy.

Where different veterinary practitioners are knowingly treating the same group of animals, including supplying medicines for administration to those animals, each one shall keep the other informed of any examination of the animals, relevant clinical information and/or medicines supplied or provided, so as to avoid any danger that might arise from conflicting advice or adverse reaction arising from unsuitable combinations of medicine. In any consideration of this matter, cognisance should be taken of the Animal Remedies Records of the holding.

If a veterinary practitioner is called upon by an owner or agent to treat an animal which is, or has been recently, in the care of another veterinary practitioner, he or she should, where possible, first consult with that veterinary practitioner. In all such cases the rules of supersession, as laid out in the current version of the Council's "[Code of Professional Conduct](#)" apply and a clinical examination of the case would be considered necessary before any medication may be dispensed.

Even where two veterinary practitioners are treating different groups of animals owned by the same client, it is still advisable for each one to keep the other informed of any problem which might affect their work.

Where the conditions listed at (3) (a), (b) or (c) above do not indicate the presence, or a previous history in the herd or flock, of the condition currently the subject of a request for service, a clinical examination shall be carried out in order to ensure the appropriate therapy, i.e. the therapy must be justified and in accordance with Regulation 43 (1) (a), (b), (c) and (d), [European Communities \(Animal Remedies\) \(No 2\) Regulations 2007](#).

- (4) That further to the implementation of Part 9 (Section 108, (2)) of the [Veterinary Practice Act 2005](#), that the registered veterinary practitioner shall practise veterinary medicine from a "veterinary premises" as defined in Section 108 of the [Veterinary Practice Act 2005](#).

To facilitate reference to the legislation referred to above, the appropriate Regulations/Sections are set out in an Appendix to this document.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

***I am a registered practitioner providing mastitis control as part of normal veterinary services to my clients, how does section 43 of the European Communities (Animal Remedies) (No 2) Regulations 2007 affect me and does Schedule 8 apply?***

Section 43 of the ARR 2007 relates to the legal obligations of veterinary practitioners when prescribing and dispensing ALL animal remedies, including intramammaries. Schedule 8 of the ARR 2007 allows for an 'Alternative Prescribing Regime' specifically for intramammaries but only where the animals to be treated belong to a herd covered by a programme meeting the requirements of Schedule 8. If such a programme is not in place you are entitled to prescribe intramammaries as part of the normal veterinary service you provide to your clients provided you comply with Section 43 of the ARR 2007 and adhere to the Veterinary Council's guidance note on Ethical Veterinary Practice. You are not exempt from the requirement to have visited the farm at least once in a 12 month period.

***I have been approached by a milk processor to supervise a Mastitis Control Programme (MCP) under Schedule 8 of the European Communities (Animal Remedies) (No 2) Regulations 2007; can I prescribe intramammaries for the farmers in the MCP?***

Schedule 8 is an 'Alternative Prescribing Regime' for intramammaries which removes the requirement in 43(8) (b) to have visited the farm at least once in a 12 month period but ONLY where the animals to be treated belong to a herd covered by a programme meeting the requirements of Schedule 8. As the veterinary practitioner under whose direction the programme operates you have certain responsibilities defined in Schedule 8. You are also bound by Section 43 of the ARR 2007, which relates to the legal obligations of veterinary practitioners when prescribing and dispensing ALL animal remedies, including intramammaries. You must also adhere to the Veterinary Council's guidance note on Ethical Veterinary Practice, in particular the requirement that you are available to provide a 24-hour service to the clients of the milk processor or have made alternative arrangements with another practitioner for the provision of such cover.

***My client wishes to sign up to a mastitis control programme offered by his milk processor. What is my role?***

If you are assigned formal responsibility in relation to the implementation of the programme (i.e. you sign up as the practitioner who has responsibility for the animals in accordance with 43 (8)) you are the only person entitled to write a prescription for intramammaries under the programme. If you do not have a direct role in the operation of the programme it is incumbent on the veterinary practitioner under whose direction the programme operates to keep you informed of any examination of the animals, relevant clinical information and/or medicines supplied, in accordance with Ethical Veterinary Practice.

***I have been invited by a farmer, who is not a regular client, to investigate a mastitis problem on his farm, what should I do?***

You should contact the veterinary practitioner who normally provides veterinary services to this farmer informing him/her of the request. The provisions of the Council's Ethical Veterinary Practice apply. In particular, you need to ensure compliance with section (3), paragraphs 2, 3, and 4.

***I feel that my client would benefit from further advice provided by a practitioner with special expertise in relation to mastitis. What are the ethical implications for me and the other veterinary practitioner providing this advice?***

The provisions of the Council's guidance note on Ethical Veterinary Practice apply. In particular you need to ensure compliance with section (3), paragraphs 2, 3, and 4. It would be vital that you agree the role of the practitioner providing expertise vis a vis your client and that you keep each other fully informed of progress, in the interests of your clients to whom you have to provide 24 hour cover.

## APPENDIX

### Extract from European Communities (Animal Remedies) (No 2) Regulations 2007

#### **Prescribing and dispensing.**

43. (1) a person shall not prescribe an animal remedy unless he or she is a registered veterinary practitioner, the animal to which the veterinary prescription relates is under his or her care and he or she is satisfied that—

- (a) the veterinary prescription will be used to treat the animal to which the prescription relates,
- (b) use of the animal remedy is justified for the animal,
- (c) administration of the animal remedy is, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, not incompatible with a current or previous treatment, (where appropriate, by consulting with any other veterinary practitioner who has responsibility for the care of the animals), and
- (d) There is no contra-indication and there will not be an adverse reaction if other animal remedies have been, or are to be, administered or prescribed.

(2) A registered veterinary practitioner shall only prescribe an animal remedy in a quantity necessary for the treatment of the condition in respect of which the animal remedy is prescribed subject, in the case of a food producing animal, to a maximum quantity of 12 months supply from the date the veterinary prescription is issued.

(3) Without prejudice to Regulation 28(6), a registered veterinary practitioner who prescribes or administers an animal remedy designated veterinary practitioner only (VPO-1), veterinary practitioner only (VPO), or prescription only for or to an animal shall, at that time, issue a veterinary prescription to the owner or person in charge of the animal.

(4) Without prejudice to Regulation 28(6), a veterinary prescription shall—

- (a) be issued by a registered veterinary practitioner,
- (b) be written in ink or printed, legible and indelible and be signed in ink by, and bear, in block capital letters, the name and address of, the registered

veterinary practitioner,

- (c) be issued in triplicate of which the original and one copy shall be given to the owner or person in charge of the animal to be treated and a copy retained by the registered veterinary practitioner, and
- (d) contain at least the particulars listed in Schedule 3.

(5) A registered veterinary practitioner shall retain, at his or her premises, a copy of a veterinary prescription for 5 years and make the copy available for inspection on request by an authorised officer.

(6) If a registered veterinary practitioner issues a veterinary prescription, he or she shall (if there is more than one authorised animal remedy suitable for treatment of the condition to which it applies) specify at least two animal remedies on the veterinary prescription.

(7) A person—

- (a) who dispenses a veterinary prescription in part, shall immediately record on the prescription and on the copy, in a conspicuous, legible and indelible manner, the quantity of an animal remedy sold or supplied by him or her on foot of the veterinary prescription and the date of each such sale or supply and shall attest to this by means of his or her signature and shall retain a copy (which could be a photocopy) of the prescription,
- (b) who has completed dispensing a veterinary prescription shall—
  - (i) at that time write on the prescription and on the copy thereof in a conspicuous, legible and indelible manner, the word “dispensed” and shall attest to this by means of his or her signature and the date,
  - (i) return a copy of the veterinary prescription to the person who presented it, and
  - (iii) he or she shall retain, at his or her premises, the original veterinary prescription for five years and shall make this available on request to an authorised officer, and
- (c) not complete dispensing an animal remedy on foot of a veterinary prescription later than 12 months after the date the veterinary prescription is issued.



(8) For the purposes of this Regulation, an animal is considered to be under the care of a registered veterinary practitioner if—

- (a) the registered veterinary practitioner (or another member of the group veterinary practice of which he or she is a member) has been consulted and has been given responsibility for the professional veterinary care of the animal, herd or flock by the owner or person in charge,
- (b) the registered veterinary practitioner (or other member of the group veterinary practice of which he or she is a member) has sufficient knowledge of the animal, herd or flock to form an opinion of the condition of the animal and for this purpose he or she (or another member of the group veterinary practice), shall have visited the farm or other premises on which the animal, herd or flock is kept (or otherwise examined the animal), sufficiently often and recently enough and, in any event, at least once in a 12 month period, to have acquired an accurate picture of the current health, welfare and disease status of the animals on that farm or premises,
- (c) the registered veterinary practitioner (or other member of the group veterinary practice) is available to respond to requests to provide services of veterinary medicine and surgery and clinical procedures on the animal (or in the herd or flock) in accordance with ethical veterinary practice,
- (d) the registered veterinary practitioner is readily available for follow up consultation or monitoring of the condition and evaluation of the therapy, and
- (e) the records kept by the registered veterinary practitioner make it evident that the professional veterinary responsibility for the animal, herd or flock in question is real and not merely nominal.

(9) The 12 month period, referred to in paragraph (8) (b), does not apply to the prescribing of an intramammary animal remedy, if the animal to be treated belongs to a herd covered by a programme meeting the requirements of Schedule 8.

(10) In order to comply with paragraph (8)(e), a registered veterinary practitioner shall maintain, at his or her premises, records as follows:

- (a) in relation to each client, a record, containing at least the following—
  - (i) the date of each visit to the premises on which the animal, herd or flock is

kept or on which the animal was seen,

- (i) the identity or other reference to animals clinically examined,
  - (i) the condition identified,
  - (ii) details of treatment of each condition, and
  - (v) a cross-reference to any relevant results of laboratory tests undertaken for the purpose of diagnosis, or any other test results, and
- (b) copies of invoices and statements regarding professional services and supply of medicines in respect of each client.
- (11) (a) Invoices referred to in paragraph (10) (b) shall detail the cost of an animal remedy, administered, sold or supplied separately from a professional veterinary service.
- (b) These records may be maintained in the form of a herd health programme.

### **Extract From [Veterinary Practice Act 2005](#)**

#### **Section 108 – Regulations in respect of veterinary premises**

- (1) For the purpose of
- (a) promoting and protecting the health, safety and welfare of animals,
  - (b) protecting the safety of owner and carers of animals and registered persons engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing and the public, and
  - (c) maintaining proper standards as regards veterinary premises in the State,

the Council shall make regulations relating to veterinary premises.

- (2) The power under subsection (1) shall be first exercised not later than 1 year after the establishment day.

- (3) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), regulations under that subsection shall include the following as respects a veterinary premises or class of veterinary premises:
- (a) classification into such classes as general premises, large animal clinics, small animal clinics, veterinary hospitals and any other class or classes that in the opinion of the Council, should be included;
  - (b) availability of equipment and resources at any specified class of veterinary premises such as facilities for clients, examinations, treatment, confinement, isolation, food storage and preparation, anaesthesia, radiology, pharmacy, laboratory needs, surgery, necropsy, nursing care, records and record management, bio security and any other facilities that in the opinion of the Council, should be included;
  - (c) type and content of any notice to the public that may or shall be placed there;
  - (d) suitability for the practice of certain specified aspects of veterinary medicine.
- (4) For the purposes of this section “class of veterinary premises” means a class of veterinary premises, having regard to the type of veterinary practice practised at such premises and the size and location of, and facilities at, such premises.



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