

Introduction

The Veterinary Practitioners Code of Professional Conduct (Code (cl 20)) requires that a veterinarian must only supply a restricted substance (S4 or S8 medication) under the following circumstances:

- (a) to a person responsible for the care of an animal that the veterinary practitioner has physically examined or has under his or her direct care, and only in respect of that animal, or
- (b) to a person responsible for the care of an animal, with the written authority of another veterinary practitioner who has physically examined the animal concerned or has it under his or her direct care, and only in respect of that animal.

With respect to 'under his or her direct care' the Board has previously noted that this inclusion enables a veterinarian to physically examine a representative sample of animals on a property, rather than every individual animal as above in accordance with the Code (cl 20(a)), establish a diagnosis and then supply a restricted substance for other animals within that herd or flock (i.e., animals which the veterinarian has not physically examined).

The Code (cl 4) requires that the establishment of a diagnosis is in accordance with current standards and this aligns with the requirement for a physical examination prior to the supply of a restricted substance.

The Board appreciates that the performance of routine animal husbandry procedures by animal owners and carers does not involve the diagnosis of a physiological or pathological condition and accordingly it is possible to extend the definition of direct care in these circumstances.

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to clearly define the circumstances in which S4 pain management medication may be supplied for routine animal husbandry procedures in production animals in addition to circumstances whereby a veterinarian has physically examined an animal or animals in accordance with the Code (cl 20(a)) or in accordance with the guideline [Technology based patient consultations](#).

Policy

1. The provision of pain relieving medication for animals undergoing routine animal husbandry procedures should be encouraged and the requirement to physically examine an animal prior to supplying this medication may create an unnecessary barrier for primary producers and lead to poor animal welfare outcomes.
2. The need for pain management in such circumstances is self-evident and a physical examination will generally not be required to establish a therapeutic need in accordance with current standards (Code cl 4).

Application of the Code

1. Veterinarians must carry out professional procedures in accordance with current standards and must base professional decisions on evidence-based science or well recognised current knowledge and practice or both (cl 4):
 - a. The veterinarian must have attended the property prior to any initial supply of pain management medication in order to establish sufficient knowledge in relation to the number, species, and conditions in which the animals are kept.
 - b. The veterinarian must be aware of the nature of the specific animal husbandry procedure and the number of animals to be treated.
 - c. The medication supplied must be registered for this purpose in the species being treated and the medication and quantity supplied must not be in excess of that required for the number of animals being treated at a given time.
 - d. Subsequent to the initial property visit, the supply of pain management medication beyond any given 12 month interval must be following either a property visit or suitable technology based consultation in accordance with veterinary practice and poisons and therapeutic goods legislation.
 - e. Property visits and or suitable technology based consultations every 12 months are required to determine whether there have been any changes to the species or conditions in which the animals are kept or the animal husbandry procedures or methods used. If changes have occurred, the veterinarian must assess whether current standards indicate that a property visit rather than a technology based consultation is required prior to repeating the supply of pain management medication.

- f. Each individual container must be labelled in accordance with requirements under poisons and therapeutic goods legislation.
2. Veterinarians must, when accepting an animal for diagnosis or treatment, ensure they are available for the ongoing care of the animal or make arrangements for another veterinarian to take over the care of the animal (cl 8):
 - a. Compliance with this clause may require attendance at the property subsequent to supply of pain management medication
 - b. If a veterinarian is aware that he or she will not be able to attend the property to provide ongoing care, the veterinarian must make arrangements with another veterinarian who is in a position to be able to attend the property.
3. The veterinarian must take reasonable steps to ensure the owner or carer has sufficient knowledge, skills and experience to administer the pain relief appropriately and safely (cl 13). Accordingly, veterinarians should be confident in the client's ability to administer pain relief and/or use any special equipment for its administration and be reasonably assured the medication will be stored appropriately prior to use.
4. The veterinarian must ensure a detailed record of the treatment is made as soon as practicable (cl 15) and that:
 - a. The record includes whether a visit or technology based consultation preceded supply
 - b. There is a record for each supply and it is in sufficient detail to enable another veterinarian to determine the species of animals treated, number of animals treated, the dose rate, the quantity supplied, and the husbandry procedure being performed
 - c. Any alteration to the record is recorded as such
 - d. The record is maintained for at least 3 years.
5. A veterinarian is considered to comply with the requirements for supply of restricted substances (cl 20), for the specific purpose of providing pain management medication for animal husbandry procedures in production animals, if the veterinarian has visited the property at least once and either visits or conducts a technology based consultation every 12 months as appropriate prior to supplying pain management medication.

Monitoring

1. The Board may request a copy of all records relating to the supply of pain management medication in accordance with this guideline and may request purchase records from wholesalers to confirm supply is in accordance with veterinary practice legislation and poisons and therapeutic goods legislation.
2. The Hospital Inspector may review records of supply when conducting inspections.
3. The Board will liaise with other veterinary boards in Australia to establish and implement a consistent approach where possible to the regulation of supply of pain management medication for animal husbandry procedures.
4. The Board will consult with the profession, veterinary, and other regulatory bodies as required regarding this guideline.

Conflict of Interest

Members of the Board must comply with the Code of Conduct for Board members in relation to decisions regarding this guideline.

Review

This guideline shall be reviewed annually or as required to ensure that it remains in line with current standards of practice, appropriate to the operations of the Board and compliant with the relevant legislation.