



College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

Professional Practice Standard: Advertising

Revised Version published July 2020 (Originally Published April 2017)

Background

Veterinarians may undertake marketing activities that are in compliance with this Professional Practice Standard to improve the viability of their practices. However, as professionals, veterinarians are held to a high standard. Advertising by veterinarians should convey professionalism as it can affect the public perception of, and respect for, the entire profession of veterinary medicine.

This Professional Practice Standard, together with the accompanying document “*Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Advertising*”, has been developed to assist veterinarians in understanding their legal and professional responsibilities pertaining to issues of advertising without restricting veterinarians’ business practice freedom where it is neither warranted nor the role of the College.

Definitions

Advertising: Advertising is a mode of marketing that might be defined as any message communicated in any public medium (print, internet, television, radio, etc.) that is used for the purpose of promoting a registrant’s professional services, goods, practice, or image.

Ancillary services: Ancillary services refer to boarding, grooming, funeral services and sales of foods, supplies and other goods and services used by or with animals that is provided by a registrant whether as part of, or separately from, the registrant’s practice of veterinary medicine.

Client: Client means, with respect to a veterinarian, the owner of an animal(s), group of animals, or herd(s) that the veterinarian is treating, an authorized representative of the owner, or an individual who the veterinarian reasonably determines is acting in the interest of the animal.

Marketing: In very general terms, marketing is the activity of promoting one’s services to members of the general public or any segment of the public. Examples of marketing include (but are not limited to) advertising (see below), making public appearances, issuing press releases, participating in directory listings, and distributing brochures and business cards.

Revised version approved by Council on July 17, 2020

G:\CVBC - Regulation\Standards, Guidelines & Policies\Advertising

Testimonial:

- A client testimonial is a statement from a client, former client, or other person that is solicited (directly or indirectly) by a veterinarian and used in an advertisement for the purpose of demonstrating esteem, admiration, gratitude, or praise for services provided by or experiences with the practice.
- Alternatively, a testimonial is a statement or endorsement by a veterinarian (made for any marketing purpose, whether or not for financial or any other kind of reward) concerning the effectiveness or any other attribute of a commercial product, including (but not limited to) veterinary foods and medications.

Practice Expectations

Veterinarians meet the Professional Practice Standard: Advertising when they:

1. Ensure that any communication they permit to be published, displayed, distributed, or used relating to their professional or ancillary services or to their association with, or employment by, any person adheres to the advertising provisions in the Bylaws (Part 4, Division 4.4) and this Standard.
2. Understand that they may advertise the professional services they provide, and any ancillary services, provided that the information in the advertisement:
 - is factual, verifiable, accurate and comprehensible;
 - is not false, misleading or deceptive;
 - contains no testimonials;
 - contains no comparisons to, or claims of superiority over, another registrant's practice or expertise;
 - contains no endorsement or promotion of specific products, brands of products, brand-name drugs or third-party service providers; and
 - could not reasonably be regarded by registrants as likely to demean the integrity or dignity of the profession or to bring the profession into disrepute.
3. Do not make a misrepresentation to a client or prospective client.

Acknowledgement

Reprinted and adapted with permission from the College of Veterinarians of Ontario.