



College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

Practice Facility Name Approval Guidelines

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PREAMBLE

CVBC Bylaws, Part 3 – Accreditation and Naming¹, establish the requirements for facility & practice names. Additionally, as the use of a practice facility name is a form of advertising activity, the name must also comply with the CVBC’s marketing and advertising bylaws (Part 4 – Ethics and Standards, sections 232 – 242). This document is intended to establish rules for the practical application of those bylaws by the Registrar, to ensure transparency and consistency in decision making.

NOMENCLATURE

A practice facility name normally consists of multiple components:

Identifier/Distinctive portion – this is the part of the name that is most open to creativity and is often selected based upon the geographic location, the veterinarian’s name, or a descriptor of the nature of the services being offered.

Descriptor portion – this is the part of the name that identifies the business as a veterinary practice facility. It is used to describe the scope and type of the practice. Common components are:

- a. A reference to veterinary medicine or animals:

“Veterinary”
“Animal”
“Pet”
“Equine”
“Poultry”, etc

Plus

- b. A reference to the type of practice facility:

“Office”
“Clinic”
“Hospital”
“Mobile”/“Housecall”
“Service(s)”, etc

It is possible that a name could be requested and approved that does not strictly follow this formula, but the expectation is that the name must clearly convey that the purpose of the business is to provide veterinary care, and should appropriately describe the scope of those services, without misrepresentation.

RULES

1. Compliance with the bylaws for marketing and advertisingⁱⁱ

A name will be rejected if it:

- Is not true and objective
- Is not accurate and verifiable
- Is reasonably capable of misleading the public or any person
- Is self-laudatory or makes use of any comparative language that implies superiority or makes exaggerated claims
- Suggests a specialist qualification that the designated registrant (name applicant) does not hold and has not properly registered with the CVBC
- Is otherwise contrary to the honour and dignity of the profession, including but not limited to words or phrases that carry racial, religious or sexual connotations; that are offensive or vulgar; or that otherwise present an unprofessional image to the public.

2. The name must include a “Descriptor” that identifies the business as a veterinary practice/facility

- The name must include a veterinary/animal-related term (see examples in “Nomenclature” section)
 - The abbreviation “vet” will not be accepted unless there are sufficient other descriptors in the name to make it clear to the public that “vet” refers to “veterinarian” or “veterinary”, rather than to “veteran”
- It should also include reference to the nature of the facility type (see examples in “Nomenclature” section)

Note: Inclusion in the name of a veterinary credential together with the registrant’s name would be an acceptable alternative (eg. “Dr. XXXX, DVM”).

3. The name “Identifier” cannot be identical or so similar to an existing practice or facility name that it would reasonably risk causing confusion.

The “Identifier” of a requested name will be assessed for similarity with reference to:

- i. Phonetics
- ii. Definition or connotation

EXCEPTIONS:

- a. If, despite similarity of the Identifier, the rest of the name clearly distinguishes a scope of practice that does not overlap with the existing name or where the scope is so narrow or distinctive so as to not be reasonably confusing.

Examples:

“ABCD Pet Clinic” vs. “ABCD Equine Veterinary Services”

“ABCD Pet Clinic” vs. “ABCD Veterinary Housecall Practice”

An example of a name that does not sufficiently distinguish between two names based upon scope of practice would be “ABCD Pet Clinic” vs. “ABCD Veterinary Hospital”

- b. If the identifier is a compound term (more than one word) rather than a single word, and part of that compound identifier modifies the rest of the identifier to the extent that it becomes easily distinguishable from existing names.

Examples:

“Eagle Ridge” vs. “Eagle Crest”

“Okanagan” vs. “Okanagan Falls” vs. “Okanagan Lake”

“Lakeside” vs. “Lakeland”

An example of a modifier that does not sufficiently distinguish between the two names would be “Lakeside” vs. “Lakeshore”

“Vancouver” vs. “North Vancouver” vs. “West Vancouver” (in this example, the modifier identifies unique geographic locations/municipalities, despite similarity of part of the Identifier)

An example of a modifier that does not sufficiently distinguish unique geographic locations/municipalities would be “Vancouver” vs. “Greater Vancouver”

4. No part of the name may suggest that services will be provided that are beyond the scope of that practice facility

- Facility types (office, clinic, hospital, mobile/housecall, service, consulting) are defined on the Self Assessment form and/or in s. 3.1 of the bylaws. The term used in the practice facility name must be consistent with the current or intended scope of practice of that facility and the facility will be expected to satisfy the relevant accreditation standards for that scope of services at accreditation.
- This also applies to the use of “Emergency” in a name - the accreditation standards establish specific requirements for emergency accreditation.

5. The name must not imply specialist services unless

- the applicant (and Designated Registrant for the facility) is board-certified by a specialty college recognized by either the American or European Boards of Veterinary Specialties.
- The name is reasonably understood to be indicating a limited scope of services by that facility, without using specialist designations or otherwise implying specialist qualifications.

All veterinarians receive training in and are qualified to provide services across a wide range of areas. If a veterinarian has a particular interest in a focussed scope of service (eg. dentistry, surgery, a particular species) they are entitled to do so and it is in the public interest for a limited scope practice facility’s name to clearly identify those limitations, so long as the public is not misled to believe that the veterinarian is a specialist in that field.

Examples (of non-specialist facility names):

“ ___ Veterinary Dentistry Services” (ACCEPTABLE) vs. “ ___ Veterinary Dental Specialists” (NOT ACCEPTABLE) or “ ___ Veterinary Dental Surgery” (NOT ACCEPTABLE)
“ ___ Veterinary Surgery” (ACCEPTABLE) vs. “ ___ Veterinary Surgeon” (NOT ACCEPTABLE)
“ ___ Cat Hospital” (ACCEPTABLE) vs. “ ___ Cat Doctor” (NOT ACCEPTABLE)
“ ___ Equine Services” (ACCEPTABLE)
“ ___ Emergency Clinic” (ACCEPTABLE)

- The name describes a focus of practice that is not a recognized specialty, but is simply a part of general practice

Examples:

“ ___ Spay & Neuter Clinic”
“ ___ Vaccination Clinic”

NOTE ABOUT GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE

Prior to the existence of the internet and its widespread adoption by the general public as a resource, geographical distance was a legitimate distinguishing factor where proposed names were otherwise reasonably similar to existing names. People seeking veterinary care were largely reliant upon local phone books and yellow pages, chambers of commerce and local word-of-mouth, greatly restricting the risk of confusion between practice facilities in different parts of the province that might have similar names. However, the first (if not only resource) for a large part of the general population these days is internet search engines, which greatly increases the possibility for public confusion when searching for contact information for an imperfectly remembered or entered practice facility name. The CVBC’s responsibility for considering potential for conflict and confusion when reviewing a new practice facility name request is therefore now expanded to a *province-wide* context.

DECISIONS

The CVBC Bylaws grant authority to the Registrar to approve or reject proposed practice facility names. If the Registrar denies an application for name approval, the applicant registrant may apply to Council for a review of the Registrar’s decision. Council will consider the decision against the bylaws for practice and facility names and for marketing and advertising, and against the guidelines established within this document.

This document is based upon the CVBC Bylaws regarding practice facility names and marketing and advertising. It has been developed for application by the Registrar in name approval decisions and approved by the Council on June 4, 2021.

ⁱ CVBC Bylaws Part 3 – Accreditation and Naming, sections 3.23 – 3.28

ⁱⁱ CVBC Bylaws, Part 4 – Ethics and Standards, Division 4.4 Marketing and Advertising