



# College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

## *FAQ: Practice of Veterinary Medicine and Purchase of Veterinary Medications*

Published March 2021

The CVBC would like to address some frequently asked questions about the practice of veterinary medicine and purchase of veterinary medicine.

### 1. What veterinary medications can be purchased in each of the CVBC registration categories?

Registration Class		Prescription	Non-prescription	Nutritional products, including "prescription diets"	Over the counter medication
<b>ACTIVE</b>	Private Practice	√	√	√	√
	Specialty Practice	√	√	√	√
	Public Sector	√	√	√	√
	Temporary	√	√	√	√
<b>INACTIVE</b>	Non-practicing	X	√	√	√
	Retired	X	√	√	√
	Suspended	X	√	√	√
	Honorary	X	√	√	√

Please note that questions about the purchase of controlled drugs should be directed to Health Canada. Health Canada has jurisdiction over this. Purchase of other pharmaceuticals is allowed under the Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act. [Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act \(gov.bc.ca\) Section 26.](#)

### 2. Personal use accounts have been held by veterinarians for years. Has anything changed?

**Nothing has changed.**

This Standard came out of a discussion on Personal Use Accounts which is why this is being addressed. The CVBC has recognized that there was a risk for registrants unknowingly contravening the Bylaws and the Veterinarians Act because of a lack of clarity on their responsibilities in the provision of veterinary services to the public. Services to the public are defined as treating any animal that the veterinarian does not own and have direct control of. The contravention was occurring when registrants were purchasing veterinary pharmaceuticals through personal accounts with suppliers and then dispensing them directly and not through accredited practice facilities.

The College's first attempt to deal with this issue placed the responsibility for regulating the personal use accounts on the shoulders of the sellers and suppliers. Evaluation of the first approach showed that the better solution was to clarify the obligations and regulatory limitations around the practice of veterinary medicine by our registrants as defined in our Act and Bylaws.

We also knew we needed to establish a way to involve registrants and stakeholders in the development of policies to insure they are effective and fair. These standards have been developed by registrants with the support of the CVBC staff to that end.

**3. When will the Standard take effect?**

**Immediately.**

The legislation and regulations that inform the Standard are already in place.

The Standard seeks to clarify the existing responsibilities and limitations. There will be an effective date when the policy is published but every registrant is already held to the legislation and regulations currently in place.

**4. I am a veterinarian and I have temporarily switched from my ACTIVE classification to the INACTIVE class of registration (for example during maternity leave). Can I still prescribe and/or dispense veterinary medications during my leave?**

**No.**

Veterinary services can only be provided by a registrant holding an **ACTIVE** class of registration, s.2.32-2.41 of the bylaws, and must be done through a CVBC-accredited veterinary facility.<sup>1</sup>

Even If you are only temporarily in an **INACTIVE** classification you cannot practice veterinary medicine and that includes the prescribing and dispensing of medications, even to family members.

5. **I recently retired and sold my practice in B.C. I have kept my ACTIVE classification of veterinary license and I make sure my CE requirements are up to date. I would like to continue to provide veterinary care to my own pets and stock animals, including obtaining medications to treat them. If I changed my registration to RETIRED what would be the implications?**

Once you transfer from an **ACTIVE** to **INACTIVE** (retired) registration, you can continue to provide care for your own animals. Moving from an **ACTIVE** to an **INACTIVE** classification will remove your privilege to purchase prescription items as allowed under the Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act.

If you retire from practice but maintain your **ACTIVE** license, you are entitled to provide care for your own animals, including obtaining prescription medications.

Veterinary services can only be provided by a registrant holding an **ACTIVE** class of registration s. 2.32-2.41 of the bylaws and must be done through a CVBC-accredited veterinary facility<sup>1</sup>.

6. **I volunteer my time to provide veterinary medical care for rescue organizations in Canada and overseas. Am I allowed to purchase medications for my volunteer work?**

**No.**

If you are currently in an **ACTIVE** registration classification, you can purchase prescription items for animals owned by you and under your direct care even if you are not doing it through an accredited practice facility. You are not allowed to purchase medications and then dispense them directly to treat animals owned by others.

Within BC the CVBC does provide temporary practice facility accreditation licenses for humanitarian and welfare clinics. These are related to the provision of temporary access to veterinary services for specific communities. (e.g., targeted community, remote spay, neuter, vaccination, health clinics).

When considering work outside of Canada you should work with the destination country to find out if you are allowed to bring in any medication, even if you are securing it through a practice in BC. Most rescue organizations have established practices for securing the medications they will need in other countries. CFIA may be able to help you with this.

Veterinary services can only be provided by a registrant holding an **ACTIVE** class of registration s. 2.32-2.41 of the bylaws and must be done through a CVBC-accredited veterinary facility.<sup>1</sup>

7. **I am a veterinarian who occasionally practices in B.C. under a Temporary Registration License. I have no primary clinic in B.C. Can I maintain a personal-use account in B.C. to provide veterinary care for my own pets?**

**Yes.**

A Temporary license classification is an **ACTIVE** one. While you are holding the **TEMPORARY** license in BC, and are working in BC, you can purchase prescription items for your own pets under your direct care.

With a Temporary classification you are only licensed in BC for a portion of the year, you must consult with the regulations of the jurisdiction where you hold a full license for information on acquiring medication in that location.

If you are licensed and located in BC and you are purchasing medication for your own pets, but they are in another province, just like with a personal prescription for yourself, you can take them with you when you cross a provincial border.

Veterinary services can only be provided by a registrant holding an **ACTIVE** class of registration s. 2.32-2.41 of the bylaws and must be done through a CVBC-accredited veterinary facility.<sup>1</sup>

8. **I am a veterinarian, and I am currently not practicing because of a work injury. I would like to continue to provide veterinary care for my own animals. If I keep my ACTIVE license, can I obtain medications for my own pets?**

**Yes.**

If you maintain your **ACTIVE** license while you are not practicing you are entitled to provide care for your own animals, including obtaining prescription medications.

If you transfer from an **ACTIVE** to **INACTIVE** registration, even temporarily during your recuperation, you can continue to provide care for your own animals. Moving from an **ACTIVE** to an **INACTIVE** classification will remove your privilege to purchase prescription items as allowed under the Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act. Veterinary services can only be provided by a registrant holding an **ACTIVE** class of registration (s. 2.32-2.41 of the bylaws), and must be done through a CVBC-accredited veterinary facility.<sup>1</sup>

Use of a PUA for the purpose of treating one's own animals (without an affiliation with an accredited practice facility) is made possible by s. 46(3) of the *Veterinarians Act*, which provides that exception to the strict regulations regarding the practice of veterinary medicine.<sup>2</sup>

9. The practice I work for will not let me have access to medications at cost, and they bill for an examination each time I need to treat my own animals. I would like to provide care for my own animals without going through this. Can I purchase medications directly from a wholesaler for use on my own animals?

**Yes.**

If you are maintaining an **ACTIVE** registration classification, you can purchase medications for animals owned by you and under your direct care from a wholesaler. Veterinary services can only be provided by a registrant holding an **ACTIVE** class of registration (s. 2.32-2.41 of the bylaws) and must be done through a CVBC-accredited veterinary facility.<sup>1</sup>

## References

<sup>1</sup> CVBC Bylaws, Part 3 – Accreditation and Naming

s. 3.1 Definitions

(11) “practice facility” means the premises, structure or vehicle in, on or from which a registrant provides veterinary services, and includes any equipment, supplies, records or documents used in that facility, but does not include a consulting practice;

s. 3.4 General Requirements

Every practice facility must:  
(2) be accredited.

s. 3.5 Registrant’s General Duties

(1) A registrant must not practise in or from a practice facility in any of the following circumstances:...

(b) if the practice facility has not been accredited;

<sup>2</sup> The *Veterinarians Act*

a. Defines “veterinary medicine” as “the art and science of veterinary medicine, dentistry and surgery, and includes, whether or not for consideration,

(a) the diagnosis and treatment of animals for the prevention, alleviation or correction of disease, injury, pain, defect, disorder, or other similar condition,

(b) the provision of a service prescribed by regulation of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and

(c) the provision of advice in respect of a matter referred to in paragraph (a) or (b).

[Section 1, Definitions]

- b. Establishes that the following circumstances are exceptions to the strict definition of the act of veterinary medicine:
  - (a) the furnishing of first aid or temporary assistance to an animal in an emergency;
  - (b) the treatment of an animal by
    - (i) an owner who has regular care and control of the animal,
    - (ii) a member of the owner's household, or
    - (iii) an employee regularly employed full time by the owner in agricultural or domestic work;