



## Remote or teleconferenced consultations

While direct physical examination of a patient by a veterinary practitioner is both central to quality veterinary care and required for establishing a bona fide veterinary-client-patient relationship, the Board takes the view that, *for the period of the pandemic emergency and in order to promote social distancing*, remote consultations may provide an adequate alternative to face-to-face consultations under the following constraints:

- the client is an existing/returning client of the veterinary clinic
- the animal has previously been examined at/by the veterinary clinic
- the owner is provided with options which include access to a hands-on patient consultation
- the veterinarian conducting the consult can assure themselves that the history and subjective information provided by the owner, by telephone or video, is sufficient to implement a therapeutic plan
- a full veterinary medical record is maintained for each remote consultation which includes all information about the case including those aspects that cannot be determined remotely, and all points of discussion with the owner about treatment options, recommendations and decisions.

The decision to provide a remote consultation is the responsibility of the individual veterinary practitioner exercising their professional judgement:

- Have I, or my colleagues, examined and made appropriate records about this animal recently enough to allow sufficient understanding of its health and management status?
- Is this a condition or complaint that can be adequately assessed remotely?
- Is a physical examination of the animal needed?
- Is a blood test or other diagnostic test required? Can any of these samples be safely and feasibly collected and submitted by the owner/agent, without compromising animal wellbeing?
- What is the scope of the advice I can appropriately provide, given the limited contact/inability to physically examine the animal?

It is the Board's view that remote consultations may be used to provide general advice or health information and to undertake some general triage to determine the urgency or need for immediate referral to a veterinary practitioner for direct care. The Board reminds practitioners that they must exercise caution in offering any presumptive diagnoses, prognoses and therapeutic recommendations remotely, and must clearly communicate any limitations in doing so and alternative options to the

owner. Veterinarians deciding to provide such services during state-of-emergency periods must continue to maintain professional standards as expected by their peers and the public.

If prescribing or supplying medications during a remote consultation, practitioners must ensure that they comply with [Regulation 38 of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017](#) and the related Board Guideline on supplying drugs and other medications. Requirements include ensuring that:

1. the client is a bona fide client (or the agent of a bona fide client)
2. the animal/herd is under the care of the veterinary practitioner
3. a therapeutic need for the drug or medication has been established (and for scheduled medications, that all reasonable steps have been taken to establish a therapeutic need)
4. side effects and precautions for the use of the medication have been discussed with the owner
5. appropriate clinical records are kept, and
6. provision is made for after-care if needed.

For the full list of matters to take into account when supplying medications, refer to [Board Guideline 6: 'Supply and use of drugs, scheduled drugs and other medications in veterinary practice'](#).