

Member Professional Code of Conduct

1 Application of the Members Professional Code of Conduct

This Member Professional Code of Conduct (**Code of Conduct**) applies to all categories of membership of the Australian Veterinary Association (**AVA**), including veterinarians, allied professionals and student members, as those terms are defined in the AVA's Constitution.

All members, regardless of professional background, registration status or place of residence, are required to comply with this Code of Conduct as a condition of AVA membership.

2 Purpose

- (a) The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide a framework for applying the core values, principles and standards of the Australian Veterinary Association and to guide members in their conduct with animals, clients, colleagues, the community and their participation in AVA. Exemplary professional conduct upholds the dignity and the public trust vested in the veterinary profession and the reputation and integrity of the AVA.
- (b) While the State Veterinary Boards regulate the minimum professional standards expected of veterinarians, AVA members hold themselves to a higher standard of personal and professional integrity including when engaging with the Association and its members.
- (c) By becoming a member of the AVA, individuals are agreeing to abide by the AVA's Code of Conduct.
- (d) This Code of Conduct does not attempt to list every possible issue that may arise for AVA members. It sets out clear requirements for the conduct of AVA members and expectations of respectful, transparent and collegial behaviour.

3 Values Statement

- (a) **Professionalism:** We behave ethically, with integrity and aim for the highest possible standards in everything that we do.
- (b) **Knowledge:** We base our decisions on evidence and actively seek out advances in knowledge.
- (c) **Community:** People are our greatest resource, and we facilitate interactions to share knowledge, contribute to scientific developments and support our broader community.
- (d) **Adaptability:** We embrace change and innovation, seek new ideas, identify trends and strive to adapt quickly.
- (e) **Respect and care:** We engage with others thoughtfully and in good faith, particularly when views differ. We act with consideration in our words and actions, and contribute to a culture of trust, safety and collegiality.

4 Member Conduct

Each Member must:

- (a) act in the AVA's best interests;
- (b) act with a high degree of professionalism, integrity and mutual respect in all interactions with the general public, other members, AVA staff, directors, volunteers and contractors;
- (c) uphold and promote the AVA's reputation, fostering trust in its governance, processes or people through their conduct;
- (d) hold as a key concern, the health, welfare and respectful treatment of animals;
- (e) for veterinarian members, ensure veterinary recommendations and decisions consider the health and welfare of the animal(s), the safety of the public, biosecurity, the needs of the client and the need to uphold the public trust vested in the veterinary profession;
- (f) proactively manage conflicts of interest by taking steps to identify and avoid or declare and manage any real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest;
- (g) maintain their professional knowledge and competence;
- (h) maintain, as appropriate, the confidentiality of any confidential information of AVA;
- (i) at all times comply with all applicable laws, regulations, standards, guidelines and state veterinary board codes of conduct that apply to them having regard to their professional role, qualifications, registration status and jurisdiction;^{2, 3, 4}
- (j) attend to their own health and wellbeing in order to provide care of the highest standard and encourage colleagues to do the same;
- (k) use social media and AVA digital communication channels in a professional manner consistent with this Code of Conduct to ensure respectful behaviour and maintenance of the public's trust and confidence in the profession;
- (l) take personal responsibility for upholding the good reputation and integrity of the veterinary profession and the AVA by promoting and not publicly contradicting AVA values, policies and guidelines;^{4,5}
- (m) ensure communication in all forms with and about professional colleagues, AVA members, AVA staff, AVA directors, volunteers and members of the public is respectful and professional;
- (n) use reasonable endeavours to protect the assets and resources of AVA and to ensure their efficient use for legitimate AVA purposes; and
- (o) fully co-operate with any investigation by AVA Board into any breach of this Code of Conduct.

5 Member Relationship with veterinary colleagues, AVA employees, directors, volunteers, members and contractors

- (a) Members must treat people including AVA's employees, directors, volunteers, members and contractors fairly, with dignity, courtesy and respect, objectively, and free from bullying, harassment or other inappropriate behaviour.
- (b) Subject to this Code of Conduct, members should cooperate fully with other members, assisting them in the provision of veterinary care. They must not publicly criticise other members in a way that risks bringing the profession into disrepute. They should encourage and help other members to develop their professional skills.

6 Compliance with AVA Policies and Guidelines

All members must act lawfully and ethically, and within the scope of their qualifications, role and legal authority.

Members must not misrepresent their professional status, veterinary registration, qualifications or authority, nor engage in conduct that could reasonably be interpreted as the unlawful provision of veterinary services.

All members must comply with this Code of Conduct and abide by AVA policies and guidelines having regard to their respective roles.

7 Unprofessional Conduct

Veterinarians

(a) State and Territory Veterinary Boards regulate veterinary professional conduct. This includes matters relating to clinical practice, professional competence, registration, scope of practice and compliance with veterinary legislation. If a member becomes aware of, or are concerned by alleged unprofessional conduct by a veterinarian member, the appropriate steps are to:

1. Wherever appropriate and possible, address any concerns first with the relevant individual.
2. If the alleged breach of the Code of Conduct relates to a violation of the state's Veterinary Practice Act or other legislative obligation, including State Veterinary Board Codes of Conduct, then the complainant should report the complaint to the State Veterinary Board or other relevant legislative authority. The complaint process varies by state legislative authority, and individuals are encouraged to contact the appropriate legislative authority for the complaint procedure.

All members

(b) For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, unprofessional conduct includes any conduct by any AVA member occurring in connection with AVA activities, governance, communications, forums, events or platforms, that is inconsistent with the values and standards set out in this Code of Conduct.

(c) This includes, but is not limited to:

1. bullying, harassment or other disrespectful behaviour;
2. conduct that undermines respectful, transparent or constructive debate;
3. misuse of AVA communication platforms;
4. breach of confidentiality;
5. misrepresentation of professional status, registration, qualifications or authority;
6. misuse of position, authority or access to information;

7. failure to act in good faith in AVA processes;
8. dishonesty, fraud or financial misconduct; conduct that brings the Association into disrepute; or
9. conduct that is unlawful or inconsistent with applicable legislation, professional obligations or AVA policies.

Where concerns relate to alleged unlawful conduct or regulatory breaches, AVA may refer the matter to the appropriate external authority while also considering whether the conduct constitutes a breach of this Code of Conduct.

- (d) Members of the AVA may lodge formal complaints regarding other members breaching the Code of Conduct as outlined in clauses 18 and 19 of the AVA Constitution.

8 AVA Procedures for handling breaches of the AVA Members Code of Professional Conduct

- (a) If a member fails to adhere to the standards in this Code of Conduct, the member will be subject to dispute resolution and disciplinary procedures as set out in clauses 18 and 19 of the of AVA's Constitution. Examples of breaches of the Code of Conduct which can lead to disciplinary action against a member include, but are not limited to:
1. breach of AVA policies, procedures and guidelines notified to members;
 2. failing to abide by AVA technical / veterinary policies;
 3. breach of confidentiality and/or privacy;
 4. conduct that constitutes professional misconduct;
 5. failing to act in AVA's best interests;
 6. using position or authority outside its limits, or obtaining an improper advantage or causing a detriment through the inappropriate use of that authority or delegation;
 7. misrepresenting their position or authority outside its limits;
 8. bullying, harassment or other inappropriate behaviour towards another AVA member, employee, volunteer or contractor; and
 9. defaming AVA or any of its members or otherwise bringing it into disrepute.

9 Revision

This Code of Conduct is based on AVA's interpretation of the professional conduct standards that the public and the profession expect all AVA members to meet. It may need to be reviewed in consideration of any changes to these expectations or any significant issues arising from its implementation. Unless required earlier, a review will take place every three years.