

Board Decision Note

Meeting Date: June 15, 2026

Topic: Providing Pharmacy Services to Animal Patients – Draft Policy for Review

From: Delia Sinclair Frigault, Manager, Equity & Strategic Policy

Purpose and action required: College staff are seeking a decision from the Board of Directors to approve, for 60-day public consultation, a draft policy regarding pharmacy services for animals.

MOTION:

THAT the Board approve the draft document titled “Providing Pharmacy Services for Animals Policy”, as set out in Appendix A, for public consultation, with circulation to registrants and system partners for a 60-day period.

Public Interest Rationale: Access to veterinary medications through pharmacies is an expectation of the public and “*has the potential to reduce costs, increase convenience and give pet owners more choice at competitive prices all while ensuring that pet health and safety remain a top priority*” ([Competition Bureau of Canada, 2023](#)). A policy articulating the requirements for providing these services ensures pharmacy professionals understand the scope and expectations for providing this service.

Strategic alignment, regulatory processes, and actions: The proposed policy clarifies the role of pharmacy and outlines practice expectations for pharmacy professionals when providing the services for animals, in line with Strategic Goal 2: *the College effectively provides members of the public, registrants and other partners with clear, relevant, up-to-date information.*

Background: The provision of pharmacy services for animals is not a new practice; pharmacy professionals have a long history of dispensing and compounding veterinary prescriptions in accordance with the [Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act](#), 1990 (DPRA). In the absence of a specific policy, registrants have relied upon their professional judgment and the framework for practice created by the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics when providing services for animals. Additional guidance for registrants has been provided in Pharmacy Connection articles ([May](#) and [August](#) 2018) and a [Frequently Asked Question](#).

- On June 6, 2024, the new *Veterinary Professionals Act* (VPA) received Royal Assent and will replace the *Veterinarians Act, 1990* when it comes into force on a day still to be proclaimed.
- The VPA introduces an approach to regulating veterinary medicine that articulates 17 **authorized activities** ([Schedule 1](#) of the VPA) for the provision of care to animals that resembles the controlled acts model established for the provision of healthcare to humans (Section 27 under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*).
- **Authorized activity # 5** is **compounding, dispensing, or selling drugs** which means that, once the VPA is proclaimed, only veterinary professionals are legally permitted to perform these activities for animals unless a profession has an exemption set out in section 9(5) of the VPA.
- Through an exemption, pharmacy professionals would be permitted to perform the authorized activities of **compounding, dispensing, or selling drugs** for animals.

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- The VPA establishes that primary responsibility for the care of animals lies with veterinary professionals. This means that without an exemption, pharmacy professionals would be excluded from providing any pharmacy services for animals. This would impact current pharmacy practice and create barriers to access for individuals seeking to fill veterinary prescriptions in pharmacies.
- To support the exemption, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO) requested that OCP consider developing a regulatory instrument stipulating practice expectations and possible training requirements for pharmacy professionals who provide pharmacy services for animals.
- At its December 2024 meeting, the Board directed staff to work collaboratively with the CVO during the drafting of their regulations under the VPA to prioritize the development of a regulatory instrument outlining expectations for providing pharmacy services to animals and to consider the need for any training requirements.

Since then, updates on the work have been provided through the Registrar's Report in March and June 2025. The March update confirmed that the *College will develop a policy instrument to regulate the practice of pharmacy with animal patients in a way that codifies existing practice while clarifying the College's expectations of registrants who engage in this practice* and in June the report confirmed that staff were working to draft practice expectations for registrants to support continued interprofessional collaboration, regulate the practice of pharmacy with animals, and more clearly articulate the College's expectations when pharmacy services are provided to animals.

Since the March 2025 update, the [Transition Council](#) for the College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario (an interim Council steering the transition from the College of Veterinarians of Ontario) recommended that pharmacy professionals be permitted to perform the authorized activities of compounding, dispensing or selling a drug based on a veterinary prescription through an exemption in section 9(5) of the Act. Part of Transition Council's recommendation to include these authorized activities for pharmacy professionals included *recognition of the OCP's willingness to develop a specific standard of practice related to their members' practice on animals and a commitment to ensuring cooperation between the two Colleges in the development of this work.*¹

Analysis:

Developing a regulatory instrument

Since the December 2024 Board meeting, College staff have been collaborating with CVO staff on scoping a regulatory tool related to pharmacy services for animals using the College's [Policy Process](#). The researching, analyzing and drafting steps of the policy review process included jurisdictional scans and a review of primary literature, College data and the legislative frameworks for pharmacy and veterinary practices. These steps are complete and the Board is presented with the draft policy that sets out the requirements for pharmacy professionals providing pharmacy services for animals.

The *Providing Pharmacy Services for Animals* policy (Appendix A) articulates the pharmacy services that are in scope and the requirements to meet when providing services to animals.

The policy:

- Codifies the College's current expectations of pharmacy professionals providing services for animals.
- Articulates the scope of practice for providing services to animals that aligns with current authority, which are that selling, dispensing and compounding are permitted in accordance with the *Drugs and Pharmacies Regulation Act, 1990*, but prescribing -- including adapting and renewing -- are not permitted as they are not "authorized activities" under the VPA. .

¹ Transition Council Regulatory Concept Recommendations: Supporting the Implementation of the Veterinary Professionals Act, 2024. Transition Council of the College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario. October 2025.

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- Recognizes the *Veterinary Professionals Act* as the Act authorizing pharmacy professionals to sell, dispense and compound for animals. Clarifies that selling and dispensing must only be done pursuant to a prescription from a veterinarian and changes to the prescription can be made only by the veterinarian.
- Sets the expectation that collaborative practice occurs between pharmacy professionals and veterinary professionals when there are questions about the pharmacy service being provided. This includes recognizing that the technical and cognitive components of dispensing, as articulated in the [Dispensing Components Included in the Usual and Customary Fee Guideline](#), are to be understood through a collaborative practice model where the veterinarian retains responsibility over determining the appropriateness of the prescription, patient education about the prescription, and any modifications.

The next step in the policy process is a public consultation pending Board direction.

Exploring training needs

The Board's direction from the December 2024 board meeting also included looking at whether there were specific training requirements pharmacy professionals need to have prior to providing services to animals. A risk assessment was completed to determine the risks and benefits of mandating training requirements for pharmacy professionals providing pharmacy services for animals. The risk assessment looked at the scope of the controlled acts involved (i.e., selling, dispensing and compounding), the potential harms associated with the performance of those acts, the potential benefits and drawbacks of mandating training, and the availability of training specific to the specified scope of authorized activities. The assessment considered the following:

- that the scope of practice is not changing
- that pharmacy professionals are not required to provide services to animals but may do so only if they have the knowledge, skills and judgment to do so safely
- that the pharmacist is collaborating and consulting the veterinarian if there are questions about the appropriateness of the prescription, potential side effects, and contraindications

Based on the risk assessment, it was determined that continuing with the current scope of selling, dispensing and compounding for animals is appropriate without additional training requirements. As a result, the policy does not stipulate any specified education or training requirements for pharmacy professionals providing services for animals.

Supplemental Guidance has been drafted to accompany the policy (Appendix B) based on questions the College has received in the past related to animals. It is intended to help registrants comply with the policy and provide practice-related information that does not articulate a policy expectation and is shared for information rather than approval. The intention is for the guidance to evolve based on consultation feedback and inquiries the College may receive throughout the policy implementation stage.

Next Steps: Subject to the Board's approval of the draft Policy for circulation, a public consultation will be launched, and the feedback will inform revisions to the draft policy. A revised policy will be brought to the Board for approval at an upcoming meeting in anticipation of the regulations under the *Veterinary Professionals Act, 2024*.

Attachments:

Appendix A – Draft Providing Services for Animals Policy

Appendix B – Draft Supplemental Guidance for Providing Services for Animals Policy