

Developing the Providing Pharmacy Services for Animals Policy

The draft Providing Pharmacy Services for Animals policy is the result of the College's comprehensive policy review process. It sets out the legislative requirements and practice expectations for pharmacy professionals providing services for animals and promotes a collaborative practice approach to animal healthcare.

Background

Veterinary medicine, like pharmacy, is a self-regulated profession. The College of Veterinarians (CVO) and its Council are accountable to the Ontario government's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA; formerly the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs).

The *Veterinarians Act, 1990*, which currently governs the practice of veterinary medicine in Ontario, will be replaced in 2027 by the [*Veterinary Professionals Act, 2024*](#) (VPA). The VPA establishes a broader definition for the practice of veterinary medicine and articulates 16 authorized activities within the scope of practice of licensed veterinary professionals.

The VPA was enacted when the [*Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act, 2024*](#) (Bill 171) received Royal Assent on June 6, 2024, and is awaiting proclamation to come into force. Proposed regulations under the VPA have not yet been published.

Rationale

The development of the Providing Pharmacy Services for Animals policy is necessary to support pharmacy professionals in understanding their authority and responsibilities when providing services to animals. With the upcoming implementation of the *Veterinary Professionals Act, 2024* (VPA), the practice of veterinary medicine will be defined through a framework of authorized activities. This modernized approach is similar to the controlled acts model used in human healthcare under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA).

Pharmacy professionals require a regulatory exemption from the VPA to perform certain activities involving animals, including activities that are otherwise authorized within pharmacy practice. This policy clarifies the services pharmacy professionals are authorized to provide to animals, helps prevent encroachment into the practice of veterinary medicine, and fulfills the Board's direction to establish expectations for pharmacy professionals providing services for animals in collaboration with CVO.

Policy Development Summary

Development of this draft policy involved the following activities (non-exhaustive):

- Reviewing the legislative framework related to pharmacy services for animals
- Reviewed the College of Veterinarians of Ontario Transition Council Package [Notes from May 14, 2025](#)
- Conducting a literature review to identify risks to animals when receiving pharmacy services
- Conducting a jurisdictional scan of national pharmacy regulators to review programs and regulatory tools related to pharmacy services for animals
- Analyzing College data, including AIMS, intakes and complaints, and inquiries
- Reviewing the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) entry-to-practice competencies and standards of practice

Past Board meeting materials on this topic for reference:

- Registrar's Report, [July 8, 2024](#) – page 66
- Registrar's Update, [September 15-16, 2024](#) – page 35
- Registrar's Update; Regulatory Exemption for Pharmacy under the Veterinary Professionals, [December 9-10, 2024](#) – page 36, pages 285-288
 - [Meeting Minutes](#) – page 5

IMPORTANT NOTE

This policy is not intended to address the operational or business aspects of dispensing prescription for animals, as these are outside the College's mandate. These include:

- Veterinarians selling drugs to pharmacists.
- Prescription portability, requiring the patient to request their prescription from a veterinarian to have it dispensed at a pharmacy at possible cost savings.
- Exclusive distribution contracts that prevent a pharmacist from procuring veterinary drugs, as addressed in the Competition Bureau Canada's recommendations ([Pets, vets and meds: The case for more competition](#)).