

Principles of veterinary medical ethics of the AVMA

The principles

1. A veterinarian shall be influenced only by the welfare of the patient, the needs of the client, the safety of the public, and the need to uphold the public trust vested in the veterinary profession, and shall avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof.
2. A veterinarian shall provide competent veterinary medical clinical care under the terms of a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR), with compassion and respect for animal welfare and human health.
3. A veterinarian shall uphold the standards of professionalism, be honest in all professional interactions, and report veterinarians who are deficient in character or competence to the appropriate entities.
4. A veterinarian shall respect the law and also recognize a responsibility to seek changes to laws and regulations which are contrary to the best interests of the patient and public health.
5. A veterinarian shall respect the rights of clients, colleagues, and other health professionals, and shall safeguard medical information within the confines of the law.
6. A veterinarian shall continue to study, apply, and advance scientific knowledge, maintain a commitment to veterinary medical education, make relevant information available to clients, colleagues, the public, and obtain consultation or referral when indicated.
7. A veterinarian shall, in the provision of appropriate patient care, except in emergencies, be free to choose whom to serve, with whom to associate, and the environment in which to provide veterinary medical care.
8. A veterinarian shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health.
9. A veterinarian should view, evaluate, and treat all persons in any professional activity or circumstance in which they may be involved, solely as individuals on the basis of their own personal abilities, qualifications, and other relevant characteristics.

Establishing a veterinarian-client-patient relationship

A VCPR is present when all of the following requirements are met:

1. The veterinarian has assumed the responsibility for making clinical judgments regarding the health of the patient and the client has agreed to follow the veterinarians' instructions.
2. The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the patient to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition of the patient. This means that the veterinarian is personally acquainted with the keeping and care of the patient by virtue of a timely examination of the patient by the veterinarian, or medically appropriate and timely visits by the veterinarian to the operation where the patient is managed.
3. The veterinarian is readily available for follow-up evaluation or has arranged for the following: veterinary emergency coverage, and continuing care and treatment.
4. The veterinarian provides oversight of treatment, compliance, and outcome.
5. Patient records are maintained.