

Doing the Best for your Pet



Safeguarding the health and welfare of your pet(s) is best achieved in partnership with your veterinary practice.

What to expect from your pet's veterinary team

Veterinary Practitioners are bound by the Veterinary Council of Ireland's Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Practitioners. To comply with this Code, Veterinary Practitioners must:

- ▶ Prioritise animal health and welfare.
- ▶ Prescribe medicines responsibly.
- ▶ Provide you with details of fees for any proposed treatment.
- ▶ Seek consent before proceeding with treatment of your pet or other action.
- ▶ Provide 24-hour emergency cover for their own clients, through their practice, or by arrangement with another service provider.
- ▶ Treat all dealings with clients confidentially and ensure information acquired when providing veterinary services is not disclosed to others.

Veterinary Practitioners and Veterinary Nurses have an overriding role on reporting / working with other bodies on animal health and welfare abuses. This duty extends to all staff in a veterinary practice.

Veterinary Nurses are bound by the Veterinary Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses which requires that they advocate for good welfare of animals and provide competent and appropriate veterinary nursing care.

The Veterinary Council of Ireland's Codes of Professional Conduct can be found [here](#). Details of individual Veterinary Practitioners, Veterinary Nurses and veterinary practice premises are available on the Veterinary Council's Public Register, which can be accessed [here](#).



Your responsibilities as a pet owner

Under animal welfare legislation, you are responsible to protect your pet(s) from pain, suffering, injury and disease. Please:

- ▶ Act promptly if you have concerns for the health or welfare of your pet(s).
- ▶ Register your pet with a veterinary practice to ensure appropriate care is available when required.
- ▶ Listen to the advice of your pet(s) veterinary team, ask for more information if needed.
- ▶ Administer treatment or medicine as directed by your Veterinary Practitioner.
- ▶ Familiarise yourself with the veterinary practice out of hours arrangements and plan how you would transport your pet in the event of an emergency.
- ▶ Make sure you understand the fees associated with any proposed treatment, and the cost of diagnostic or laboratory tests advised by your veterinary team.



What to expect from the veterinary team

Veterinary Practitioners and Veterinary Nurses play an important role in delivery of care to all animals. They are also involved in livestock rearing, food production, animal sport, scientific and research activities.

The importance of animal welfare for Veterinary Practitioners and Veterinary Nurses is conveyed in their declaration and oath to promote the welfare of animals entrusted to their care.

Veterinary Practitioners and Veterinary Nurses must act with compassion, discernment, trustworthiness, integrity and conscientiousness in their professional interactions, to ensure that the public can have trust and confidence in our veterinary professions.

When you seek the services of a Veterinary Practitioner, you can expect to receive competent, appropriate care from a qualified professional registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland. Trust your Veterinary Practitioner, respect their clinical opinion and request more information if needed.

Mannerly and courteous exchanges between the veterinary team and the pet owner supports open dialogue and the best care for your pet.

Some information and guidance to animal owners seeking veterinary services.

Hours of business

All veterinary practice premises are required to list their hours of business. This may be the traditional 9am to 5pm, with closures at lunchtime, or extend into evening time.

Veterinary Practitioners in their practice must always make provision for 24-hour emergency cover for the care of animals that belong to their clients, which during working hours could be considered as being under their care. Different practices offer different types of emergency cover - it is a good idea to check, during a routine visit with your Veterinary Practitioner, what out of hours service they provide so you can be prepared in the event of an emergency.

Out of hours service

Out of hours services are for emergency cases for registered clients of a practice. These services are often provided via an out of hours centre or via a "shared roster" system between veterinary practice premises. This may mean you have to travel further to see a vet out of hours. It is best to discuss this with your vet during routine visits and be aware of the arrangements in place.

Out of hours services often incur additional fees, at the discretion of the veterinary service provider. It is a good idea, during a routine veterinary visit, to discuss what possible emergencies could happen to your animal, and the fee guidelines that might apply.

Out of hours services are for emergencies only.

Client-Patient-Practice Relationship (CPPR)

This is an agreement between a pet owner (or designated keeper) and a Veterinary Practitioner(s) in a veterinary practice to provide ongoing clinical Veterinary Practitioner pet contact.

The Code of Professional Conduct, which can be accessed [here](#), requires all animals under veterinary care to fall within a Client Patient-Practice Relationship (CPPR). Veterinary Practitioners must have knowledge of the pet(s), their history and environment to enable the safe, informed delivery of treatment and care, in the interests of animal health and welfare, and public health.

Communication

There are many different reasons that the Veterinary Practitioner or Veterinary Nurse may wish to contact you. When you first register with a veterinary practice, it is a good idea to agree what communication platform works best for all parties.

Phone calls: Many test results and treatment plans are delivered by phone and your Veterinary Practitioner will make reasonable efforts to contact you.

In person consultations: A Veterinary Practitioner may ask that you attend their premises to discuss your pet's health in order to facilitate clear and direct communication and to avoid miscommunication.

Out of hours services are for emergencies only



Multiple ownership: Where multiple people own a pet, it is best to nominate one person, authorised to make decisions, and/or to communicate with the Veterinary Practitioner. This ensures consistent communication for all parties.

Speaking directly with your Veterinary Practitioner/Veterinary Nurse: It is very stressful and worrying when your pet is injured or sick. While you may wish for the Veterinary Practitioner or Veterinary Nurse to speak with you immediately, it is not always possible for them to do so. This may be because they are attending to your pet or another pet who is also in need of their urgent attention and care. In such cases, it's best to ask for a set call back time or schedule an appointment.

Matters to confirm with a Veterinary Practice

1. What are your clinic's hours/days of operation? Who do I contact and where do I go if my pet needs veterinary care outside of these hours?
2. What are the clinic's payment policies and can you explain the bill to me?
3. How can I contact you when I have a non-urgent question about my pet's care?

Certification and signing forms

Veterinary Practitioners have strict legal requirements covering veterinary certification and declarations. They must make necessary enquiries to verify information and in some cases, undertake specific actions, before they can certify or sign documents.

Stray animals

Veterinary practices are not expected to keep a lost or stray animal and must report stray dogs to the Local Authority Dog Warden or Gardai. Should a member of the public present a lost dog or cat to a veterinary practice, a staff member may scan the animal for a microchip. It is advisable that veterinary practices report microchip numbers to dog wardens as they have access to multiple microchip databases. Members of the public are not permitted to access the dog owner's personal data. They may, however, choose to leave their contact number for the veterinary practice to pass on to the owner. GDPR restrictions will apply as a matter of law in restricting access to such information. Stray dogs are the responsibility of Local Authority Dog Wardens and finders should report stray dogs to them or the Gardai.

Fees

The Veterinary Council of Ireland does not regulate fees charged by a veterinary practice. The Veterinary Council does, however, acknowledge that veterinary practices may request payment (full or partial) prior to the delivery of services or consumables. Services may legitimately be withdrawn if fees are not discharged.

Fees associated with any proposed treatment, as well as the cost of any diagnostic or laboratory tests, should be explained. It is open to pet owners to explore pet insurance, to support the payment of veterinary fees, which may arise in the lifetime of a pet.

Client and Clinical records

Clients may request the release of their pet's clinical records at any time. Records should include dated examination findings, dated diagnostic test findings, all treatments, anaesthetics and surgeries, and relevant communications with clients. Records should be transferred promptly within reason to a client, or their new vet on request.

Social media

Many veterinary practices have an online presence, which may include opportunities to leave reviews. Respectful commentary from veterinary practices and pet owners is encouraged.

Terminating a Client-Patient-Practice-Relationship (CPPR)

A client may terminate the CPPR at any time. A practice may terminate the CPPR with notice and where animal welfare is not compromised. Such notice should be given in writing, by way of recorded delivery, and a copy of the communication should be retained by the practice.

Use of the term “specialist” in veterinary medicine

What is a Veterinary Specialist?

A ‘Veterinary Specialist’ is a Veterinary Practitioner registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland who has a higher degree of skill and/or knowledge compared to a general Veterinary Practitioner in the same discipline. The Veterinary Council maintains a register of specialists whereby persons who have successfully completed post-graduate diploma-level qualifications, that usually entitle those persons to diplomat status in approved European institutions may apply to be recognised and registered on the Specialist Register.

For recognition as a ‘Veterinary Specialist’ by the Veterinary Council, a Veterinary Practitioner must have successfully completed post-graduate diploma-level qualifications, usually entitling them to diplomat status in approved European institutions. A list of Veterinary Specialists can be found on the Veterinary Council’s website [here](#).

Veterinary Specialist is a protected term

Use of the title “Veterinary Specialist” is protected in law, meaning any use of the title or any term that implies specialist status or expertise by someone who is not accredited as such by the Veterinary Council, is not permitted. Veterinary Practitioners should be careful that they do not mislead the public by using titles which could imply specialist status.

Although Veterinary Practitioners may be experienced in a particular area or hold a special interest in a particular area, they may not use the term *Veterinary Specialist* unless they hold specialist registration with the Veterinary Council.

With a strong Client-Patient-Practice Relationship, the pet(s) benefits as the recipient of competent, informed care and appropriate diagnosis, medication and treatment





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