



Requirements for Registrants Providing In-Home Companion Animal Veterinary Services from a Registered Veterinary Premises

The following requirements have been prepared by the Veterinary Council of Ireland and must be adhered to by all Registrants practising at, or from, a registered veterinary premises that provides in-home veterinary services for companion animals.

Providing veterinary care in a client's home offers many benefits but also presents unique challenges and risks. These include maintaining animal welfare standards, ensuring the safety of veterinary professionals, clients, and the public, and addressing issues such as biosecurity and infection control.

The purpose of this document is to set clear requirements to help ensure that in-home companion animal veterinary care is delivered safely, effectively, and in compliance with professional and legal obligations. The requirements aim to protect animal health and welfare, safeguard Registrants and clients, and uphold public confidence in the veterinary profession.

If you have any questions or require further guidance in relation to this document, please contact the Council's Executive Office by phone on 01 6684402, or by email to pas@vci.ie.

Requirements for Registrants Providing In-Home Companion Animal Veterinary Services

1. Detailed Scope of Practice Required

In accordance with Section 106(1)(a) of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended, a registered person shall not practise veterinary medicine otherwise than at:

- (a) a premises to which a certificate of suitability applies,
- (b) a State premises,
- (c) a premises, including a farm, that is under the control of the person who owns the animal or who for the time being has custody of the animal that is under the care of a registered practitioner, which registered practitioner usually practises veterinary medicine at a premises to which a certificate of suitability applies,
- (d) an exempted place,
- (e) a place where an emergency veterinary procedure is performed.

When applying for a Certificate of Suitability ("COS") the COS Applicant must include a detailed scope of practice with their COS application form, including a list of in-home veterinary services they plan to offer.

COS Holders/Applicants providing in home veterinary services from a premises in the Registered Veterinary Office ("RVO") classification must have a formal arrangement in place with a Registered Veterinary Clinic or Registered Veterinary Hospital, located within a reasonable distance from the RVO, for instances when a client's animal needs to be seen at a veterinary practice.

2. 24 Hour Emergency Care

Premises Accreditation Scheme Standard ("PAS") 1.1, which relates to the provision of a 24-hour emergency service is a mandatory requirement for all premises registered with the Council and ensures that the public can always have access to emergency veterinary care. While it is permissible for an arrangement to be in place with another registered veterinary premises, this arrangement must be clearly and actively communicated to clients, and documentary evidence of the arrangement(s) must be available.

As animals must not be seen at a Registered Veterinary Office, any RVO offering companion animal home visits must clearly communicate their out of hours arrangements to clients, including on their promotional materials and website.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Practitioners ("**the Code**"), in emergency cases, veterinary practitioners should provide emergency first aid and pain relief as soon as is reasonably possible in the circumstances. The owner (or designated keeper) of an animal should be prepared to transport or have the animal transported to a Registered Veterinary Clinic or Registered Veterinary Hospital to obtain emergency treatment when this would be reasonable in any given set of circumstances.

In cases where a veterinary practitioner is attending a dog show, or similar event, and an emergency arises, it is only permitted to provide emergency first aid and pain relief.

3. Transporting an Animal to a Registered Veterinary Clinic/Registered Veterinary Hospital

In cases where the owner (or designated keeper) of an animal is unable to provide transportation, it is permissible for a Registrant to transport the animal in their car, once this car has been inspected as part of the premises inspection and against Section 7 of the PAS Standards.

It is not permitted to carry out acts of veterinary medicine in the veterinary practitioner's vehicle or the practice vehicle when registered in the Registered Veterinary Office, Registered Veterinary Clinic or Registered Veterinary Hospital classifications.

4. Surgery

It is not permissible to provide surgical procedures in a client's home except for emergencies in an exceptional case.

5. Anaesthesia & Sedation

It is not permissible to provide procedures requiring general anaesthesia in a client's home.

Administration of injectable and oral sedation is permitted to facilitate clinical examinations and other routine procedures.

Procedures involving entry into a body cavity are not permitted, regardless of whether sedation is used.

6. Diagnostics

Only routine, diagnostic tests, which do not involve entering a body cavity, are permitted.

It is not permitted to provide radiography services in a home setting.

7. Receiving and Sharing of Clinical Records

As noted in the Code, if a veterinary practitioner is called upon to treat an animal that has previously been in the care of another veterinary practitioner, they must ask the owner for the details of that veterinary practitioner. If the owner refuses to provide details of their animal's previous attending veterinary practitioner or to provide consent to contact that veterinary practitioner, the case may be declined other than to provide emergency first aid and pain relief.

As the welfare of an animal under the care of a veterinary practitioner is of primary concern, a veterinary practitioner who has been asked to take over a colleague's case and has received the consent of the owner of the animal to contact that colleague must enquire of that colleague as to the treatment that has been given and ask for the patient's clinical records.

In cases where a veterinary practitioner is not the attending veterinary practitioner to an animal, then in accordance with the Code, all case details and any test results must be shared with the animals attending veterinary practitioner.

8. Health & Safety

PAS Standard 3.1 requires that a practice safety statement must be available and must reflect the scope of work and species seen from the premises.

COS Applicants/ COS Holders must ensure that provisions are in place should any complications arise during a home visit relating to the animal's health and welfare and/or their own health and safety.

In accordance with the Code, where a veterinary practitioner believes that their personal safety might be at risk in conducting house calls, particularly at night, the situation should be explained to the client, and the discussion should be documented.

9. At Home Euthanasia

In cases where a registered veterinary premises is providing an at home euthanasia service, the following points must be adhered to:

The disposal of bodies must be in accordance with the relevant legislation. Please note that Commission Regulation 1069 of 2009, specifically Article 8 (a)(iii), defines pets as Category 1 animal by products, and Article 19(1)(a) allows for the Competent Authority to apply a derogation. SI 187 of 2014 is the implementing SI, specifically Part 2(3)(5) which refers to burying pets and 19(1)(a) which allows for the derogation. The Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine is the competent body regarding animal burials and a licence from the Minister for Agriculture is required to allow members of the public to bury their animals. A key reason animal carcasses cannot be routinely buried is to prevent contamination of soil and water sources, which can pose risks to both human and animal health. This links directly to the One Health approach, which recognises that the health of people, animals, and the environment are closely connected.

You must provide confirmation on how verification of the person in charge of the animal will be undertaken.

Confirmation of what provisions are in place for any required postmortems, analyses and the transportation and disposal of the animal bodies must be provided.

In accordance with Section 53 of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended, diagnosing the cause of death is an act of veterinary medicine. Accordingly, it is not permissible to carry out postmortem examinations at a Registered Veterinary Office.