



VETERINARY PRACTICE BOARD WESTERN AUSTRALIA



GUIDELINES FOR VETERINARY HOUSE CALL PREMISES FOR SMALL OR COMPANION ANIMALS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

PREAMBLE

The *Veterinary Practice Act 2021 (WA)* specifies that a veterinary practice business is to be carried out at or from a registered veterinary premises. A veterinary practice business is a business that involves 'the practice of veterinary medicine by 1 or more veterinarians. The definition of a premises under the Act includes a vehicle.

These Guidelines describe the standard of practice expected by the Board of veterinarians operating veterinary house call services for small or companion animals in Western Australia.

There are separate guidelines for large animal mobile veterinary facilities and small animal mobile surgical facilities.

APPLICATION OF THESE GUIDELINES

These Guidelines apply from and including 14 November 2023.

These Guidelines may be superseded by subsequent versions. To ascertain whether this version has been superseded, view the current version on the Board's website at www.vpbwa.org.au.

It is the responsibility of veterinarians who operate mobile veterinary clinics and veterinary house call services for small or companion animals, to be conversant with the current version of these Guidelines.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of these Guidelines:

Reasonably available means within a radius of 50 kilometres of any registered veterinary premises at any time that services are available, or can be made available, at that registered veterinary premises. Whether or not a veterinarian has the use of a registered veterinary premises is irrelevant to the question of whether a service is reasonably available at that registered veterinary premises.

Small or companion animal includes, but is not limited to, a dog, cat, bird, rabbit, ferret, guinea pig or other "pocket pet", reptile, amphibian, fish and small native animal.

Surgery means any procedure performed on an animal that involves the use of some, usually sharp and metallic, instrument to expose otherwise unexposed blood or other body tissues, or to remove a body part, or to correct an injury.

Veterinary house call service means a specified range of veterinary services provided by a veterinarian at an animal owner's premises.

Veterinary medicine has the meaning provided for in section 3 of the *Veterinary Practice Act 2021 (WA)*.

INSURANCE

All veterinarians are responsible for their own insurance requirements and should seek professional advice on public liability insurance and professional indemnity insurance.

POISONS PERMIT AND RADIOLOGY LICENCE

All veterinarians must ensure that they hold the relevant permits and licences necessary for

Postal Address: Po Box 1721 Melville South WA 6156

Office: Suite 1, First Floor, Melville Professional Centre, 275 Marmion Street, Melville WA 6156

Telephone: (08) 9317 2353 Email: admin@vpbwa.org.au Website: www.vpbwa.org.au

them to practise veterinary surgery.

Drug Dispensing Labels

The Department of Health's requirements for drug dispensing labels can be found under Appendix L of the [Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons \(SUSMP\) \(external site\)](#).

Under the SUSMP, drug dispensing labels must include the name, address and telephone number of the dispenser supplying the substance. Given that most veterinarians conduct a house call practice from their private residence, the use of a post office box on the label, rather than a physical address, is sufficient.

STANDARDS FOR VETERINARY HOUSE CALL SERVICES FOR SMALL OR COMPANION ANIMALS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

1. Unless permitted by these Guidelines, a veterinarian must not perform any surgery on a small or companion animal outside a registered veterinary premises.
2. Veterinarians providing veterinary house call services must refer clients and their animal or animals to a registered veterinary premises if their lack of equipment, staff, facilities, or expertise may result in the animal's welfare being compromised, or if there are occupational health and safety issues for the veterinarian or any other person.
3. Subject to the animal owner's premises having adequate facilities, a veterinarian may perform the following services as a veterinary house call service:
 - a) consultations, examinations and investigations;
 - b) medical treatment of animals
 - c) vaccinations;
 - d) microchipping;
 - e) minor procedures requiring light to moderate sedation and/or local anaesthetic; and
 - f) euthanasia.
4. A veterinarian providing a house call service and carrying Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 drugs must ensure that they comply with the Medicines and Poisons Act 2014 and in particular the drugs are in their immediate possession, for example in a "doctors bag", or in a locked container attached to the body of the veterinarian's vehicle¹. At all times the volume of drugs carried must be minimised and wherever possible, limited to a maximum of one day's requirements.
5. With the exception of Point 6 below, a veterinarian providing a house call service must not perform surgery on a small or companion animal if the surgery requires general or dissociative anaesthesia, or the administration of any drug or combination of drugs, to render the animal unconscious except in a life-threatening emergency.
6. A veterinarian providing a house call service in the pastoral region and in which a registered veterinary premises is not reasonably available, may apply to the Board for approval to perform specified surgeries on small or companion animals that require general or dissociative anaesthesia, or the administration of any drug or combination of drugs, to render the animal unconscious. Such approval will be subject to the veterinarian demonstrating a public need or benefit for the service and that they have the appropriate equipment and facilities as determined by the Board to perform the specified surgeries and does not diminish the veterinarian's responsibility for ensuring the welfare of the animals in their care.

¹ Department of Health WA Guideline ["Who needs a Veterinary Practice Permit 2019"](#)

7. Regardless of the circumstances, and whether or not a veterinarian is in breach of any of the above, a veterinarian who has sedated or anaesthetised an animal must remain with the animal until it is able to stand and walk unaided.
8. Clinical records and the supply of scheduled drugs must comply with the Board's [Code of Practice](#) No.1 of 2022 .
9. Clinical records should be completed by the veterinarian at the time, or as soon as possible after, the veterinary service is provided.
10. Clients may only attend the veterinarian's residence to collect drugs that have been supplied to their animals.