

Preventing complaints

For veterinary professionals



What do Veterinary Boards look for?

Guided by your state, territory or NZ veterinary legislation, other related legislation and your Veterinary Board professional standards Guidelines or Code of Conduct, we consider your actions in light of what your *veterinary peers and the public would reasonably expect* of you in that specific situation.

Veterinary Boards recognise that veterinarians differ in their approach, knowledge, skills and contexts. Vets provide a spectrum of professional care, influenced by many factors.

Irrespective of context, exercising your professional judgement and behaviour is central to being a registered veterinary practitioner. It encompasses:

- following a logical sequence of thoughts and actions
- demonstrating currency of knowledge and skills, including of expected standards
- self-awareness and self-management
- complete, honest, timely, respectful communication
- actions appropriate to the context

Owner complaints to practices and veterinarians

If an owner reaches out with questions, concerns or a complaint to you or your practice, we encourage you to try to discuss the events and address their concerns directly if possible. Veterinary Boards do not consider an empathetic apology to be an admission of unprofessional conduct.

If you choose to provide your veterinary records to the owner, this additional information may assist initial triage of any subsequent Board complaint and may expediate Veterinary Board processes.

TIPS TO PREVENT COMPLAINTS

Veterinary Board Guidelines, Standards or Code of Conduct, and Veterinary and other Acts of legislation provide a framework for appropriate veterinary practice.

Based on the types of complaints Veterinary Boards receive, we particularly encourage you to:

- stay up to date with relevant knowledge, skills, equipment and regulatory guidance
- make decisions and recommendations that fit the evidence and context
- work within your capabilities, seek support or information when needed and inform the animal owner of any relevant limitations
- be self-aware about your behaviour, your health and your needs
- be respectful and avoid assumption or judgement
- communicate openly, completely, clearly and regularly
- discuss relevant options, which may include euthanasia and/or referral, with an animal's owner to enable their informed choice
- maintain complete and concise records of your efforts
- be open to reflection, continued education and workplace systems improvement

Still have questions?

You can find more information and resources on your Veterinary Board's website including other AVBC factsheets and videos in this series. You can also phone or email your helpful Veterinary Board or Vet Council staff.