



Veterinary Surgeons' Board



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

PREAMBLE

The *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1960 (WA)* makes no reference for the provision of veterinary house call services. However professional standards must be applied in the delivery of house call services and the responsibility for setting those standards rests with the Veterinary Surgeons' Board (Board).

These Guidelines describe the standard of practice expected by the Board of veterinary surgeons 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 29 May 2018.

These Guidelines may be superseded by subsequent versions. To ascertain whether this version has been superseded, view the current version on the Board's website at www.vsbwa.org.au.

It is the responsibility of veterinary surgeons 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 hospital or veterinary clinic at any time that services are available, or can be made available, at that registered veterinary hospital or veterinary clinic. Whether or not a veterinary surgeon has the use of a registered veterinary hospital or clinic is irrelevant to the question of whether a service is reasonably available at that registered veterinary hospital or clinic.

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 veterinary surgeon at an animal owner's premises.

Veterinary surgery has the meaning provided for in section 2 of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1960 (WA)*.

INSURANCE

All veterinary surgeons 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 veterinary surgeons must ensure that they hold the relevant permits and licences necessary for them to practise veterinary surgery.

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

1. Unless permitted by these Guidelines, a veterinary surgeon should not perform any surgery on a small or companion animal outside a registered veterinary hospital or a registered veterinary clinic.
2. Veterinary surgeons providing veterinary house call services must refer clients and their animal or animals to a registered veterinary hospital or clinic 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 veterinary surgeon or any other person.
3. Subject to the animal owner's premises having adequate facilities, a veterinary surgeon may perform the following services as a veterinary house call service:
 - a) consultations, examinations and investigations;
 - b) vaccinations;
 - c) microchipping;
 - d) minor procedures requiring light to moderate sedation and/or local anaesthetic; and
 - e) euthanasia.
4. A veterinary surgeon providing a house call service and carrying Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 drugs must ensure that the drugs are in their immediate possession, for example in a "doctors bag", or in a locked container that is attached to the body of their vehicle and suitable for the transportation and storage of drugs. 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 veterinary surgeon 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 veterinary surgeon providing a house call service in the pastoral region and in which a registered veterinary hospital or clinic 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 veterinary surgeon 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 veterinary surgeon's responsibility for ensuring the welfare of the animals in their care.
7. Regardless of the circumstances, and whether or not a veterinary surgeon is in breach of any of the above, a veterinary surgeon 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 *Veterinary Surgeons Regulations 1979* (WA).

9. Clinical records should be completed by the veterinary surgeon at the time, or as soon as possible after, the veterinary service is provided.