



GUIDELINES FOR CLINICAL RECORDS FOR VETERINARIANS, VETERINARY NURSES & AUTHORISED PERSONS

INTRODUCTION

The Veterinary Practice Act 2021 (Act) and the *Veterinary Practice Regulations 2022 (Regulations)* require that veterinarians, veterinary nurses and authorised persons create a clinical record when performing an act of veterinary medicine on an animal, including their own animals. Clinical records provide an accurate and contemporaneous account of the veterinary management of an animal, supporting effective communication and ensuring continuity of care.

These guidelines set out what information must be included in a clinical record, whose responsibility it is to keep and maintain them as well as obligations to provide copies on request.

NOTE

The veterinarian or veterinary nurse must allocate sufficient time to write the clinical record, and the practice owner is responsible for ensuring the veterinarian or veterinary nurse has adequate time in their schedule to do so.

If artificial intelligence (**AI**) is used to assist with the making of clinical records, they must be checked by the veterinarian to ensure accuracy. This includes the AI interpretation of diagnostic images and cytology. Prior to utilising AI, permission must be sought from animal owners and there must be robust processes in place to ensure privacy and security.

It is expected that clinical records will be in an electronic form or if handwritten they must be legible.

APPLICATION OF THESE GUIDELINES

These Guidelines apply from and including 10 March 2026.

These Guidelines may be superseded by subsequent versions. To ascertain whether this version has been superseded view the current version on the Veterinary Practice Board of Western Australia (**Board**) website at www.vpbwa.org.au.

It is the responsibility of veterinarians, veterinary nurses and authorised persons registered with the Board to be conversant with the current version of these Guidelines.

DEFINITIONS

Veterinary medicine includes, but is not limited to, the following acts —

- (i) diagnosing diseases or physiological conditions in, and injuries to, animals;
- (ii) medical treatment of animals;
- (iii) performing surgical procedures on animals;
- (iv) administering anaesthetics to animals;
- (v) an act of a kind prescribed as being an act of veterinary medicine (see [schedule 1 of the Regulations](#)).

OBLIGATION TO MAINTAIN CLINICAL RECORDS

Clinical records must be made when:

- performing an act of veterinary medicine – by registered veterinarians, registered veterinary nurses and Authorised persons; and
- supervising a veterinary student or veterinary nurse student performing such an act – by Registered veterinarians.

Note: Veterinary students and veterinary nursing students are not required to create a clinical record when performing an act of veterinary medicine as that is the responsibility of their supervising veterinarian.

REQUIRED CONTENT OF CLINICAL RECORDS

Clinical records must be:

- Written and legible; and
- Completed at the time of the act of veterinary medicine or as soon as practicable to facilitate continuity of care.

Each clinical record must include:

- Full name and professional title of the person performing the act of veterinary medicine;
- Supervisor's full name and title (if applicable);
- Name and address of the person in charge of the animal;
- Details of the animal being treated including:
 - Species and breed;
 - Sex;
 - Age (or estimate);
 - Weight (or estimate); and
 - Identifying features (e.g. microchip number, colour etc).
- Relevant clinical history and treatment plan (if applicable);
- Date of the procedure and date the record was made;
- Examination findings, diagnostic results, imaging, and any diagnoses; and
- Details of any medications prescribed, supplied, or administered, including:
 - Medication name, dosage, route, duration, quantity, strength; and
 - Name and title of the prescribing or administering professional.

AMENDMENTS TO RECORDS

Any alteration to a clinical record must be:

- Clearly marked; and
- Accompanied by the name and title of the person making the amendment and the date of the amendment.

USE OF PROFORMA TEMPLATES FOR CLINICAL RECORDS

Proforma clinical record templates can help with consistency for record keeping but prepopulating parameters such as temperature, heart rate etc with "WNL" (within normal limits) or "NAD" (no abnormalities detected) is discouraged as it may cast doubt on whether that parameter was measured at all. If the temperature or heart rate etc is taken, the actual figure should be recorded in the clinical record.

RECORD RETENTION REQUIREMENTS

If the act of veterinary medicine is performed as part of a veterinary practice business and if the individual is not a practice owner of the business, the record must be provided to the practice owner. Otherwise, the record must be retained personally.

All clinical records must be retained for a minimum of **7 years** from the date of creation.

Practice owners are responsible for ensuring records given to them are securely stored for the required duration.

REQUESTS FOR CLINICAL RECORDS

REQUESTS BY THE BOARD

The Board may issue a written notice requiring a copy of a clinical record. The notice will specify a deadline for compliance and indicate that failure to comply may constitute an offence.

Note: Self-incrimination is not considered a valid excuse not to comply with such a request from the Board. However, records provided under such notice are not admissible in most legal proceedings, except for disciplinary actions or offences under [Regulation 33A of the *Veterinary Practice Regulations 2022*](#).

REQUESTS BY TREATING VETERINARIANS

A veterinarian may request a copy of a clinical record if:

- They are treating the animal in question; and
- Consent is provided by one of the following:
 - The animal's owner;
 - The person in charge of the animal (other than the requesting veterinarian); or
 - The person in charge of the animal immediately before the veterinarian accepted custody, care and control of the animal.

The veterinarian who holds the clinical record, which is the subject of the request, must comply by providing either a copy of the clinical record, or a summary that enables continuation of clinical care. As above, self-incrimination is not a valid excuse to not comply with a request for clinical records from another treating veterinarian and records provided are protected from use in unrelated legal proceedings.

Records shared with a new practice or veterinarian still belong to the original practice and cannot be given to third parties, including pet owners and insurance companies, without the consent of the animal owner and the original practice.

REQUESTS BY THE ANIMAL'S OWNER

Veterinarians or practices are not required to give copies of records directly to pet owners.

REQUESTS BY INSURANCE COMPANIES

It is generally in the best interests of the client and their animals for veterinarians to supply full clinical records or a summary of the animal's treatment to pet insurance companies, but veterinarians are not obliged to do so.

DISCLAIMER

These Guidelines (printed, electronic or any other medium) do not constitute legal advice.

Readers are encouraged to seek their own professional advice to determine their obligations under the Act, subsidiary legislation made under the Act and other applicable laws. It is the responsibility of those persons regulated by the Act to determine their obligations. The authors, the Veterinary Practice Board of Western Australia, the members of the Board and the staff of the Board accept no liability for losses caused by reliance on any of the material in these Guidelines.