



New Zealand Veterinary Association Position Statement | May 2021

Working with Non-veterinarians

NZVA Position Statement

Veterinarians working with non-veterinarians, including when enabling them to perform procedures (e.g., significant surgical procedures) by authorising the use of restricted veterinary medicines (RVMs), must take reasonable steps to ensure that those people are competent.

Additionally, pain relief used by veterinarians, and authorised for use by non-veterinarians, for significant surgical procedures, must be appropriately administered and effective for the duration of the procedure. Acceptable post-operative analgesia should be considered when authorising pain relief for significant surgical procedures

Explanation

Competency & Liability

When working with non-veterinarians, including when enabling non-veterinarians to perform significant surgical procedures by authorising the use of restricted veterinary medicines, veterinarians must take reasonable steps to ensure that those people are competent.

Competency of non-veterinarians includes:

1. appropriate use of the RVM (including handling, storage, recording, reconciliation, and administration)
2. undertaking the procedure in a manner that minimises pain and distress to the animal, and ensures the safety of people and animals
3. the ability to identify and appropriately manage adverse events
4. the ability to identify and appropriately manage emergencies
5. the ability to recognise when appropriate veterinary emergency care is needed and engage that care. *

* Refer to the documents listed in Further Reading for the legal framework within which veterinarians must operate.

Competency assessment must be based on sound scientific knowledge, evidence-based medicine and surgery, best-practice, and where appropriate, relevant qualifications. Competency should be assessed at every authorisation, and any deficits in competency resolved prior to authorisation

Where veterinarians enable non-veterinarians to undertake procedures on animals, veterinarians have a responsibility to ensure there are acceptable welfare outcomes for those animals.

NZVA Member Technical Notes provide further explanation and outline expectations of veterinarians regarding specific topics (e.g. working with non-veterinarians, equine dentistry) and NZVA Recommended Best Practice documents provide details of specific procedures (e.g. disbudding calves and goats, using internal teat sealants).

Consent

In addition, section 5 of the Animal Welfare principle in the Veterinary Council of New Zealand's (VCNZ) Code of Professional Conduct (COPC) states *"In considering whether a procedure can be delegated to a non-veterinarian, the following criteria should be applied...viii) The consent of the owner knowing that the procedure will be carried out by a person who is not a veterinarian."*

Consent may be written or verbal.

Insurance

Veterinarians are encouraged to remind owners/persons in charge (PICs) to ensure that owners/PICs' insurance policies will respond, should a non-veterinarian undertake a procedure, enabled by use of RVMs, or otherwise. Some insurance policies may have exclusions (and therefore not respond) for some procedures if they are not performed by veterinarians.

Guiding Principles

1. Animals are sentient, (as recognised in the Animal Welfare Act 1999), and their welfare matters.
2. Animals should not be exposed to unreasonable and/or unnecessary pain and/or distress* (physical and psychological suffering), including during procedures.
3. People performing procedures on animals must be competent to do so. During training, supervision is required to ensure acceptable welfare outcomes.
4. Where people are not yet competent, veterinarians must provide training and supervision to ensure competency prior to authorising the use of RVMs to enable those procedures, or not authorise the use of RVMs.
5. Reputable third parties (e.g. training providers offering NZQA-approved qualifications), whose methodologies withstand scrutiny (e.g., of veterinarians, the law, and regulators) can provide competency training.
6. Judgement of non-veterinarian's competency is at the discretion of the supervising /training/authorising veterinarian.
7. Where veterinarians enable non-veterinarians to undertake procedures on animals, veterinarians have a responsibility to take all reasonable steps to ensure there are acceptable welfare outcomes for those animals.

* as interpreted by case law

Member Technical Notes (MTN):

For NZVA members, detailed explanations relating to specific procedures can be found in these member technical notes, and other regulatory documents:

1. MTN | Working with Non-veterinarians
2. MTN | Equine Dentistry
3. Veterinary Council of New Zealand's Code of Professional Conduct
4. ACVM Notice: Requirements for Authorising Veterinarians
5. MPI Guidance Document: Veterinary Operating Instructions

Recommended Best Practice

For NZVA members, detailed explanations relating to specific procedures, and recommended best practice can be found in these documents:

1. Disbudding and dehorning
 - a. Calves
 - b. Cattle
 - c. Goats
2. Internal teat sealant training suite

Further Reading

1. The Veterinary Council of New Zealand's Code of Professional Conduct
2. The ACVM Notice: Requirements for Authorising Veterinarians
3. MPI Guidance Document: Veterinary Operating Instructions
4. Relevant Insurance Policies
5. Animal Welfare Act 1999
6. Section 183B Regulations relating to surgical and painful procedures.