

GUIDELINES FOR LODGING A COMPLAINT AGAINST A VETERINARIAN

A. GUIDELINES

The Animal and Veterinary Service (AVS) regulates veterinarians and assesses complaints regarding professional conduct. Professional misconduct might refer to improper professional practice, or any breaches and departure from relevant legislation and licensing conditions, including the Code of Ethics for Veterinarians.

Before lodging a complaint with AVS, complainants are strongly encouraged to attempt resolving the issue directly with the veterinarian or the veterinary manager. Direct communication with the veterinary team often provides the quickest path to resolution and allows for immediate clarification of any concerns.

A complaint may be lodged with AVS if it has been determined that the matter cannot be resolved or if direct resolution is inappropriate. The aim of investigating a complaint is to maintain appropriate standards for the profession and the community. Eligible complaints lodged will be thoroughly assessed and may take up to 12 months or longer for evaluation.

B. TYPES OF COMPLAINTS ASSESSED

- Issues with professional conduct

C. TYPES OF COMPLAINTS THAT ARE NOT ASSESSED (NOT EXHAUSTIVE ILLUSTRATIONS)

- Matters relating to the veterinary fees, or disputes about fees and charges
- Matters relating to requests for apologies, compensations, refunds and/or clinical advice
- Matters relating to quality of customer service e.g. failure to provide appointments at an agreed time
- Matters that fall under the control of another statutory authority or an agency given specific powers under other legislation
 - For example: assault, theft, physical injuries sustained while in the vet centre etc.
- Matters that have been privately resolved or settled between the clinic and the complainant with/without the help of a third-party mediator e.g. CASE or Small Claims Tribunals
- Complaints regarding diagnosis and treatment from individuals who are not able to prove ownership of the pet
- Civil matters such as boundary, planning and pet ownership disputes, or alleged minor disturbances between the practice and neighbours e.g. noise complaints
- Anonymous complaints
- Incomplete complaint forms

D. TIME LIMITS FOR LODGING OF COMPLAINTS

- Please file your complaint as soon as possible after the incident as delays can impact the availability of records and witnesses.

E. POINTS TO NOTE

- Veterinarians have clinical freedom to treat animals; therefore, veterinarians may have

different approaches to the same problem.

- Diagnosis is not an exact science.
- In surgery and/or medicine, the outcome of treatment or medication is not always certain and may not be what the owner or veterinarian would wish.
- A post-mortem examination report would help provide greater clarity on the cause of death.