

Chapter 38 of Title 54.1 of the Code of Virginia

Veterinary Medicine

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§ 54.1-3800. Practice of veterinary medicine.

Any person shall be regarded as practicing veterinary medicine within the meaning of this chapter who represents himself, directly or indirectly, publicly or privately, as a veterinary doctor or uses any title, words, abbreviation or letters in a manner or under circumstances which may reasonably induce the belief that the person using them is qualified to practice veterinary medicine.

Any person shall be deemed to be practicing veterinary medicine who performs the diagnosis, treatment, correction, change, relief or prevention of animal disease, deformity, defect, injury, or other physical or mental conditions; including the performance of surgery or dentistry, the prescription or administration of any drug, medicine, biologic, apparatus, application, anesthetic, or other therapeutic or diagnostic substance or technique, and the use of any manual or mechanical procedure for embryo transfer, for testing for pregnancy, or for correcting sterility or infertility, or to render advice or recommendation with regard to any of the above.

Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit persons permitted or authorized by the Department of Wildlife Resources to do so from providing care for wildlife as defined in § [29.1-100](#), provided that the Department determines that such persons are in compliance with its regulations and permit conditions.

Code 1950, § 54-786; c. 574; 1978, c. 539; 1988, c. 765; 2014, c. [626](#); 2020, c. [958](#).

§ 54.1-3801. Exceptions.

This chapter shall not apply to:

1. The owner of an animal and the owner's full-time, regular employee caring for and treating the animal belonging to such owner, except where the ownership of the animal was transferred for the purpose of circumventing the requirements of this chapter;
2. Veterinarians licensed in other states called in actual consultation with veterinarians licensed in the Commonwealth who do not open an office or appoint a place to practice within the Commonwealth;
3. Veterinarians employed by the United States or by the Commonwealth while actually engaged in the performance of their official duties, with the exception of those engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine, pursuant to § [54.1-3800](#), as part of a veterinary medical education program accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education and located in the Commonwealth;
4. Veterinarians providing free care in underserved areas of Virginia who (i) do not regularly practice veterinary medicine in Virginia, (ii) hold a current valid license or certificate to practice veterinary medicine in another state, territory, district, or possession of the United States, (iii) volunteer to provide free care in an underserved area of the Commonwealth under the auspices of a publicly supported all volunteer, nonprofit organization that sponsors the provision of health

care to populations of underserved people, (iv) file copies of their licenses or certificates issued in such other jurisdiction with the Board, (v) notify the Board at least five business days prior to the voluntary provision of services of the dates and location of such service, and (vi) acknowledge, in writing, that such licensure exemption shall only be valid, in compliance with the Board's regulations, during the limited period that such free health care is made available through the volunteer, nonprofit organization on the dates and at the location filed with the Board. The Board may deny the right to practice in Virginia to any veterinarian whose license has been previously suspended or revoked, who has been convicted of a felony, or who is otherwise found to be in violation of applicable laws or regulations. However, the Board shall allow a veterinarian who meets the above criteria to provide volunteer services without prior notice for a period of up to three days, provided the nonprofit organization verifies that the practitioner has a valid, unrestricted license in another state; or

5. Persons purchasing, possessing, and administering drugs and biological products in a public or private animal shelter as defined in § 3.2-6500, provided that such purchase, possession, and administration is in compliance with § 54.1-3423.

Code 1950, § 54-786; c. 574; 1978, c. 539; 1988, c. 765; 2002, c. [740](#); 2008, c. [674](#); 2009, cc. [149](#), [169](#); 2014, c. [148](#); 2016, cc. [306](#), [479](#); 2018, c. [774](#).

§ 54.1-3802. Board of Veterinary Medicine; appointment; officers; etc.

The Board of Veterinary Medicine shall consist of seven members as follows: five licensed veterinarians, one licensed veterinary technician and one citizen member. The terms of the members of the Board shall be for four years.

The Board shall annually elect a president, vice-president and secretary.

The Board shall meet at least once annually at such times and places as it may prescribe. Special meetings may be held upon the call of the president and any three members. Four members of the Board shall constitute a quorum.

Code 1950, §§ 54-776, 54-777, 54-783, 54-784; 1978, c. 539; 1986, c. 464; 1988, cc. 42, 765; 1995, c. [644](#).

§ 54.1-3803. Nominations.

Nominations of professional members may be made from a list of at least three names for each vacancy submitted to the Governor by the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association. The Governor may notify such organization of any professional vacancy other than by expiration. In no case shall the Governor be bound to make any appointment from among the nominees.

1986, c. 464, § 54-777.1; 1988, c. 765.

§ 54.1-3804. Specific powers of Board.

In addition to the powers granted in § [54.1-2400](#), the Board shall have the following specific powers and duties:

1. To establish essential requirements and standards for approval of veterinary programs.
2. To establish and monitor programs for the practical training of qualified students of veterinary medicine or veterinary technology in college or university programs of veterinary medicine or veterinary technology.
3. To regulate, inspect, and register all establishments and premises where veterinary medicine is practiced.
4. To establish requirements for the licensure of persons engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine, pursuant to § [54.1-3800](#), as part of a veterinary medical education program accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education and located in the Commonwealth.

1978, c. 539, § 54-784.03; 1988, c. 765; 2016, c. [306](#).

§ 54.1-3804.1. Expired.

Expired.

§ 54.1-3805. License required.

No person shall practice veterinary medicine or as a veterinary technician in this Commonwealth unless such person has been licensed by the Board.

1978, c. 539, § 54-786.2; 1988, c. 765.

§ 54.1-3805.1. Repealed.

Repealed by Acts 2016, c. [479](#), cl. 2.

§ 54.1-3805.2. Continuing education.

The Board shall adopt regulations which provide for continuing education requirements for relicensure and licensure by endorsement of veterinarians and veterinary technicians. After January 1, 1997, a veterinarian shall be required to complete a minimum of fifteen hours, and a veterinary technician shall be required to complete a minimum of six hours of approved continuing education annually as a condition for renewal of a license. Continuing education courses shall be approved by the Board or by a Board-approved organization. Regulations of the Board adopted pursuant to this section may provide for the waiver of such continuing education requirements upon conditions as the Board deems appropriate.

1995, c. [99](#).

§ 54.1-3806. Licensed veterinary technicians.

The Board may license a veterinary technician to perform acts relating to the treatment or the maintenance of the health of any animal under the immediate and direct supervision of a person licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the Commonwealth or a veterinarian who is employed by the United States or the Commonwealth while actually engaged in the performance of his official duties. No person licensed as a veterinary technician may perform surgery, diagnose, or prescribe medication for any animal.

1978, c. 539, § 54-786.3; 1988, c. 765; 2016, c. [100](#).

§ 54.1-3806.1. Disclosure forms required.

Any animal medical care facility in the Commonwealth, excluding those facilities dealing with livestock, as defined in § [3.2-5900](#), which does not provide continuous medical care for all animals left in its charge shall, before taking charge of an animal, provide the client or agent thereof with a disclosure form which specifies the hours and days when continuous medical care is not available at the facility. Such form shall be separate and apart from any other form or information provided by the facility. Except in emergency situations when time or circumstances do not permit, such facilities may take charge of an animal only after the client or agent thereof has signed the disclosure form and returned it to the facility. Only one signed form per client shall be required, and the form shall be kept on file by the facility.

1991, c. 621; 1998, c. [158](#).

§ 54.1-3807. Refusal to grant and to renew; revocation and suspension of licenses and registrations.

The Board may refuse to grant or to renew, may suspend, or may revoke any license to practice veterinary medicine or to practice as a veterinary technician or registration to practice as an equine dental technician if such applicant or holder:

1. Is convicted of any felony or of any misdemeanor involving moral turpitude;
2. Employs or permits any person who does not hold a license to practice veterinary medicine or to practice as a licensed veterinary technician or registration to practice as an equine dental technician to perform work which can lawfully be performed only by a person holding the appropriate license or registration;
3. Willfully violates any provision of this chapter or any regulation of the Board;
4. Has violated any federal or state law relating to controlled substances as defined in Chapter 34 (§ [54.1-3400](#) et seq.);
5. Is guilty of unprofessional conduct as defined by regulations of the Board;

6. Uses alcohol or drugs to the extent such use renders him unsafe to practice or suffers from any mental or physical condition rendering him unsafe to practice; or

7. Has had his license to practice veterinary medicine or as a veterinary technician or his registration to practice as an equine dental technician in any other state revoked or suspended for any reason other than nonrenewal or has surrendered such license or registration in lieu of disciplinary action.

1978, c. 539, § 54-786.4; 1979, c. 243; 1988, c. 765; 2007, c. [754](#); 2016, c. [479](#); 2020, c. [885](#).

§ 54.1-3808. Repealed.

Repealed by Acts 1997, c. [556](#).

§ 54.1-3809. Repealed.

Repealed by Acts 2016, c. [479](#), cl. 2.

§ 54.1-3810. Report of conviction or injunction to Board.

It shall be the duty of the clerk of the court in which any person is convicted of a violation of this chapter or enjoined from practicing veterinary medicine to report the same to the Board.

1978, c. 539, § 54-786.8; 1988, c. 765.

§ 54.1-3811. Veterinary professionals rendering services without charge exempt from liability.

Any person licensed by the Board of Veterinary Medicine who, in good faith and without charge or compensation, renders health care services within the limits of his license to any animal, shall not be liable for civil damages for any act or omission resulting from the rendering of such services unless such act or omission was the result of that person's gross negligence or willful misconduct.

1992, c. 400 .

§ 54.1-3812. Release of records.

A. A veterinarian licensed by the Board shall release or authorize the release of rabies immunization records and other relevant treatment data of an animal under his care to (i) a requesting physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner who is contemplating the administration of the rabies treatment protocol to any person under his care who has been the victim of a bite or other possible rabies exposure from such animal; (ii) a requesting animal control officer or law-enforcement officer who needs to identify the owner of such animal or verify the rabies vaccination history of such animal; or (iii) a requesting animal control officer or an official of the Department of Health who is investigating the incident.

B. Any veterinarian licensed by the Board who in good faith releases or authorizes the release of an animal's rabies immunization records and other relevant data pursuant to this section shall not be liable for civil damages resulting from the release of such information.

2000, c. [582](#); 2004, c. [855](#); 2006, c. [396](#); 2010, c. [834](#).

§ 54.1-3812.1. Reporting of animal cruelty.

Any person regulated by the Board who makes a report of suspected animal cruelty or who provides records or information related to a report of suspected cruelty or testifies in any judicial proceeding arising from such report, records, or information shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability or administrative penalty or sanction on account of such report, records, information, or testimony, unless such person acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose.

2010, c. [574](#); 2016, c. [100](#).

§ 54.1-3813. Registration of equine dental technicians.

A. As used in this section, "equine dental technician" means an individual who satisfies the criteria established by the Board for registration to perform duties relating to the care and maintenance of equine teeth in accordance with this section and regulations promulgated by the Board. A licensed veterinary technician shall practice in accordance with the requirements of § 54.1-3806 and regulations of the Board governing the practice of licensed veterinary technicians.

B. The Board may register a person as an equine dental technician who meets the following criteria: (i) satisfactory evidence that he is of good moral character, (ii) recommendations from at least two licensed veterinarians with practice bases that are at least 50 percent equine, and (iii) evidence that he holds current certification from the International Association of Equine Dentistry or a Board-approved certification program or has satisfactorily completed a Board-approved training program. The Board may register individuals who have not completed a Board-approved training program or do not hold a current certification from the International Association of Equine Dentistry or a Board-approved certification program if they have engaged in acts considered to be those of an equine dental technician as set forth in subsections C and E of this section for at least five years and provide the following: (i) satisfactory evidence of length of time of practice, (ii) recommendations from at least two licensed veterinarians with practice bases that are at least 50 percent equine, and (iii) proof of continued competency satisfactory to the Board.

C. It shall be unlawful for any person not holding a current and valid registration as an equine dental technician or a current and valid license as a veterinarian to perform the following duties:

1. The planing or leveling of equine teeth using nonmotorized hand tools for routine dental maintenance;
2. The planing or leveling of equine teeth using motorized tools performed for routine dental maintenance, or the extraction of wolf teeth premolars including premolars 105, 205, 305 and

405, performed under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian where (a) there exists an established client-patient relationship between the veterinarian and the owner, (b) the veterinarian is present, and (c) the veterinarian remains responsible for the sedation of the animal; and

3. Any other task restricted pursuant to regulations promulgated by the Board.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, no equine dental technician shall administer any sedative, tranquilizer, analgesic, prescription medication, or other drug under any circumstances.

D. The provisions of this section shall not prevent or prohibit:

1. Any person from performing tasks related to the practice of equine dentistry under the direct and immediate supervision of a licensed veterinarian or registered equine dental technician during completion of training and experience necessary for registration for a period not to exceed twelve months; or

2. A licensed veterinary technician from planing or leveling equine teeth for routine dental maintenance under the immediate and direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian, provided the licensed veterinary technician has graduated from an American Veterinary Medical Association accredited program with successful completion of coursework in equine dentistry or can document training comparable to that of an equine dental technician.

E. The Board shall promulgate regulations in order to carry out the provisions of this section, which shall include (i) criteria and fees for application and renewal; (ii) requirements for evidence of continued competency for equine dental technicians; and (iii) standards to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of animals treated by equine dental technicians.

(2007, c. 754; 2008, c. 490.)