

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.

The client should, where possible, attempt to resolve the issue directly with the veterinarian or the veterinary manager of the clinic. Many concerns arise from some degree of misunderstanding or miscommunication and can be resolved by open and transparent communication with the veterinarian or the clinic's veterinary manager.

If the matter cannot be resolved or if direct resolution is not appropriate, such as unprofessional behaviours and infringement of licensing conditions, a complaint can be lodged with the AVS. The aim of investigating a complaint is to maintain appropriate standards for the profession and the community. Eligible complaints lodged are thoroughly assessed.

B. TYPES OF COMPLAINTS ASSESSED

- Issues with professional conduct

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

- Matters relating to the scale of 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

Within six (6) months after the incident.

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.