SENATE BILL REPORT
ESHB 2247

As Passed Senate - Amended, March 6, 2026

Title: An act relating to veterinarian-client-patient relationships.

Brief Description: Concerning veterinarian-client-patient relationships.

Sponsors: House Committee on Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representatives Parshley, Lekanoff, Reed, Leavitt, Zahn, Gregerson, Berg and Fosse).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/26, 94-0.
Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/19/26, 2/24/26 [DPA, DNP, w/oRec].
Floor Activity: Passed Senate - Amended: 3/6/26, 30-18.

Brief Summary of Bill
(As Amended by Senate)

- Establishes requirements for creating and maintaining a veterinarian-client-patient relationship.
- Specifies permissible utilization of telehealth in veterinary care.
- Establishes duties of a veterinarian with regard to animals for commercial purposes.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.
Signed by Senators Cleveland, Chair; Orwall, Vice Chair; Slatter, Vice Chair; Bateman, Chapman, Riccelli and Robinson.

Minority Report: Do not pass.
Signed by Senators Muzzall, Ranking Member; Christian and Holy.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Signed by Senator Harris.

Staff: Jacob Ewing (786-7402)

Background: The Washington State Veterinary Board of Governors (Board) is tasked with protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public and their animals by regulating the competency and quality of veterinary healthcare providers and facilities. The Board has adopted rules relating to topics such as the establishment of veterinarian-client-patient relationships, telehealth, emergency services, and prescription drugs.

Summary of Amended Bill: Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship. A veterinarian-client-patient relationship is the basis for interaction between veterinarians and their clients and patients, and it exists when the following conditions are met:

- the veterinarian has assumed responsibility for clinical judgment regarding the animal's health, and the client has agreed to follow the instructions of the veterinarian;
- the veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal to initiate, at a minimum, a general or preliminary diagnosis of the animal's medical condition; and
- the veterinarian is readily available for follow-up evaluation or has arranged for emergency coverage and continuing care.

To establish sufficient knowledge of an animal, such that a veterinarian-client-patient relationship exists, a veterinarian must have physically examined the animal within the last year, unless circumstances exist where telehealth is permitted. To establish sufficient knowledge in cases involving several animals, such as at farms, the veterinarian must be personally acquainted with the keeping and care of the animals.

When a veterinarian-client-patient relationship has been established, the relationship extends to all veterinarians employed or practicing at the same premises as the veterinarian who established the most current relationship.

A veterinarian-client-patient relationship may be terminated under specified conditions.

Telehealth. Once a veterinarian-client-patient relationship has been established, ongoing care may be provided via telemedicine if certain conditions are met. If such a relationship has not been established, allowable telehealth services are limited to:

- teleadvice;
- teletriage in an emergency situation;
- telemedicine for the purpose of prescribing sedation in certain circumstances;
- dispensing drugs prescribed by another veterinarian in certain circumstances; and
- poison control services.

A veterinarian providing care through telehealth must meet specific requirements. A veterinarian providing care for animal patients under the telehealth exceptions

for establishing knowledge of a patient may deny treatment because a physical examination is necessary, and must:

- be licensed as a veterinarian in Washington;
- to the extent practicable, have or establish an association with practices that are registered in Washington;
- notify the client that prescription drugs or medications may be available at a pharmacy;
- provide the client with the veterinarian's identity and clinic address; and
- encourage the owner of the animal to schedule an in-person follow-up examination if there are concerns about the animal's health that cannot be addressed through telehealth.

A veterinarian who practices through telehealth must also:

- obtain client consent;
- certify at least 14 days a year, with a minimum of 105 total hours, of practice in a clinic setting with hands-on experience, unless an exception applies;
- comply with applicable privacy protection laws;
- have historical knowledge of the animal patient;
- employ sound professional judgment to determine whether using telehealth is appropriate;
- be familiar with available medical resources, be able to provide the client with a list of nearby veterinarians, and maintain patient records;
- provide the client with certain licensing information;
- secure an alternative means of contacting the client; and
- not claim to be a specialist unless certified as such.

A veterinarian may deny telehealth treatment if they believe that a physical examination is necessary.

Animals for Commercial Purposes. For animals or animal products for commercial purposes, the following requirements apply:

- there must be a written agreement between the client and a veterinarian of record who is accountable for drug use and treatments administered on the commercial operation;
- the veterinarian of record is responsible for providing oversight of drug use on the commercial operation;
- provision of drugs or prescriptions must be for appropriate time frames and management groups; and
- a veterinarian issuing a veterinary feed directive must comply with applicable federal laws.

Prescriptions. A veterinarian may use or prescribe drugs only within the context of a veterinarian-client-patient relationship, subject to exceptions. Certain limitations apply to prescriptions provided through telehealth.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2027.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Engrossed Substitute House Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Washington has a shortage of veterinarians, and many of our communities, both urban and rural, lack access to veterinary care. The demand for veterinary services is so high that it can be impossible to get care even during an emergency. Authorizing telehealth for vets will allow people access to immediate care and solutions until their pet can be seen in person. Veterinary telehealth is already used in several states across the country, providing millions of Americans with access to these critical services. This bill will enable Washingtonians who have health conditions, who don't have access to a local vet, and who don't have transportation, to access veterinary care. Breaking down barriers to veterinary care is essential to improving outcomes for animal patients and ensuring that people from all backgrounds can access the care their animals need.

OTHER: This bill violates federal law, which requires an in-person examination to establish a veterinarian-client-patient relationship in order to prescribe drugs. This could lead to public health issues for both humans and animals. The bill should include language to clarify these federal law requirements.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Lisa Parshley, Prime Sponsor; Brittany Benesi, ASPCA; Donna DeBonis; Zarah Gaeta, Seattle Veterinary Outreach; Dr. Jen Stonequist, Kitsap Humane Society; Katie Jarl, PETS Partnership for Expanded Telemedicine Services.

OTHER: Amber Itle, WSDA State Veterinarian; Greg Hanon, Washington State Veterinary Medical Assoc..

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.