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ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2247

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State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By House Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representatives Parshley, Lekanoff, Reed, Leavitt, Zahn, Gregerson, Berg, and Fosse)

READ FIRST TIME 01/27/26.

1 AN ACT Relating to veterinarian-client-patient relationships;  
2 amending RCW 18.92.015; adding a new section to chapter 18.92 RCW;  
3 and providing an effective date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 18.92  
6 RCW to read as follows:

7 (1) A veterinarian-client-patient relationship is the basis for  
8 interaction between veterinarians and their clients and patients. A  
9 veterinarian-client-patient relationship exists when all of the  
10 following conditions have been met:

11 (a) The veterinarian has assumed responsibility for making  
12 clinical judgments regarding the health of the animal and need for  
13 medical treatment, and the client has agreed to follow the  
14 instructions of the veterinarian;

15 (b) The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal to  
16 initiate, at a minimum, a general or preliminary diagnosis of the  
17 medical conditions of the animal. To establish this knowledge, the  
18 veterinarian must:

19 (i) Have physically examined the animal within the last year, or  
20 sooner if medically appropriate. In cases where a veterinarian cannot

1 physically examine the animal, such knowledge may be established  
2 using telehealth when:

3 (A) The animal cannot access clinical veterinary care due to  
4 substantial challenges including, but not limited to, substantial  
5 transportation challenges for the client or animal or the  
6 unavailability of in-person appointments for a significant amount of  
7 time; or

8 (B) The animal has an urgent condition that could result in  
9 suffering, and it is not medically reasonable for the veterinarian or  
10 client to delay care;

11 (ii) In cases involving operations with several animals, such as  
12 encountered at farms, laboratories, or in shelters, be personally  
13 acquainted with the keeping and care of the animals by virtue of an  
14 examination of the animals or by medically appropriate and timely  
15 visits to the premises where the animals are kept; and

16 (iii) In cases where a veterinarian-client-patient relationship  
17 has been established through (b) (i) (A) or (B) of this subsection:

18 (A) Enter in the medical record detailed information regarding  
19 the nature of the substantial challenge or urgent condition that  
20 generated the need for every such telehealth consultation; and

21 (B) Refrain from treating that animal for a period exceeding one  
22 year following the initial consultation unless that animal has had a  
23 physical examination during that year by a veterinarian licensed  
24 pursuant to this chapter. Evidence of the physical examination must  
25 be noted in the records of the veterinarian that is treating the  
26 animal pursuant to (b) (i) (A) or (B) of this subsection; and

27 (c) The veterinarian is readily available for follow-up  
28 evaluation or has arranged for emergency coverage and continuing care  
29 and treatment.

30 (2) Once a veterinarian-client-patient relationship has been  
31 established, ongoing care may be provided via telemedicine; however,  
32 it is the responsibility of the examining veterinarian to determine  
33 if an additional physical examination is medically appropriate based  
34 on available information regardless of when the last physical  
35 examination was performed.

36 (3) Once a veterinarian-client-patient relationship has been  
37 established, the relationship extends to all veterinarians employed  
38 or practicing at the same premises or same mobile practice entity as  
39 the veterinarian who established the most current veterinarian-  
40 client-patient relationship. The veterinarian-client-patient

1 relationship may not be extended to other veterinarians based solely  
2 on the accessibility of the medical records.

3 (4) In the absence of an established veterinarian-client-patient  
4 relationship, allowable telehealth services are limited to the  
5 following:

6 (a) Teleadvice;

7 (b) Triage in an emergency situation. A licensed veterinarian  
8 who in good faith engages in the practice of veterinary medicine by  
9 rendering or attempting to render emergency care to a patient when a  
10 client cannot be identified, or where a veterinarian-client-patient  
11 relationship is not established, is not subject to discipline based  
12 solely on the veterinarian's inability to establish a veterinarian-  
13 client-patient relationship;

14 (c) Telemedicine for the purpose of prescribing sedation, other  
15 than a controlled substance, prior to an in-person visit, to  
16 facilitate transportation to, examination by, or treatment by a  
17 veterinarian, or as provided in subsection (5)(e) of this section;

18 (d) Dispensing drugs prescribed by another veterinarian licensed  
19 under this chapter, in compliance with RCW 18.92.012, if:

20 (i) Failure to dispense the drug could interrupt a therapeutic  
21 regimen or cause a patient to suffer; and

22 (ii) The prescribing veterinarian has ascertained information  
23 necessary to fill the requested prescription; and

24 (e) Poison control services.

25 (5) A veterinarian providing care for animal patients under the  
26 telehealth exceptions for subsection (1)(b)(i) of this section:

27 (a) May deny treatment because in their medical opinion a  
28 physical examination is necessary to adequately diagnose, prognose,  
29 and prescribe adequate care for the patient;

30 (b) Must be licensed as a veterinarian in the state of  
31 Washington;

32 (c) Must, to the extent practicable, have or establish an  
33 association with practices that are registered in the state of  
34 Washington to which the patient can be referred for an in-person  
35 examination;

36 (d) Must notify the client that prescription drugs or medications  
37 may be available at a pharmacy and, if requested, the veterinarian  
38 must submit a prescription to a pharmacy that the client chooses;

39 (e) Must provide the client with the veterinarian's identity and  
40 clinic address; and

1 (f) Must encourage the owner of the animal or the qualified  
2 individual to schedule an in-person follow-up examination of the  
3 animal to occur not later than 90 days after the date of the  
4 examination through telehealth if the veterinarian, the owner of the  
5 animal, or the qualified individual has concerns about the animal's  
6 health that cannot be addressed through telehealth.

7 (6) Once a veterinarian-client-patient relationship has been  
8 established, all forms of telehealth may be used at the discretion of  
9 the veterinarian.

10 (7) The veterinarian-client-patient relationship may be  
11 terminated under the following conditions:

12 (a) The termination does not constitute patient abandonment as  
13 described in board rules;

14 (b) If there is an ongoing medical or surgical condition, the  
15 client is offered a patient referral at the time of termination to  
16 another veterinarian for diagnosis, care, and treatment; or

17 (c) Clients may terminate the veterinarian-client-patient  
18 relationship at any time.

19 (8) For animals or animal products for commercial purposes,  
20 including food consumption, medical testing, and commercial breeding:

21 (a) There must be a written agreement between the client and a  
22 veterinarian of record who is accountable for drug use and treatments  
23 administered to the animals on the commercial operation;

24 (b) The veterinarian of record is the responsible party for  
25 providing appropriate oversight of drug use on the commercial  
26 operation. Oversight includes establishment of diagnostic and  
27 treatment protocols, training of personnel, review of treatment  
28 records, monitoring drug inventories, assuring appropriate labeling  
29 of drugs, monitoring compliance and outcomes, and, in cases where  
30 telehealth is used in between in-person exams, at least one annual  
31 in-person visit following an initial in-person examination of the  
32 commercial operation where the animals are kept. Veterinary oversight  
33 of drug use must include all drugs used on the commercial operation  
34 regardless of the distribution of the drugs to the client;

35 (c) Provision of drugs or drug prescriptions must be for specific  
36 time frames appropriate to the scope and type of operation involved  
37 and only for the management groups within the operation that the  
38 veterinarian of record has direct involvement and oversight;

1 (d) A veterinarian issuing a veterinary feed directive must  
2 comply with applicable federal laws and regulations, including 21  
3 C.F.R. 558.6.

4 (9) Medical records must be maintained pursuant to board rules.

5 (10)(a) A veterinarian may use or prescribe drugs only within the  
6 context of a veterinarian-client-patient relationship except as  
7 outlined in subsection (4) of this section. Veterinary prescription  
8 drugs are restricted by federal law, under 21 U.S.C. Sec. 353(f), and  
9 may only be used by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

10 (b) A veterinarian providing care through telehealth may not  
11 prescribe a drug to the animal patient for a period longer than three  
12 months from the date of issuing a prescription unless a veterinarian  
13 has examined the animal patient in person. The veterinarian may not  
14 issue another prescription to the animal patient for the same drug  
15 unless they have conducted an in-person examination of the animal  
16 patient.

17 (c) A veterinarian providing care through telehealth may not  
18 prescribe an antimicrobial or anti-inflammatory drug to the animal  
19 patient for a period longer than 14 days of treatment. The  
20 veterinarian may not issue any further antimicrobial or anti-  
21 inflammatory drug prescription, including a refill, to treat the  
22 condition of the animal patient unless the veterinarian has conducted  
23 an in-person examination of the animal patient.

24 (11) A veterinarian providing care for patients using telehealth  
25 shall inform the client about the use and potential limitations of  
26 telehealth and obtain consent from the client to use telehealth,  
27 including acknowledgment of all of the following:

28 (a) The same standards of care apply to veterinary medicine  
29 services via telehealth and in-person veterinary medical services;

30 (b) The client has the option to choose an in-person visit from a  
31 veterinarian at any time; and

32 (c) The client has been advised how to receive follow-up care or  
33 assistance in the event of failure to respond or declining clinical  
34 condition; or of an adverse reaction to the treatment; or in the  
35 event of an inability to communicate resulting from technological or  
36 equipment failure or failure to be able to reconnect for a follow-up  
37 conversation.

38 (12) A veterinarian who practices veterinary medicine through  
39 telehealth must do all of the following:

1 (a) Certify with the board of at least 14 days, with a minimum of  
2 105 total hours, a year of practice in a clinic setting with hands-on  
3 animal experience unless telehealth medicine is less than 90 percent  
4 of the veterinarian's annual practice, unless the veterinarian has  
5 over 20 years of practicing veterinary experience. Hands-on animal  
6 experience in a clinic setting includes but is not limited to  
7 volunteering at clinics, animal shelters, or emergency facilities.  
8 The board may exempt individual veterinarians otherwise precluded  
9 from in-person practice from the requirements of this subsection;

10 (b) Ensure that the technology, method, and equipment used to  
11 provide veterinary medicine services through telehealth complies with  
12 all current applicable privacy protection laws;

13 (c) Have historical knowledge of the animal patient by obtaining,  
14 if available, and reviewing the animal patient's relevant medical  
15 history, and, if available, medical records including any diagnostic  
16 data. If medical records exist from a previous in-person visit and  
17 are in possession of the client, the client may transmit those  
18 records, including any diagnostic data contained therein, to the  
19 veterinarian electronically;

20 (d) Employ sound professional judgment to determine whether using  
21 telehealth is an appropriate alternative method from in-person  
22 evaluation for delivering medical advice or treatment to the animal  
23 patient and providing quality of care consistent with prevailing  
24 veterinary medical practice;

25 (e) As required by subsection (5)(c) of this section, be familiar  
26 with available medical resources, including emergency resources near  
27 the animal patient's location, be able to provide the client with a  
28 list of nearby veterinarians who may be able to see the animal  
29 patient in person upon the request of the client, and keep, maintain,  
30 and make available a summary of the animal patient record;

31 (f) Provide the client with the veterinarian's name, contact  
32 information, and license number that has undertaken the telehealth  
33 appointment;

34 (g) Secure an alternative means of contacting the client if the  
35 electronic means is interrupted; and

36 (h) Not claim to be a specialist unless the veterinarian is  
37 certified in such specialty by a board recognized by the American  
38 veterinary medical association.

1       **Sec. 2.** RCW 18.92.015 and 2013 c 19 s 43 are each amended to  
2 read as follows:

3       The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter  
4 unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

5       (1) "Animal patient" means any animal under the care and  
6 treatment of a veterinarian.

7       (2) "Board" means the Washington state veterinary board of  
8 governors.

9       ~~((2))~~ (3) "Client" means the animal patient's owner, owner's  
10 agent, or other person presenting the animal patient for care.

11       (4) "Commercial operation" means any business, facility, or  
12 agricultural activity involved in the production, testing, breeding,  
13 or sale of animals and materials derived from them for economic gain.

14       (5) "Department" means the department of health.

15       ~~((3))~~ (6) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department of  
16 health.

17       ~~((4))~~ (7) "Teleadvice" means the provision of any health  
18 information, opinion, guidance, or recommendation concerning prudent  
19 future actions that are not specific to a particular animal patient's  
20 health, illness, or injury.

21       (8) "Telehealth" means the overarching term that encompasses all  
22 uses of technology geared to remotely deliver health information or  
23 education. Telehealth encompasses a broad variety of technologies and  
24 tactics to deliver virtual medical, health, and education services.  
25 Telehealth is not a specific service, but a collection of tools which  
26 allow veterinarians to enhance care and education delivery.  
27 Telehealth encompasses teleadvice, telemedicine, and teletriage.

28       (9) "Veterinary medication clerk" means a person who has  
29 satisfactorily completed a board-approved training program developed  
30 in consultation with the pharmacy quality assurance commission and  
31 designed to prepare persons to perform certain nondiscretionary  
32 functions defined by the board and used in the dispensing of legend  
33 and nonlegend drugs (except controlled substances as defined in or  
34 under chapter 69.50 RCW) associated with the practice of veterinary  
35 medicine.

36       ~~((5))~~ (10) "Veterinary technician" means a person who is  
37 licensed by the board upon meeting the requirements of RCW 18.92.128.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 3.**    This act takes effect July 1, 2027.

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