
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2247

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 the telehealth consultation; and

21 (B) Assess the substantial challenges or urgent condition for
22 each subsequent consultation and enter this detailed information into
23 the medical record as a component of any subsequent care for the
24 animal; and

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

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

34 (3) Once a veterinarian-client-patient relationship has been
35 established, the relationship extends to all veterinarians employed
36 or practicing at the same premises or same mobile practice entity as
37 the veterinarian who established the most current veterinarian-
38 client-patient relationship. The veterinarian-client-patient
39 relationship may not be extended to other veterinarians based solely
40 on the accessibility of the medical records.

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

4 (a) Teleadvice;

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

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

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

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

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

22 (e) Poison control services.

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

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

28 (b) Must be licensed as a veterinarian in the state of
29 Washington;

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

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

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

39 (f) Must encourage the owner of the animal or the qualified
40 individual to schedule an in-person follow-up examination of the

1 animal to occur not later than 90 days after the date of the
2 examination through telehealth if the veterinarian, the owner of the
3 animal, or the qualified individual has concerns about the animal's
4 health that cannot be addressed through telehealth.

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

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

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

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

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

17 (8) For animals or animal products for food consumption:

18 (a) There must be a written agreement with the client that
19 identifies the farm veterinarian of record who is accountable for
20 drug use and treatments administered to the animals on the farm
21 operation;

22 (b) The veterinarian of record is the responsible party for
23 providing appropriate oversight of drug use on the farm operation.
24 Oversight includes establishment of diagnostic and treatment
25 protocols, training of personnel, review of treatment records,
26 monitoring drug inventories, assuring appropriate labeling of drugs,
27 and monitoring compliance and outcomes. Veterinary oversight of drug
28 use must include all drugs used on the farm regardless of the
29 distribution of the drugs to the farm;

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

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

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

38 (10)(a) A veterinarian may use or prescribe drugs only within the
39 context of a veterinarian-client-patient relationship except as
40 outlined in subsection (4) of this section. Veterinary prescription

1 drugs are restricted by federal law, under 21 U.S.C. Sec. 353(f), and
2 may only be used by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

3 (b) A veterinarian providing care through telehealth may not
4 prescribe a drug to the animal patient for a period longer than three
5 months from the date of issuing a prescription unless a veterinarian
6 has examined the animal patient in person. The veterinarian may not
7 issue another prescription to the animal patient for the same drug
8 unless they have conducted another examination of the animal patient,
9 either in person or using telehealth.

10 (c) A veterinarian providing care through telehealth may not
11 prescribe an antimicrobial drug to the animal patient for a period
12 longer than 14 days of treatment. The veterinarian may not issue any
13 further antimicrobial drug prescription, including a refill, to treat
14 the condition of the animal patient unless the veterinarian has
15 conducted an in-person examination of the animal patient.

16 (11) A veterinarian providing care for patients using telehealth
17 shall inform the client about the use and potential limitations of
18 telehealth and obtain consent from the client to use telehealth,
19 including acknowledgment of all of the following:

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

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

24 (c) The client has been advised how to receive follow-up care or
25 assistance in the event of failure to respond or declining clinical
26 condition; or of an adverse reaction to the treatment; or in the
27 event of an inability to communicate resulting from technological or
28 equipment failure or failure to be able to reconnect for a follow-up
29 conversation.

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

32 (a) Certify with the board of at least 14 days, with a minimum of
33 105 total hours, a year of practice in a clinic setting with hands-on
34 animal experience unless telehealth medicine is less than 90 percent
35 of the veterinarian's annual practice in Washington, unless the
36 veterinarian has over 20 years of practicing veterinary experience.
37 Hands-on animal experience in a clinic setting includes but is not
38 limited to volunteering at clinics, animal shelters, or emergency
39 facilities. The board may exempt individual veterinarians otherwise

1 precluded from in-person practice from the requirements of this
2 subsection;

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

6 (c) Have historical knowledge of the animal patient by obtaining,
7 if available, and reviewing the animal patient's relevant medical
8 history, and, if available, medical records including any diagnostic
9 data. If medical records exist from a previous in-person visit and
10 are in possession of the client, the client may transmit those
11 records, including any diagnostic data contained therein, to the
12 veterinarian electronically;

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

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

24 (f) Provide the client with the veterinarian's name, contact
25 information, and license number that has undertaken the telehealth
26 appointment;

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

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

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

34 The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter
35 unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

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

38 (2) "Board" means the Washington state veterinary board of
39 governors.

1 ~~((2))~~ (3) "Client" means the animal patient's owner, owner's
2 agent, or other person presenting the animal patient for care.

3 (4) "Department" means the department of health.

4 ~~((3))~~ (5) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department of
5 health.

6 ~~((4))~~ (6) "Teleadvice" means the provision of any health
7 information, opinion, guidance, or recommendation concerning prudent
8 future actions that are not specific to a particular animal patient's
9 health, illness, or injury.

10 (7) "Telehealth" means the overarching term that encompasses all
11 uses of technology geared to remotely deliver health information or
12 education. Telehealth encompasses a broad variety of technologies and
13 tactics to deliver virtual medical, health, and education services.
14 Telehealth is not a specific service, but a collection of tools which
15 allow veterinarians to enhance care and education delivery.
16 Telehealth encompasses teleadvice, telemedicine, and teletriage.

17 (8) "Veterinary medication clerk" means a person who has
18 satisfactorily completed a board-approved training program developed
19 in consultation with the pharmacy quality assurance commission and
20 designed to prepare persons to perform certain nondiscretionary
21 functions defined by the board and used in the dispensing of legend
22 and nonlegend drugs (except controlled substances as defined in or
23 under chapter 69.50 RCW) associated with the practice of veterinary
24 medicine.

25 ~~((5))~~ (9) "Veterinary technician" means a person who is
26 licensed by the board upon meeting the requirements of RCW 18.92.128.

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

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