

# **GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

*FOR THE*

**VETERINARY SURGEON**



*Issued under the authority*

*of the*

**VETERINARY COUNCIL OF SRI LANKA**

*2001*



## VETERINARIAN'S OATH

Being admitted to the veterinary profession,

I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health, the relief of animal suffering, the conservation of animal resources, the promotion of public health, and the advancement of scientific knowledge.

I will practice my profession conscientiously, with dignity, and in keeping with the principles of veterinary medical ethics.

I accept as a lifelong obligation the continual improvement of my professional knowledge and competence.

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## **PREFACE**

The Veterinary Council of Sri Lanka was established under the Veterinary Surgeons and Practitioners Act No. 46 of 1956 for the purpose of registration of Veterinary Surgeons to practice the profession in Sri Lanka. The main aim of forming the Veterinary Council is to look after the interests of the profession and the standard of the Veterinary education.

The Veterinary Council comprises of ten members. Eight members are elected by the registered Veterinarians by ballot every 4 years. The Director General of the Department of Animal Production and Health, Peradeniya and the Dean Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, Peradeniya are ex-officio members.

The Registrar is appointed by the Council to execute its decisions and carryout the statutory functions.

The main responsibility of the Council is to ensure a high standard of competence among the members of the Veterinary profession so as to protect the interests of the dumb patients whom they have chosen to serve. On the other hand the members of the Veterinary profession should not only be equipped with high technical skills, but should also conduct themselves to maintain the dignity of the profession.

This document is issued to the registered Veterinarians of the Veterinary Council as a guide to professional conduct. We wish that the Veterinarians in Sri Lanka would abide by this code of ethics in order to maintain a high professional standard expected from them.

**Dr. S.K.R. Amarasekara**  
*President*  
*Veterinary Council of Sri Lanka*

October, 2001.

## **GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The main purpose of this publication is to lay down standards of professional conduct for registered veterinarians. These guidelines have reference to conduct and activities of veterinarians both on their own individual accounts and as a group of professionals serving the community. Failure to abide by these codes may lead to disciplinary action by the Veterinary Council of Sri Lanka (VCSL) and in serious cases, termination of the registration.

Professional misconduct is defined as action taken or failed to be taken by a veterinarian in the course of professional work, which could be seriously regarded as disgraceful or dishonest by colleagues of good repute or competence. This is more so when public interest and / or welfare of animal patients are involved.

It should be noted that the conduct of the veterinarians should be guided by the principles mentioned below;

- The primary concern of the veterinary profession is for the welfare of animals.
- The professional work should be carried out at the highest standard of competence.
- No personal advantage be sought to cause detriment to a professional colleague.

It must be clearly understood that the instances of professional misconduct which are given below do not constitute, and are not intended to constitute, a complete list of the offences which may lead to punishment by the name being expunged from the Register and that by issuing this notice, the Council is in no way precluded from considering and dealing with any form of professional misconduct (as for example, immorality involving abuse of professional relationship) which may be

brought before them, although it may not appear to come within the scope or precise wording of any of the categories herein set forth.

Circumstances may and do arise from time to time, in relation to which there may occur questions of professional conduct, which do not come within any of these categories. In such instances, as in all others, the Council has to decide upon the facts brought before it.

## **B. GENERAL GUIDELINES**

### **1. Obligations of the Veterinary Surgeon as a member of a learned profession**

The Veterinary Surgeon is a member of a learned and skilled profession. Therefore, his conduct should be governed by a stricter code of ethics than that applies to the ordinary citizen.

### **2. Conduct disgraceful in a professional respect**

2.1 Conduct which may be regarded as infamous in terms of Section 25 © of the Veterinary Surgeons' and Practitioners' Act No. 46 of 1956 implies conduct disgraceful in a professional respect. In each case, the Council will decide on the basis of the facts presented before it, whether a registered veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary practitioner has been guilty of conduct disgraceful in a professional respect.

2.2 A registered veterinary surgeon is considered to be a skilled person and is therefore obliged to make careful use of the knowledge and skill. He or she as representative of a profession should never refuse advice or treatment without good cause.

### 3. Canvassing, Advertising, Signboards, Nameplates and Professional Stationery

**3.1 Canvassing:** It is unprofessional for a veterinary surgeon or a veterinary practitioner to canvass or tout for practice whether by himself or through others. Thus, in the event of a farm or an estate changing hands, ownership or management, the veterinary surgeon who was in attendance on the animals in the farm or estate should not approach directly or indirectly the new owner or management with a view to continuing his professional services to the said owner or management.

**3.2 Advertising:** A registered veterinary surgeon or veterinary practitioner should not attempt to secure clients or gain reputation by any kind of advertisement in the press, but this does not prevent him from publishing articles in professional journals, print media, broadcasting and appearing on television.

**3.3 Sign Boards:** Veterinary Surgeons have a duty to see that their premises can be found without undue difficulty by members of the public seeking their services. For this purpose professional premises may be identified by one sign board reading "Veterinary Hospital" or "Veterinary Clinic" or "Veterinary Surgery", giving the hours of attendance and if desired, the telephone number of the practice and any information which indicates where veterinary advice or assistance may be sought when the clinic is closed. No other information should be given on the signboard.

The size and design of the sign board should be such as is consistent with the professional approach to the provision of information for members of the public and should not give the appearance of a commercial sign intended to attract customers. This board should not exceed 2 feet x 1.5 feet in size and the lettering should be in navy blue color with white background.



**3.4 Name Plates:** All professional premises from which veterinary services are provided should bear on the building itself or at some appropriate point adjacent to the building a name plate. Such a nameplate should contain no information other than the following:

- The name of the Veterinary Surgeon or Veterinary Practitioner or the names in a partnership.
- Letters indicating the qualifications as entered against the name of each Veterinarian in the Register of Veterinary Surgeons in Sri Lanka.
- The title of "Veterinary Surgeon (s) " as the case may be.
- Nameplates must not exceed 18"x18" in size and should be designed in a dignified and professional style.

**3.5 Professional Stationery:** Professional notepaper, account heads, visiting cards, or other professional stationery should not be printed in large letters or with florid display, and should contain generally the following.

- The name of the Veterinarian (or the names in a partnership)
- The address (or in the case of more than one set of premises, the main and subsidiary addresses).
- The title "Veterinary Surgeon" or "Veterinary Practitioner" as the case may be.
- letters indicating degrees or diplomas entered in the Register of Veterinary Surgeons.

#### **4. Change of Address**

This could be announced by a very brief note in the local press. He may also write under cover to bona fide clients of the change of address. However, it is not permissible to make an announcement in the press when a new practice is set up. Any change in address must be notified to the Registrar of the Veterinary Council of Sri Lanka.

#### **5. Press and Broadcasting**

Contribution of signed articles to the press is permissible provided that it is clear that:

- a. Such a contribution is not inspired by a desire to promote the veterinary surgeon's or veterinary practitioner's interest.
- b. The action is not detrimental to the interests of the profession. While broadcasting over the radio, anonymity need not be maintained. However, one should not abuse one's position nor attempt to acquire personal publicity.

#### **6. Testimonials**

It is unprofessional for any veterinary surgeon or veterinary practitioner to give any testimonial intended for sales promotion, in favour of proprietary or patent articles, medicines or animal foods.

#### **7. Scientific Articles**

When a veterinary surgeon or a veterinary practitioner is the author of an article, it is unprofessional for him to promote the reprinting of

all or part of the article to be used for the advertisement or sale of any product to the general public. He may, however, send reports to the manufacturer or distributor for the purposes of disseminating knowledge. If the manufacturer or his representatives use such an article for advertisement, no blame can be placed on the veterinary surgeon or veterinary practitioner.

## **C. RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE VETERINARIANS**

### **1. Obligations of Veterinary Surgeons to one another**

Every veterinary surgeon is duty bound to promote the interests, honour and dignity of the veterinary profession and the relationship of the veterinary surgeons to each other must be founded on honour and good faith.

A veterinary surgeon in Government employment or in a similar position has certain advantages over a veterinary surgeon in private practice in the same area. It would be unprofessional of the former to exploit these advantages. In cases of doubt he should consult the Veterinary Council of Sri Lanka or the Head of his Department.

### **2. Consultations**

If a veterinary surgeon at the invitation of another veterinary surgeon or veterinary practitioner in attendance on a case assists in treatment or in arriving at a diagnosis, prognosis or treatment, the former may be regarded as a consultant.

Consultations may occur on a suggestion from the attending veterinary surgeon or from the owner. A consultant should attend only with prior consent of the veterinary surgeon in attendance.

When requested by a client, a veterinary surgeon attending on a case should call another in consultation.

If the consultant were to see the client's patient without the attending veterinary surgeon, he should inform the latter of the condition of the patient, his findings and his opinion as soon, as is practicable.

### **3. Treatment by another Veterinarian**

If an owner of a sick animal which has been recently treated by one veterinary surgeon, calls upon another for treatment the latter should decline to attend unless (1) he is considered as a Consultant, or (2) the owner of the animal produces a letter referring the case to the veterinary surgeon in question or (3) the first veterinary surgeon is away and is not available (4) there is evidence that the first veterinary surgeon has retired from the case or (5) has been informed by the owner that his services are no longer required. The veterinary surgeon called is expected to inform the one whom he is superseding.

### **4. Fees**

The fees that may be charged cannot be laid down but should be reasonable.

In the case of veterinary surgeons in Government employment they are to be guided by the instructions issued by the Head of the Department from time to time.

### **5. Disputes**

It is very undesirable that there should be any disputes among the veterinary surgeons. Wherever possible they should settle disputes

within the profession and if necessary seek the advice of the Veterinary Council of Sri Lanka.

## **D. THE USE OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

A Veterinary Surgeon should not use in connection with professional affairs, any title, which is not in the Register of Veterinary Surgeons. The list of Veterinary Surgeons, their qualifications and addresses is published annually in the Government Gazette (Vide Section 27 (1) of the Veterinary Surgeons' and Practitioners' Act No. 46 of 1956).

## **E. THE VETERINARY SURGEON AND THE LAW**

### **1. Certificates**

- (a) A veterinary surgeon is in duty bound in certain cases, when requested to do so, to issue certificates, etc. signed by him in his professional capacity for their subsequent use in the Courts of Law or for administration purpose.
- (b) When certificates are given in respect of animals, wherever possible, the certificate should contain all the relevant information for the animals to be identified.

### **2. Professional Secrecy**

Any information gained by a veterinary surgeon concerning a patient under his care is to be treated as confidential and to be divulged to the owner alone and with the owner's consent to others if necessary. However, this does not apply if he has to divulge this

information in terms of the Animals Diseases Act or other legislative enactments , or if the public welfare or the welfare of other animals is endangered.

### 3. Evidence

When a veterinary surgeon by reason of his/her professional status is called upon to give evidence in a Court of Law, the evidence must be given with the purpose of seeing that justice is done. If a veterinary surgeon is called by a party to an action to give evidence, he/she should do so as a professional person to assist the Court.

### 4. Veterinary Surgeons' and Practitioners' Act No. 46 of 1956

It is the duty of every veterinary surgeon and practitioner registered under this Act to report any breach of this Act that may come to his attention, to the Veterinary Council of Sri Lanka.

The Veterinary Council of Sri Lanka ratified this document on " Guide to Professional conduct for the Veterinary Surgeon" at its 186th meeting held on 20th July 2001

#### COUNCIL MEMBERS 2001/2002

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