

Rules Veterinarians Practice Under

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A veterinarian, like any other person involved in a profession, has rules to obey and a certain level of expected conduct and competency to maintain. Any veterinarian in any state is subject to the same rules that apply to any citizen of the United States and any state resident. However, there are also additional rules that apply to the practice of veterinary medicine.

The practice of veterinary medicine in a state of the United States is governed by a set of rules and laws usually known as the Veterinary Practice Act. The rules are usually set forth by the legislative body of the state and are established to define the practice of veterinary medicine in the state, establish a veterinary board and establish penalties for the illegal practice of veterinary medicine. The veterinary profession is also regulated in each state by a state Veterinary Medical Board. The exact name of the Board may vary from state to state or the overseeing agency may be different; but the rules, regulations and policies are similar.

In the State of Arkansas, the office of the Arkansas Veterinary Medical Examining Board is headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas. The Board consists of five members appointed by the governor of the state. There are four veterinarians on the Board and one public member.

The purpose of the veterinary board is multiple. Some of the duties include examining and determining the qualifications of applicants to practice in the state, issuing veterinary licenses, investigating complaints against veterinarians and enforcing the provisions of the veterinary practice act. These rules and regulations are designed to protect the general public and their animals by ensuring that licensed qualified veterinarians are engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine.

The practice act and/or veterinary board also outlines a code of professional conduct for veterinarians

to follow. This code lists activities which are considered as unprofessional conduct, such as the “guarantee of a cure.” A veterinarian that violates the rules of the practice act and/or veterinary board is investigated by the veterinary board and may be issued a citation, temporary suspension of their license or a revocation of their license to practice. Unprofessional conduct, conviction of a felony of moral turpitude, negligence, animal cruelty, dishonesty, etc., are all grounds for investigation and punishment.

The diagnosis of disease in an animal by a veterinarian is also somewhat regulated by the provisions adopted in a state by the agency with the responsibility to control animal diseases in the state. This is usually the domain of the state veterinarian or state department of agriculture. The agency charged with this responsibility usually issues a list of diseases that are considered reportable.

A “reportable disease” is one that is to be reported to the agency in charge of animal disease control. These diseases are those that have the potential to be communicable to people, are easily spread or are a foreign animal disease (i.e., one not endemic to the United States). A few examples are rabies, Brucellosis, Tuberculosis, Avian Influenza, Exotic Newcastle, Anthrax and Hog Cholera. In most states a veterinarian is legally obligated to report any disease listed as reportable in that state or the United States if the disease is only suspected in an affected animal. In other words the veterinarian does not need to definitively diagnose the disease, only suspect it.

The reasons for these rules and regulations are to protect the health of the public, protect the health of animals, protect the food supply and prevent deadly and costly disease outbreaks. They also ensure that a veterinarian is practicing with a certain level of knowledge and professional conduct and obeys the laws of the state and nation.