

# **NSVMA Policy Statement on Telemedicine**

This policy statement has been adopted from the National Policy Statement on Telemedicine developed by the Canadian Council of Veterinary Registrars (CCVR) and is designed to promote consistency, transparency and fairness in the development of similar guidelines on telemedicine across Canada.

## **Definition:**

Telemedicine is the provision of specific veterinary medical advice and veterinary treatment of an animal(s) based on the remote diagnosis of disease and injury by means of telecommunications technology where no physical examination of the animal(s) by the veterinarian takes place. It does not include consultation between veterinarians where colleagues in different physical locations consult remotely with each other or the provision of general, non-specific, advice.

## **Policy Statement:**

### ***A) Expectations for NSVMA Licensed Veterinarians practising Telemedicine within the Province of Nova Scotia:***

1. Veterinarians who practise telemedicine must meet the existing legal and professional obligations that apply to veterinary care that is provided in in-person visits. The practise of telemedicine is the practice of veterinary medicine and a VCPR, as defined in Section 17 of the Code of Ethics, must be established. As it relates to telemedicine, a VCPR must be initially established in person and cannot be established virtually.
2. For every instance in which the use of telemedicine is contemplated, veterinarians must use their professional judgement to determine whether telemedicine is appropriate and will enable them to meet all relevant and applicable legal obligations, professional obligations, and the standard of care.
3. Prescribing and dispensing of medications, other than narcotics and controlled substances, through telemedicine is permitted.
4. When practicing via telemedicine, veterinarians must:
  - Disclose their identity, location and licence status;
  - Confirm the identity of the client and animal(s);
  - Consider the existing health status of the animal or group of animals, the specific health needs and specific circumstances, and only use telemedicine if the risks do not outweigh the potential benefits;
    - Identify what resources (e.g. information and communication technology, equipment, support staff, etc.) are required, and only proceed if those resources are available and can be used effectively;
    - Ensure the reliability, quality and timeliness of the information obtained;
    - Protect the privacy and confidentiality of the client's and animal(s) information, inclusive of evaluating the technology and the physical setting;
    - Ensure the physical setting in which the care is being delivered is appropriate and safe for the client and patient, having a plan to manage adverse events and/or emergencies;
    - Explain to the client any limitations of proceeding with telemedicine to provide the veterinary services required.
5. As required by regulation, a veterinarian providing telemedicine must work from an NSVMA accredited facility.

***B) Expectations for a NSVMA Licensed Veterinarian practising Telemedicine across Borders:***

1. When providing or assisting with the provision of veterinary medicine in another province, territory or country via telemedicine a veterinarian must comply with the licencing requirements of that jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions may require a veterinarian to hold a licence in that jurisdiction in order to practice via telemedicine.
2. When providing or assisting with the provision of veterinary medicine in another province, territory or country via telemedicine a veterinarian remains accountable to the regulator in the jurisdiction in which they are licenced. The NSVMA maintains jurisdiction over its members regardless of where or how the member is practising veterinary medicine. The NSVMA has the authority to investigate any complaints made about a member regardless of whether the member or animal(s) is physically located in Nova Scotia.

***C) Expectations for a Veterinarian not licenced in Nova Scotia while practicing telemedicine in Nova Scotia:***

1. Although Veterinarians who are not licenced in Nova Scotia while providing veterinary telemedicine are deemed not to be practicing veterinary medicine in Nova Scotia (Section 8.2 of the Veterinary Medical Act), they must comply with the licensing requirements of the jurisdiction in which they do hold licensure and provide care in accordance with the standard of care.
2. If the NSVMA becomes aware of concerns about care provided to an animal(s) via telemedicine in Nova Scotia by a veterinarian not licensed in Nova Scotia, the NSVMA will share that information with the regulatory authority that has jurisdiction over the individual so that appropriate action can be taken by that regulatory authority.