Policy Statement

Title:	Veterinarian-Client-Patient-Relationship	*Number:* **VET 13-01**
References:	WAC 246-933-340	
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Effective Date:	March 4, 2013	
Supercedes:	Policy Number VT 0002	
Approved By:	_____ Chair, Veterinary Board of Governors	

The Veterinarian-Client-Patient-Relationship (VCPR) is the basis for interaction between veterinarians and their clients and patients.

Background and Analysis

A VCPR exists when all of the following conditions have been met:

- The veterinarian has assumed responsibility for making clinical judgments regarding the health of the animal(s) and the need for medical treatment, and the client has agreed to follow the veterinarian's instructions.
- The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal(s) to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical conditions of the animal(s). This means that the veterinarian has seen the animal(s) within the last year and is personally acquainted with the keeping and care of the animal(s) by virtue of an examination of the animal(s), or by medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animal(s) are kept. Medical records must be maintained. The veterinarian is readily available, or has arranged for emergency coverage, for follow-up evaluation in the event of adverse reactions or the failure of the treatment regimen.

Veterinary prescription drugs are to be used or prescribed only within the context of a VCPR. Veterinary prescription drugs are restricted by federal law to be used by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian (Section 503(f) Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act). Extra-label use is legal only when ordered by a veterinarian and within the context of a VCPR.

Veterinarians may terminate a VCPR under certain conditions. Veterinarians have an ethical obligation to use courtesy and tact when terminating a VCPR.

- If there is no ongoing medical condition, veterinarians may terminate a VCPR by notifying the client that they no longer wish to serve that patient and client.

- If there is an ongoing medical or surgical condition, the patient should be referred to another veterinarian for diagnosis, care, and treatment. The referring veterinarian should continue to provide care, as needed, during the transition.
- Clients may terminate the VCPR at any time.

The Veterinarian-Client-Patient-Relationship (VCPR) is the basis for interaction among veterinarians, their clients, and their patients.