

by Grant Miller, DVM, CVMA Director of Regulatory Affairs

Agencies that Oversee Veterinary Practices

Numerous government agencies have some type of authority over the veterinary profession in California. While all California businesses are subject to regulations by agencies such as the Department of Industrial Relations, Employee Development Department, Department of Fair Employment and Housing, and the Board of Equalization, certain state and federal agencies enforce laws specific to veterinary practices. Below is a brief summary of those agencies.

State Agencies

The California Veterinary Medical Board's (VMB) mission is to protect consumers and animals through the development and maintenance of professional standards; licensing of veterinarians, registered veterinary technicians, and premises; and diligent enforcement of the California Veterinary Medicine Practice Act. This includes investigating consumer complaints, administering licensing examinations, issuing Veterinary Assistant Controlled Substance Permits, inspecting veterinary premises, and writing regulations for veterinary practice in California. Website: vmb.ca.gov

The California Board of Pharmacy (BOP) provides consumer protection relating to medications, medication labels, prescriptions, and consumer notices relating to prescriptions. The BOP also has jurisdiction over veterinary food animal drug retailers. Website: pharmacy.ca.gov

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has three divisions which can affect veterinary practices. The Wildlife Branch coordinates the treatment and care of injured wildlife; the Law Enforcement (Wildlife Protection) Division employs game wardens who manage permits for possessing prohibited species; and the Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response maintains an Oiled Wildlife Care Network to address oiled wildlife. Website: wildlife.ca.gov

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has three branches that most commonly affect veterinary practices. The Rabies Branch creates regulations pertaining to rabies control, vaccination, and reporting; the Medical Waste Management Program oversees medical waste (which includes biohazardous, pharmaceutical, pathology, trace chemotherapeutic, and sharps waste) and requires veterinary practices to register as small quantity generators; and the Radiologic Health Branch registers radiation producing

machines, writes regulations pertaining to radiation safety, and inspects practices for compliance. Website: cdph.ca.gov

While the VMB has the ultimate jurisdiction over veterinary practice and veterinary licenses, the California Horse Racing Board (CHRB) imposes additional requirements for veterinarians who work on horse racing tracks. They include record keeping of the time, amount, and type of medications administered, lameness reporting, and more. The Medication and Track Safety Committee creates several of the rules pertaining to veterinary practice on tracks. Website: chrb.ca.gov

The California Department of Justice (DOJ) requires all practitioners with DEA numbers to register with the Controlled Drug Utilization and Review Evaluation System (CURES) database and submit weekly reports if controlled substances are dispensed to patients. Practitioners who prescribe controlled substances must use a DOJ-approved prescription pad with security features and tamper resistant components. The Attorney General's office will assist the VMB in administrative hearings if a practitioner is formally charged with violations of the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act. Website: oag.ca.gov

The California Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) oversees hazardous waste management by California generators. This includes registration (required for most veterinary practices), inspections/investigations, and disposal through registered hazardous waste haulers. Website: calepa.ca.gov

Federal Agencies

The Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issues registration numbers to veterinarians who order, administer, dispense, or prescribe controlled substances. The DEA creates and enforces regulations pertaining to controlled substances including record keeping, storage, and utilization to name a few. They investigate controlled drug loss, theft, and diversion. Website: deadiversion.usdoj.gov

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and National Veterinary Accreditation Program (NVAP) most commonly affect veterinary practices. These divisions oversee interstate and international animal movement (imports

and exports) as well as issue accreditation to veterinarians who issue health certificates for the purpose of animal movement domestically and abroad. The USDA also investigates drug residue violations in animal agriculture operations. Website: usda.gov

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversees animal drug compounding, new animal drugs or medical devices, extra-label drug use, drug dispensation, and pet foods to name a few. Website: fda.gov

Conclusion

Detailed information about each of these agencies and veterinary practice obligations can be found by logging onto cvma-inline.net and visiting the Resources box in the Regulatory Compliance section. ■



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