



# Veterinary Surgeons' Board



## GUIDELINES FOR MOBILE VETERINARY CLINICS AND VETERINARY HOUSE CALL SERVICES FOR SMALL OR COMPANION ANIMALS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### PREAMBLE

The *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1960* (WA) makes no reference to mobile veterinary clinics or the provision of veterinary house call services. However professional standards must be applied in the delivery of mobile veterinary clinics or house call services and the responsibility for setting those standards rests with the Veterinary Surgeons' Board (Board).

These Guidelines describe the standard of practice expected by the Board of veterinary surgeons operating mobile veterinary clinics or veterinary house call services for small or companion animals in Western Australia.

There are separate guidelines for mobile veterinary services for large animals.

### APPLICATION OF THESE GUIDELINES

These Guidelines apply from and including 9 January 2014.

These Guidelines may be superseded by subsequent versions. To ascertain whether this version has been superseded, view the current version on the Board's website at [www.vsbwa.org.au](http://www.vsbwa.org.au).

It is the responsibility of veterinary surgeons who operate mobile veterinary clinics and veterinary house call services for small or companion animals, to be conversant with the current version of these Guidelines.

### DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of these Guidelines:

**Mobile veterinary clinic** means a facility that provides a form of veterinary practice that may be moved from one location to another for delivery of a specified range of veterinary services. The term 'mobile veterinary clinic' does not infer the facility is registered as a veterinary clinic as defined by the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1960* (WA).

**Reasonably available** with reference to a registered veterinary hospital or clinic, means a registered veterinary hospital or clinic that is within a 50 kilometre radius from the place where the mobile service is being provided and at which veterinary services are, at the time of providing the mobile service, available. It is not relevant:

- that the mobile veterinary surgeon may not have access to or the authority to use the registered veterinary hospital or clinic, or
- that there may be financial constraints.

**Small or companion animal** includes, but is not limited to, a dog, cat, bird, rabbit, ferret, guinea pig or other "pocket pet", reptile, amphibian, fish and small native animal.

**Surgery** means any procedure performed on an animal that involves the use of some, usually sharp and metallic, instrument to expose otherwise unexposed blood or other body tissues, or to remove a body part, or to correct an injury.

**Veterinary house call service** means a specified range of veterinary services provided by a veterinary surgeon at an animal owner's premises.

**Veterinary surgery** has the meaning provided for in section 2 of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1960* (WA).

## **INSURANCE**

All veterinary surgeons are responsible for their own insurance requirements and should seek professional advice on public liability insurance and professional indemnity insurance.

## **POISONS PERMIT AND RADIOLOGY LICENCE**

All veterinary surgeons must ensure that they hold the relevant permits and licences necessary for them to practise veterinary surgery.

## **STANDARDS FOR MOBILE VETERINARY CLINICS AND VETERINARY HOUSE CALL SERVICES FOR SMALL OR COMPANION ANIMALS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

1. Unless permitted by these Guidelines, a veterinary surgeon should not perform any surgery on a small or companion animal outside a registered veterinary hospital or a registered veterinary clinic.
2. Veterinary surgeons conducting mobile veterinary clinics or providing veterinary house call services must refer clients and their animal or animals to a registered veterinary hospital or clinic if their lack of equipment, staff, facilities, or expertise may result in the animal's welfare being compromised, or if there are occupational health and safety issues for the veterinary surgeon or any other person.
3. Subject to the mobile veterinary clinic being appropriately equipped or the animal owner's premises having adequate facilities, a veterinary surgeon may perform the following services from a mobile veterinary clinic or as a veterinary house call service:
  - a) consultations, examinations and investigations
  - b) vaccinations
  - c) microchipping
  - d) minor procedures requiring light to moderate sedation and/or local anaesthetic, and
  - e) euthanasia.
4. A vehicle used as a mobile veterinary clinic must:
  - a) be clean, hygienic and secure at all times
  - b) be fitted with a locked container that is attached to the body of the vehicle and suitable for the transportation and storage of drugs as required by legislation
  - c) carry sufficient and appropriate drugs and equipment to provide the services that the veterinary surgeon intends to perform
  - d) the drugs must be stored in compliance with the manufacturer's recommendations, for example refrigeration
  - e) meet the requirements of local government by-laws, for example, for the correct disposal of waste, and
  - f) include a secure compartment for the safe transport of animals to a veterinary hospital or veterinary clinic.
5. The volume of Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 drugs held in a mobile veterinary clinic must be minimised as a matter of public safety, and wherever possible, limited to a maximum of one day's requirements.
6. A veterinary surgeon providing a house call service and carrying Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 drugs must ensure that the drugs are in their immediate possession, for example in a "doctors bag", or in a locked container that is attached to the body of their vehicle and suitable for the transportation and storage of drugs as required by legislation. At all times the volume of drugs carried must be minimised and wherever possible, limited to a maximum of one day's requirements.
7. With the exception of Point 8 below, a veterinary surgeon providing a mobile veterinary clinic or house call service must not perform surgery on a small or companion animal if the surgery requires general or dissociative anaesthesia, or the administration of any drug or combination of drugs, to render the animal unconscious except in a life threatening emergency.
8. A veterinary surgeon providing a mobile veterinary clinic or house call service in the pastoral region and in which a registered veterinary hospital or clinic is not reasonably available, may apply to the Board for approval to perform specified surgeries on small or companion animals that require general or dissociative anaesthesia, or the administration of any drug or combination of drugs, to render the animal unconscious. Such approval will

be subject to the veterinary surgeon demonstrating a public need or benefit for the service and that they have the appropriate equipment and facilities as determined by the Board to perform the specified surgeries, and does not diminish the veterinary surgeon's responsibility for ensuring the welfare of the animals in their care.

9. Regardless of the circumstances, and whether or not a veterinary surgeon is in breach of any of the above, a veterinary surgeon who has sedated or anaesthetised an animal must remain with the animal until it is able to stand and walk unaided.
10. Clinical records and the supply of scheduled drugs must comply with the *Veterinary Surgeons Regulations 1979* (WA).
11. Clinical records should be completed by the veterinary surgeon at the time, or as soon as possible after, the veterinary service is provided.