

NORTH CAROLINA VETERINARY MEDICAL BOARD

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE LINWOOD JERNIGAN, D.V.M. DECEMBER 2006

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Greetings! I send this President's Message on behalf of the members, Thomas Mickey, Executive Director, and staff of the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Board. I have been honored to serve as President of the Board since July 1. Our other officers are Dr. David T. Marshall, Vice-President and Nancy K. Robinson, R.V.T., Secretary-Treasurer. Other members of the Board are Dr. Susan K. Bull, Ms. Amy J. Edwards, Dr. Amy J. Lewis, Dr. Richard W. Hawkins and Dr. Dante R. Martin.

Veterinarians' Mistakes We See Far Too Often - "Poor medical records" leads the list! A majority of the complaints to the Board contain inadequate medical records. If you remember only one thing from this President's Message, let that be the absolute necessity of complete and accurate medical records. Ensure that basic examination findings - - patient ID, name, weight, temperature and presenting problem - - are in the medical record. This holds true even for cursory examinations. Record the date of the entry. Initial all entries. An employee recording entries under your supervision should initial his or her entries.

As you examine each body system, record your findings, even if normal. Perform as much of your initial examination as is feasible in front of the client, so they are comfortable about what is being done. Identify presenting problems and abnormalities, including assessment and presumptive diagnosis. Set forth an action plan. As you work through your plan, document results. Ensure that laboratory results are dated, that they match the patient's identification, and that they are entered into the record. The same holds true for radiographs. Note laboratory abnormalities and your interpretations. Daily observation entries for animals that are boarding, such as eating, drinking, urinating, defecating, and bright, alert and responsive should be made. Because you are a veterinarian, your clients expect more than the boarding facility down the street. You and your staff need to document your observations. In responding to complaints to the Board, the medical record can be your most important response. Finally, make sure your records include all information required by Board Rule .0207(b)(12).

Take time to communicate with your clients. Help them understand your diagnostic plan, the diagnosis, and recommended treatment. Explain findings in layman's terms. Give written estimates for services. Promptly inform clients of any variations of these estimates. Give complete written discharge instructions.

Prepare accurate prescription labels that comply with Board Rule .0207(b)(11). You will not want the Board to review a complaint in which you have dispensed medicine without the name of the patient, the name of the medicine, the dosage and the directions for use. Give client information sheets regarding medications.

Train and monitor your staff. It is elementary not to allow lay staff to give medical advice, but it happens in loosely-managed practices. Staff should be well trained and educated on aspects of the Veterinary Practice Act and Administrative Rules. Make sure that your staff is not overstepping their privileges as outlined in the Practice Act. Be especially careful with a staff veterinarian working under a temporary permit. A veterinarian listed as a supervisor is responsible for an individual working on a temporary permit. A supervising veterinarian must be present at the facility while the temporary permit holder is performing veterinary medicine. The person holding a temporary permit is not authorized to operate a facility on their own, write health certificates, or give rabies vaccines until fully licensed in this State.

The potential regulation of new technologies such as digital imaging, electronic records, telemedicine, specialty practices, and the role of the veterinary technician will present many challenges for the Board and the profession. To better fulfill its statutory mission the Board needs input from you. Never hesitate to contact the Board office when you have questions or concerns. Thank you for your support. May the remainder of 2006 and all of next year be enjoyable and prosperous.