

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- VETERINARY PRACTICE

Introduced By: Representatives J. Brien, Serpa, Lima, Baginski, and Noret

Date Introduced: February 26, 2025

Referred To: House Corporations

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 5-25-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 5-25 entitled "Veterinary Practice" is hereby amended to read as follows:

5-25-2. Definitions.

As used in this chapter:

(1) "Animal" means any animal other than humans and includes, by way of illustration, not limitation, fowl, birds, fish, livestock, and reptiles, wild or domestic, living or dead.

(2) "Department" means the Rhode Island department of health.

(3) "Director" means the director of the Rhode Island department of health.

(4) "Division" means the division of professional regulation within the department of health established in chapter 26 of this title.

(5) "Veterinarian" means a person who practices is licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the State of Rhode Island.

(6) "Veterinarian/client/patient relationship" means a relationship where all of the following conditions have been met:

(i) The veterinarian has assumed the responsibility for making medical judgments regarding the health of the animal or animals and the need for medical treatment, and the client has agreed to follow the instructions of the veterinarian;

(ii) The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal or animals to initiate at least a general or preliminary (e.g. tentative) diagnosis of the medical condition of the animal or animals.

1 This means that the veterinarian has recently seen and is personally acquainted with the keeping
2 and care of the animal or animals, and/or by medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises
3 where the animal or animals are kept, or obtained current knowledge of the animal through a video-
4 based telecommunication medium, subject to the limitations and requirements of § 5-25-18;

5 (iii) The veterinarian is readily available for follow-up in cases of adverse reactions or
6 failure of the regimen of therapy; and

7 (iv) The veterinarian maintains records that document patient visits, diagnosis, treatment,
8 and other relevant information.

9 (7) "Veterinary dentistry" means that part of veterinary science that deals with the
10 prevention and treatment of diseases, developmental conditions, and injuries of the teeth, gums,
11 and oral cavity in animals.

12 SECTION 2. Chapter 5-25 of the General Laws entitled "Veterinary Practice" is hereby
13 amended by adding thereto the following section:

14 **5-25-18. Veterinary telemedicine client patient relationship.**

15 (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, regulation or rule to the contrary, a
16 veterinarian may establish a client-patient relationship in Rhode Island through synchronous,
17 audiovisual electronic means, subject to the limitations and requirements set forth in subsection (b)
18 of this section.

19 (b) Before establishing a veterinarian client-patient relationship through electronic means,
20 a veterinarian shall:

21 (1) Be licensed to practice veterinary medicine pursuant to this chapter;

22 (2) Obtain from the client verbal consent to establish the veterinarian client-patient
23 relationship through electronic means, including an acknowledgement that the same standards of
24 care under state law and regulations apply to telehealth and in-person visits; and

25 (3) Maintain such documentation for at least one year.

26 (c) A veterinarian shall practice in a manner consistent with the prevailing professional
27 standard of practice for a veterinarian who provides in-person veterinary services to patients in this
28 state and shall employ sound, professional judgment to determine whether using veterinary
29 telehealth is an appropriate method for delivering medical advice or treatment to the patient.

30 (d) Veterinarians may prescribe after establishing a virtual veterinary client-patient
31 relationship under the following conditions:

32 (1) Prescriptions based on a virtual veterinary client-patient relationship shall be issued
33 initially for no more than thirty (30) days and shall not be renewed for more than thirty (30) days
34 without an additional virtual or in-person examination.

1 (2) A prescription renewed once and based upon only virtual examinations shall not be
2 renewed again without an in-person examination.

3 (3) A veterinarian may not prescribe a controlled substance as defined in § 5-19.1-2 unless
4 the veterinarian has conducted an in-person examination of the animal or made medically
5 appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animal or group of animals is kept.

6 (d) Services provided through veterinary telemedicine are subject to this state's laws and
7 regulations governing the veterinary provider's scope of practice.

8 (e) Each telemedicine provider shall disclose to consumers a description of services and
9 standard charges in a consumer-friendly display that is easily accessible on the provider's website.

10 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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918 CM attachment
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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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1 This act would authorize a veterinarian to establish a client-patient relationship in Rhode
2 Island through electronic means, subject to certain limitations and requirements such as a
3 veterinarian making a good faith effort to determine whether care should be provided through
4 telemedicine instead of in person. The act would also provide that the veterinarian shall be licensed
5 in Rhode Island, obtain the client consent to establish the veterinarian client-patient relationship
6 through electronic means, and maintain such documentation for at least one year.

7 This act would take effect upon passage.

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