Principles of Veteranary Medical Ethics
abstracted and annotated

Judicial Council
1973
PRINCIPLES
OF
VETERINARY MEDICAL ETHICS

OPINIONS AND REPORTS
OF THE
JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Abstracted and Annotated

American Veterinary Medical Association
600 S. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60605

1973 Edition
The Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics—Annotated

The document that provides for the regulation of professional behavior of veterinarians in the United States is the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics. Adopted in 1960, the Principles replaced the 1940 Code of Veterinary Medical Ethics and the 1952 edition of the Principles, both of which lacked specificity and were regarded by many veterinarians as a guide to etiquette rather than statements of principles. Those who had to interpret and enforce the 1940 Code and the 1952 Principles were constantly faced with the task of rendering opinions on individual questions where those documents were not specific, so the Judicial Council, soon after it was formed in 1958, set about drafting a simple, understandable set of ethical principles. The House of Delegates adopted the final document in 1960.

To the 1960 Principles, the Council appended rulings and interpretations to help members and ethics committees attain full understanding of the new concept of setting forth ethical principles. Nevertheless, interpretation and application of the new Principles raised many questions, so the Council has subsequently issued a number of specific and clarifying annotations.

In dealing with questions of ethics, a committee on veterinary medical ethics must attempt to interpret the spirit and intent of the Principles, but it's the annotations that most often serve as the basis for resolving specific problems.

Relationship of Local, State, and National Associations on the Matter of Ethics

Ideally, all questions of ethical behavior on the part of a veterinarian should be considered and dealt with by his local association's ethics or grievance committee, the members of which should be familiar with local customs and circumstances and are in a position to talk to all parties concerned. In some instances, a solution at the local level may be impossible and referral to the ethics committee of the state association may be advisable. Occasionally, a problem not resolved at either local or state levels should be considered by the AVMA Judicial Council, but the Council should not be used by ethics committees as a means of avoiding disagreeable tasks. Nor should the Council be saddled with handling of minutiae. Having issued annotations of such topics as telephone directory listings and advertising, it should be left free to deal with such broader problems as admission and dismissal of AVMA members, interpretation of the Constitution and Bylaws and the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics, study of professional conditions, and preparation of annotations. It's the local and state ethics committees that should decide whether someone's telephone listing is acceptable or whether a sign on a veterinary hospital is too large.

It's Attitude That Counts

The Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics have been criticized for being too general, too broad, and too similar to those of the American Medical Association. But the veterinarian who accepts the Golden Rule as a guide for his general conduct and makes a reasonable effort to abide by the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics in his professional life will have little difficulty with ethics. Those whose aggressiveness and promotional tendencies cause them to run afoul of the Principles would probably have the same difficulty under more specific rules.

Purportedly, veterinary medicine is an ennobling profession. The Principles light the path to that ennoblement.
Preamble

The honor and dignity of our profession lie in our obedience to a just and reasonable code of ethics set forth as a guide to the members. The purpose of this code is more far-reaching because exemplary professional conduct not only upholds honor and dignity, but also enlarges our sphere of usefulness, exalts our social standards, and promotes the science we cultivate. Briefly stated, our code of ethics is the foundation of our individual and collective efforts. It is based on the Golden Rule.

Traditional Concepts

The honor and dignity of our profession lie in our obedience to a just and reasonable code of ethics set forth as a guide to the members. The object of this code, however, is more far-reaching, for exemplary professional conduct not only upholds honor and dignity, but also enlarges our sphere of usefulness, exalts our social standards and promotes the science we cultivate. Briefly stated, our code of ethics is the foundation of our individual and collective efforts. It is based on the Golden Rule.

Annotations

Principles Applicable to All

1952 Report: Our educational program should be intensified on a national scale, and emphasis should be placed on the importance of enforcement of the Principles by local and component associations.

Recommendations:

1) That all component associations that have not done so, adopt the AVMA Principles or a similar code of ethics, and all associations appoint an active committee on ethics.

2) That all state associations endeavor to include in the programs of their state meetings, a paper or discussion on professional ethics.

3) That since a good many violations of the Principles have been observed during the first year of practice, it is suggested that the teaching of ethics and professional morals be intensified in the schools.

4) That the Principles be given a thorough study with a view to clarification of certain sections and amendments to strengthen it.

5) That a more determined effort be made to enforce the Principles in their entirety.

1958 Report: The ethical principles governing a group, clinic, partnership, or association shall be exactly the same as shall apply to the individual.

1958 Report: One local association requested permission to use a plan whereby they could, as a group, ethically advertise services allied to the operation of a hospital, such as grooming, etc. It was the considered opinion of the Committee that ethics applies in equal measure to any group on the same basis as it applies to the individual, and special consideration of this kind could not be considered.

1959 Report: The Principles are intended to aid veterinarians individually and collectively in maintaining a high level of ethical conduct. They are not laws, but standards by which an individual may determine the propriety of his conduct in his relationship with clients, colleagues, and with the public.

The Council does not consider veterinary ownership of biological and pharmaceutical firms as unethical per se. Neither are group endeavors in themselves unethical unless they are found to be contrary to civil law.

The uniting of veterinarians into a business, whether employer, employee or partner, each of whom is subject to principles of ethics, does not relieve them, either individually or as a group, from the obligation they assume as members of the veterinary profession.
Section I

The principal objectives of the veterinary profession are to render service to society, to conserve our livestock resources, and to relieve suffering of animals. A veterinarian should conduct himself in relation to the public, his colleagues and their patients, and the allied professions, so as to merit their full confidence and respect.

Traditional Concepts

Deportment

Conduct characterizing the personal behavior of a gentleman is expected of all members of the profession.

No member shall use a college degree to which he is not entitled or any degree or title granted by an institution declared unworthy by contemporary institutions of its class.

No member shall belittle or injure the professional standing of another member of the profession or unnecessarily condemn the character of his professional acts.

Frauds

Members of the Association shall avoid the impropriety of employing questionable methods to attract public attention or boast of possessing superior knowledge or skill in the treatment or prevention of any disease.

When employed by the buyer to inspect an animal for soundness, it is unethical to accept a fee from the seller. The acceptance of such a fee is prima facie evidence of fraud. On the other hand, it is deemed unethical to criticize unfairly an animal about to be sold. The veterinarian's duty in this connection is to be a just and honest referee.

Guarantee Cures

It is unethical to guarantee a cure.

Annotations

Certificates or Diplomas, Continuing Education, Display of

1972 Report: Because the display of continuing education course certificates or diplomas might lead the public to infer that the veterinarian to whom they are issued is a specialist in the subject matter, the public display of such documents is in poor taste and should be discouraged.

Displays in Waiting Rooms

1954 Report: It is considered unprofessional for veterinarians to display leashes, collars, meat, foods, and other nonprofessional products in their offices, hospitals, and waiting rooms.

Drugs, Practitioner's Responsibility in the Choice of

1969 Report: After considering the propriety of a practitioner using a human-label drug in his practice, even though the drug as a veterinary-label product has been withdrawn from the market because of adverse side effects, the Council concluded that the practitioner of veterinary medicine, in common with practitioners in other branches of medicine, is fully responsible for his actions with respect to a patient from the time he accepts the case until it is re-
Ethical Use of Diplomate Status

1969 Report: The diplomate should use his qualifications and the recognition thereof in such a way as to strengthen his profession and improve service to the public. In general, it is considered proper for him to advise professional colleagues of his certification but not to advertise to the public. Some suggestions follow concerning the use of and announcement of the diplomate status.

In a curriculum vitae or résumé, in the appropriate place such as “membership in scientific and professional organizations,” the diplomate may be listed as “Member American College of Veterinary . . . .” In the section indicating educational and professional qualifications, he could also be listed as “Diplomate, American College of Veterinary . . . .”

On professional cards, it is permissible to list the specialty, using the term “Diplomate, American College of Veterinary . . . .” Abbreviations should not be used for they could be confused with academic or professional degree designations.

Although specialty status may be included in biographical data, reference to it should not be made in telephone directories or in the bylines and footnotes of manuscripts prepared for publication or other distribution.

In professional correspondence, it is permissible for a diplomate to indicate his specialty under his signature. For example, John Doe, D.V.M., Veterinary Pathologist.

Gene defects

1966 Report: Performance of surgical procedures to conceal or to correct genetic defects in animals to be shown, bred, or sold is unethical.

Guaranteed cures

1955 Report: A veterinarian should not procure, sanction, be associated with, or acquiesce in notices which commend his own or any veterinarian's skill, knowledge, services, or qualifications, or which deprecate those of others.

An honorable veterinarian will never be guilty either of boasting of cures, or of promising radical cures, or of self-praise in order to gather practice.

Policy Pertaining to Corporate Ownership and Management of Veterinary Practices

The following policy statement, adopted by the House of Delegates in 1970, has been included among the annotations to the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics at the request of the House of Delegates.

In recent years, veterinarians have organized corporations, associations, and similar legal entities in order to obtain tax benefits and related advantages which physicians and members of other professions now enjoy. The decisions concerning the legal form used in the particular situation naturally depend upon state laws, financial factors, and other considerations peculiar to individual veterinarians. Because this trend apparently will continue in the future, the AVMA suggests that its members be guided by the following statement of policy:

Veterinarians' participation with other persons in corporations and associations can be divided into two categories. First, professional organizations may be formed in order that their members may practice veterinary medicine. The AVMA believes that the public interest will be served best when decisions affecting the care and treatment of animal patients are made by veterinarians. Having obtained extensive professional education and training, only veterinarians are properly equipped to diagnose disorders and to analyze each patient's complete health requirements. Therefore, the AVMA recommends that private practices of veterinary medicine be governed by veterinarians rather than by nonprofessional individuals. Superior veterinary medical care is most likely to result when the controlling interests of professional corporations, associations, or partnerships are owned by veterinarians.

Second, veterinarians may join organizations created merely to own equipment or the physical assets of a veterinary hospital or to perform business functions. For example, veterinarians may lease a hospital or obtain accounting services from a nonprofessional organization. Since this kind of joint enterprise does not determine the professional treatment which animal patients receive, the public interest will not be jeopardized.

Since the preceding two types of joint veterinary organizations are sometimes combined, the AVMA recommends that veterinarians be particularly careful to distinguish between enterprises which merely supply ancillary services and organizations which attempt to influence veterinarians' professional responsibilities. So that all animal patients will secure the best possible medical care, veterinarians should retain full control over all professional corporations whose members practice veterinary medicine. Only in this way will the present high professional standards be maintained and will the welfare of animal patients remain the principal concern of veterinarians.

Some states have passed professional practice acts providing that only persons licensed to practice their profession in those states may incorporate and that they may not sell or transfer the stock in such corporations to nonlicensed persons. The Association views these provisions as desirable.
Professional Relationships with New Clients

1972 Report: Great potential for the development of poor client-veterinarian relationships occurs when a dissatisfied animal owner takes the initiative of going from one veterinarian to another without referral. The second veterinarian's careless or ill-considered comments could even result in a lawsuit against a colleague.

The following suggestions are offered for consideration by veterinarians in dealing with clients with whom they are not acquainted or for whom they have not previously rendered service:

Conduct yourself in word and action as if the patient had been referred to you by a colleague. Try to ascertain by careful questioning whether the client has consulted another veterinarian and if so his name, diagnosis, and treatment. It may be advisable to contact the previous veterinarian in order to ascertain his diagnosis and treatment before telling the client how you plan to handle the case.

Describe your diagnosis and intended treatment carefully so that the client will be generally satisfied with his professional contacts.

Consider the advisability of notifying the previous veterinarian(s) of your diagnosis and therapy.

Handle new clients, their sick animals, and the veterinarians they have consulted previously in a manner consistent with the Golden Rule. To criticize or disparage another veterinarian's service to a client is unethical. If your colleague's actions reflect professional incompetence or neglect or abuse of the patient, call it to his attention and, if appropriate, to the attention of officers or practice committees of the local or state veterinary associations or the proper regulatory agency.

You may refuse to accept a client or patient but do not do so solely on the basis that the client had previously contacted another veterinarian.

It should also be recognized that the first veterinarian to handle the case has an obligation to other veterinarians that the client may choose to consult about the same case. He should readily withdraw from the case, indicating the circumstances on his records, and should be willing to forward copies of his medical records to other veterinarians who request them.

Sale of Ethical Veterinary Products and Veterinary Prescription Drugs

1972 Report: Commercial firms that have a policy of sales to veterinarians only are known as “ethical” firms and their products as “ethical” products. Such a sales policy has no legal basis and therefore has no legal protection. However, many veterinarians prefer to use the so-called “ethical” products and believe that the sales policy should be respected by the profession.

The sale of veterinary prescription drugs is regulated by law which requires that licensed veterinarians issue prescriptions for such sales.

The Association has received complaints that product catalogs distributed to animal owners contain listings of both “ethical” products and prescription drugs.

The Council views it as unethical for a veterinarian to use his name or permit the use of his name in connection with the purchase of “ethical” products for resale by a commercial distributor to animal owners. The Council also views as unethical a veterinarian’s arranging with a commercial distributor for the mail order sale of prescription drugs directly to animal owners without examining the affected animals and making a diagnosis.

Secret Remedies

1964 Report: It is unethical and unprofessional for a veterinarian to promote, sell, prescribe, or use any product the ingredient formula of which has not been revealed to him.

Therapy, Determination of

1959 Report: Determination of therapy must not be relegated to secondary consideration with remuneration to the veterinarian being the primary interest. The Council is of the opinion that the veterinarian’s obligation to uphold the dignity and honor of his profession precludes his entering into an arrangement whereby, through commission or rebates, his judgment on choice of treatment would be influenced by considerations other than needs of the patient, welfare of the client, or safety of the public. This is a responsibility of personal conduct which each individual member must assume and discharge.
Section II

A veterinarian may choose whom he will serve. Once he has undertaken care of a patient he must not neglect it. In an emergency, however, he should render service to the best of his ability. He should not solicit clients.

Traditional Concepts

Advertising

The word “advertising” in relation to the veterinary medical profession must be taken in its broadest sense. It includes all those methods by which a practicing veterinarian is made known to the public, either by himself or by others without his objection, in a manner which can fairly be regarded as having for its purpose the obtaining of patients or the promotion in other ways of the veterinarian's individual professional advantage.

Objectionable advertising consists of:

a) Advertising personal superiority over one's colleagues.

b) Advertising secret remedies or exclusive methods.

c) Advertising fixed fees for given services.

d) Advertising as a corporation or partnership beyond that which would be ethical for either party.

e) Advertising case reports, allegedly unintentional.

f) Advertising hospital and office equipment and the special service rendered therewith.

g) Advertising the building or occupation of a new hospital as an unsolicited news item of the local press may be considered unavoidable and unobjectionable. Solicited and repeated publicity of this class is, however, frowned upon by the Association.

Directory Listings

Advertising in a city, commercial telephone, or any widely circulated directory is a violation of this code.

A member who permits his name to be listed in directories in bold-face type or who advertises his name or hospital or institution in any way differing from the standard style, type, or size used in the directory for the listing of professional groups (physicians, dentists, lawyers, nurses) is subject to the charge of unprofessional conduct.

It is also unethical for a veterinarian to allow his name to be printed in public directories as a specialist in the treatment of any disease or in the performance of any service within the scope of veterinary practice.

In principle, this section of the Code of Ethics is intended to improve the listing of names in such a way as to give all of them identical visual prominence.

Emergency Service

When called in an emergency as a substitute for a fellow practitioner in his absence, it is the veterinarian's duty to render the necessary service and then turn the patient over to his colleague upon his return.

In making emergency calls upon a patient already under treatment, it is unethical to institute radical changes in the treatment previously prescribed in such a way as to attract unusual attention.

Local Newspaper Listings

It is customary and advisable in certain communities to print advertisements of professional men in local newspapers, but, such advertisements should be reasonable in size and display. They should be limited to name, title, address, office hours, and telephone number.

Professional Signs

Display signs of reasonable size and dimensions on veterinary hospitals are not regarded as objectionable, provided they do not announce special services, such as bathing, plucking, clipping, and x-ray work, which characterize the ways of the charlatan.

Professional Stationery

The letterhead of a professional man should be modest, announcing only name, title, address, telephone number, and office hours.

In view of the turn veterinary practice has taken in recent years, a veterinarian may announce on his cards and letterheads that his practice is limited to treatment of diseases of small animals or poultry, provided that such cards or letterheads indicate that he is a member of the veterinary profession and thus distinguish him from groups of irregular practitioners who are not eligible to membership in the Association.

The mailing of letters or cards announcing a new location of office, hospital, or other place of business is permissible, but such occasions should not be used as an excuse for violating the code in other instances.
Annotations

Advertising in General

1957 Report: Advertising, as such, is not allowed in any form. A conservative display ad in the local paper may be used to announce the opening of a practice. It should contain the necessary information, and if the practice is limited, a statement to that effect is acceptable.

Telephone directory listings should contain only the necessary information. The terms “specialists” or “specializing” should never be used. Block ads or bold type are not acceptable.

Promiscuous mailing of announcements of any kind is forbidden. Newspaper announcements and telephone directory listings should be limited to the actual area served.

The letterhead of a professional man should be modest.

Display signs on an office or hospital should be conservative and in keeping with the surroundings so as to enhance the appearance. Avoid the impropriety of employing questionable methods to attract undue public attention.

Advertising, Nonprofessional

1970 Report: If a veterinarian offers services such as nutritional consultation, farm or ranch management services, boarding, grooming, etc., he may advertise such services if reference to his being a doctor of veterinary medicine does not appear in the advertisement, the listed phone number is not the same as his hospital or practice phone number, and no reference to his being a doctor of veterinary medicine is conveyed on bills for such nonveterinary services. A veterinarian should not use his degree to proclaim his abilities in nonveterinary areas.

Announcement Cards and Notices

1956 Report: The veterinarian may want to send out dignified announcement cards informing members of the community of his opening. These should be limited to the residents of the immediate vicinity and to neighboring veterinarians. Such announcements should be mailed in sealed envelopes with first-class postage. This same rule, first-class mail, should also be observed in the mailing of any reminders to clients regarding certain services, such as vaccinations.

1966 Report: In the opinion of the Judicial Council, it is permissible for a veterinary practitioner to mail notices to his clients to remind them of vaccinations or other follow-up services due. The notices should be sent in a sealed envelope, by first-class mail, and should not contain any material or statements that could be construed as advertising. At the time of a client’s visit to the veterinarian’s office, permission should be obtained for the mailing of the follow-up reminder, which should contain an introductory clause such as: “In accordance with your request, we are sending this reminder . . .”

Bank Charge Cards

1966 Report: Veterinarians participating in bank credit card plans should not display promotional materials, even to the extent of displaying a window decal, and should not permit their practices to be listed in a directory of participants. It is acceptable to display, within the office, a discreet notice of the veterinarian’s willingness to accept bank credit cards.

Calendars

1955 Report: The issuing of calendars on which the name of a veterinarian or that of his hospital appears, together with the location, telephone number, etc., constitutes advertising and is unethical.

Commissions, Rebates, or Kickbacks

1972 Report: It is unethical for a veterinarian to solicit or accept a commission, rebate, or kickback in connection with his recommendation of, or referral of a client to, purveyors of merchandise or services such as dog food, cremation or burial services, caskets, urns, insurance, breeding stock, and livestock supplies.

Emergency Service

1972 Report: Every practitioner has a moral and ethical responsibility to provide service when because of accidents or other emergencies involving animals it is necessary to save life or relieve suffering. Inasmuch as the veterinarian cannot always be available to provide this service, he has an obligation to join with his colleagues in the area to see that emergency services are provided consistent with the needs of the locality.

Fees for Services

1970 Report: In determining his fees for services rendered, the veterinarian may be expected to consider the nature of the condition, his time, the expense of other resources applicable to the case, and the client’s ability to pay.

It is unethical for a veterinarian to participate in fee splitting and rebating or to accept or pay a fee in connection with referrals.

Although it is permissible for a veterinary association to conduct fee surveys and to publish the results to its members, it is not permissible for a veterinary association to take follow-up action that would in effect coerce, pressure, or achieve agreement among veterinarians to conform to a fee schedule.

The Judicial Council has repeatedly expressed its concern about the setting of veterinary fees by such organizations as dog pounds, humane societies, pet adoption agencies, farm cooperatives, and organizers of prepaid animal health plans. When veterinarians agree to provide service gratis or at less than their regular fees, the quality of service must be maintained at the usual high professional level.
Floodlighting of Veterinary Hospitals

1950 Report: The Committee was requested to give an opinion concerning the floodlighting of veterinary offices and hospitals. We were told that in certain areas, especially where the request came from, that veterinarians are floodlighting their establishments so that they resemble a night club or some other place of entertainment. They leave them lit, in some cases, well into the night so as to attract attention and advertise. We do not approve this type of lighting for professional offices, hospitals, and veterinary properties.

1956 Report: Outside floodlighting and displays should be used with discretion. As long as the lighting helps to identify the building and to assist the clients to avoid accidents while coming in and out, it is in good taste; but if the lighting is in the nature of an advertising display, it is frowned upon.

Greeting Cards

1955 Report: The subject of greeting cards (such as Christmas, etc.) sent by veterinarians was given to the Committee for consideration. The Committee is of the opinion that the sending of greeting cards to friends and relatives is a proper custom, but that the promiscuous use of the mail for the purpose of indirectly advertising a professional practice behind the guise of a seasonal greeting card, whether it be Christmas, New Year’s, or any other holiday, would constitute a breach of the principles of veterinary ethics. If a doctor deems it proper to send a season’s greeting card to a client, then, in the opinion of the Committee, that card should be one fitting to the occasion, dignified and proper, and not one which could be construed as calling attention to a veterinary medical practice. Those submitted to the Committee for examination were not considered ethical.

1972 Report: The use of the mail for the purpose of indirectly advertising a professional practice behind the guise of a seasonal greeting card, whether it be Christmas, New Year’s, or any other holiday, would constitute a breach of the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics. If a doctor deems it proper to send a season’s greeting card to a client, then, in the opinion of the Committee, that card should be one fitting to the occasion, dignified and proper, and not one which could be construed as calling attention to a veterinary medical practice. Those submitted to the Committee for examination were not considered ethical.

Identification Tags

1958 Report: An opinion was requested as to whether it was considered ethical for a veterinarian to place an identification tag on the collar of his clients’ pets with the doctor’s name and address upon it, so that in the event the animal became lost, it could be returned to the owner through contact with the veterinarian. We advised that we did not approve the placing of such tags and would consider them a form of advertising that would be detrimental to the profession.

1960 Report: The use of pet identification tags bearing the name of a veterinarian or his hospital is unprofessional. However, the inclusion of the veterinarian’s name and address on rabies inoculation tags could be considered in the realm of public service and is therefore not highly objectionable.

Listing of Staff Assignments on Bulletin Boards

1968 Report: After thorough review of a presentation from the owner of a veterinary hospital requesting that the Council give an opinion as to the propriety of listing on a bulletin board in the reception room the names of veterinary staff members and their responsibilities and consideration of comments on this subject received from constituent associations, the AAHA, and the Advisory Board on Veterinary Specialties, the Council agreed that the listing of areas of competence of veterinarians on letterheads or on bulletin boards inside or outside the office would be inconsistent with the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics, unless in each case the veterinarian is board certified in the named specialty. However, it was agreed that no exception should be taken to the listing of names with degrees and with an indication that practice is limited to certain species of animals.

1969 Report: A veterinarian should not hold himself out in any way to be a specialist unless he is board certified in a named specialty.

Name of Veterinary Facility

1966 Report: After considering comments submitted by AVMA members, by the Council on Veterinary Service, by the Council on Education, and by the American Animal Hospital Association, the Judicial Council adopted the following definitions of terms applying to veterinary practice facilities:

A veterinary or animal medical center is defined as a facility in which consultative, clinical, and hospital services are rendered and in which a large staff of basic and applied veterinary scientists perform significant research and conduct advanced professional educational programs.

A veterinary or animal clinic is defined as a facility in which the practice conducted is essentially an out-patient type of practice.

A veterinary or animal hospital is defined as a facility in which the practice conducted includes the confinement as well as the treatment of patients.

[A facility that meets the foregoing definition of hospital may be named either hospital or clinic; however, if a facility meets the definition of a clinic but not hospital, it should be called a clinic.]

Name on Vehicle

1955 Report: It is considered unethical for a veterinarian to have his name and title or that of his hospital appearing in letters on the side or on any portion of any vehicle appearing before the public.

1972 Report: It is unprofessional for a veterinarian to have his name, title, degree designation, veterinary medical symbols, display characters of any...
kind, words such as "pet ambulance," or the name of his hospital or clinic on a motor vehicle.

However, in some states motor vehicle laws and regulations may require that owner identification be placed on commercial vehicles. In such states, the veterinary associations should attempt to obtain an exemption for vehicles used in veterinary practice. In the absence of such an exemption, the veterinarian should comply with the minimal requirements of the laws and regulations. For example, if the regulation specifies that name of owner, city, and state will be displayed in letters not smaller than 2 inches, then the veterinarian should not use larger letters nor should he use additional words, titles, abbreviations, symbols, or characters to indicate his professional status or activity and thus risk the charge that he is advertising.

Newspaper Listing
1958 Report: In regard to the insertion of a business card in a local newspaper, the Committee felt that this action should be limited to those areas where it is a common practice on the part of all allied professions, or in those areas without classified listings in the telephone directory. If a classified telephone directory listing is available, there can be little excuse for the need of supplementary listing in the newspaper and this should be discouraged.

It is further the opinion of this Committee that business card insertions in a local newspaper should be allowed for "beginning" practitioners, until such time as a new telephone directory shall be printed for that area. Such insertions should be limited to name, title, address, office hours, and telephone number. Business card insertions in any medium, either newspaper or directory, should be limited in size to that of the common calling card.

In addition, it is the feeling of this Committee that the practitioner entering an entirely new location has been unduly limited in making known his presence in the area. In the past, it has been customary to advise against more than one paid display ad for the announcing of the opening of a practice. It is believed logical to allow three to five display insertions of moderate size, one each on consecutive days or weeks, depending upon the publication routine of the paper being used.

Prizes or Trophies to Animal Shows
1954 Report: The Committee was asked to consider the problem of individual veterinarians or veterinary medical associations being solicited to donate prizes to animal shows. The Committee considers it ethical for individual veterinarians or veterinary organizations to make donations in the form of cups, plaques, cash, etc., in such shows provided the card attached to the donation bears nothing more than the name of the individual or organization. There should be no mention, announcement, or card in the program or booklet of the show publicizing the donation.

1955 Report: The offering of professional services by veterinarians (such as distemper inoculations, etc.) as prizes in animal shows constitutes an insidious form of advertising and is unethical.

1972 Report: Veterinarians should not permit the announcement, in programs or by cards, plaques, or similar means, that they have donated prizes, trophies, cups, or monies to animal shows. However, such donations may be made anonymously. They may also be made by veterinary associations and announced.

Products, Commercial, Naming of
1969 Report: It is inconsistent with the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics for a veterinarian to permit the use of his name combined with his professional designation (such as "Doctor," professional degree, or "veterinarian") in the name of a commercial firm, a commercial product, or in the promotion thereof. Such usage may mislead the public to think that services or products are superior. For the same reason it is also unethical for a veterinarian to permit the use of his likeness in connection with the promotion of a commercial product or service.

It is permissible for the veterinarian's name alone to be included in the name of a firm or product. Thus, the promotion and sale of "Smith's..." by the John Smith Drug Company should result in no valid objection on ethical grounds insofar as the name of the product or the company is concerned, whether or not Smith is a veterinarian.

Professional Stationery
1954 Report: The Committee has noted an increase in the use of professional envelopes and letterheads making use of cuts, mostly outlines of animals. Such stationery is considered unprofessional and unethical and is in violation of the Principles.

1972 Report: A consulting veterinarian or a veterinary practitioner who has working relationships with business establishments such as stock farms, ranches, feedlots, kennels, etc., should not permit his name with title or degree to be used on the stationery of such establishments. Such stationery would be used in the conduct of business over which the veterinarian would have little or no control and the firm would, in effect, be using the veterinarian's name to impress those with whom it has business dealings.

A veterinarian who serves one firm only, who has managerial responsibilities in that firm, and who conducts no private practice may permit his name and title or degree to appear on the firm's stationery.

Sales Promotion, Use of Veterinarian's Name in
1972 Report: It is unethical for a veterinarian to permit the use of his name by others for promotional purposes. Products and services should be promoted on their own merits and veterinarians should not permit the use of their names and reputations in connection with such promotion.

It is permissible for veterinarians to serve as consultants, as members of boards of advisers, or as members of boards of directors of commercial firms,
either on a gratis or compensated basis, but they should not permit the use of their names associated in any way with sales promotion. Although the purveyor of a product or service to veterinarians might regard it as simply a matter of good business to set up a board of veterinary advisors and to include in his promotional material the pictures and biographical sketches of those veterinarians, it is unethical for the veterinarian to permit the listing of his name and title among the members of boards of directors, advisors, or consultants on business letterheads or to permit the use of his name and title, photograph, or résumé in flyers, brochures, catalogs, and advertisements.

The veterinarian who engages in commerce as a corporate officer, in a technical or managerial capacity, or in his own behalf, may identify himself in correspondence and otherwise as a veterinarian. For example, the marketing manager or president of a firm may use business stationery on which his name and veterinary degree are either imprinted or typed.

Veterinarians who author or co-author books may permit the use of their names in the promotion of those publications inasmuch as their own work is being offered for sale. Veterinarians who serve actively on the editorial review boards of technical journals may be listed on the publication mastheads in accordance with long-established custom.

Signs

1956 Report: Hospital display signs should be of reasonable size, complimentary to the building and surroundings. One sign, located in such manner as to be readily observed by approaching clients, should be sufficient.

The American Veterinary Medical Association considers it to be a breach of professional ethics for a sign to use animal figures, animated or otherwise, to announce special services such as bathing, clipping, plucking, or x-ray work, as this characterizes the way of the charlatan. It further recommends that the sign be limited to the name of the veterinarian, the name of the hospital, address, telephone number, and hours; it further deems it objectionable for any practitioner to use a motor vehicle upon the sides of which display signs of any character have been placed, such as a pet ambulance. This constitutes direct advertising and invites criticism by fellow practitioners.

1958 Report: Certain strong local associations are beginning the task of instituting more uniformity in outdoor display signs. It must be recognized at once that complete uniformity is impossible and that this Committee has never been commissioned to set down hard and fast rules. However, general recommendations can be promulgated, which will be of assistance and lend a semblance of uniformity for those who wish to comply as ethically as possible. An attempt has been made to assist inquirers of associations by use of the following simple statement:

“Outdoor display signs should always be conservative in size, word content, and color. They should be so constructed and placed that they enhance the appearance of the facility and its surroundings. They should be considered fixtures for the sole purpose of identification and not for attraction. Special services should not be mentioned in any manner.”

1965 Report: The Council does not favor the placing of signs on or near streets or highways for the purpose of directing the public toward a veterinary facility. However, if, in the judgment of the local veterinary association, such a sign is placed primarily for the convenience of the public and not in an effort to solicit clients, it could be considered permissible. It should be in good taste and of professional character.

Telephone Directory Listings

1954 Report: It is unethical for a veterinarian to have more than one listing under any given heading in the classified section of a telephone directory. In the case of a hospital listing, it is considered proper for the names of the individual veterinarians on the staff to be listed separately, immediately before the name of the given hospital.

1954 Report: The Committee recommends that a local veterinary association be permitted to list the names of its members under the association’s name in the classified section of a telephone directory providing the listing of the local association contains its name only. There shall be no advertising of the Association’s motto or insignia. There shall be no double listing of veterinarians’ names who are members of the local association using such a listing. There shall be no bold type or outlining.

1956 Report: Early in the construction of the hospital, the manager of the telephone exchange serving the area should be consulted regarding phone service and a telephone listing in the classified section of the directory. Telephone books and classified directories are published about every six to nine months; therefore, it should be arranged to have a listing by the time the hospital is opened.

A word of caution should be voiced regarding proper listing of the hospital in the classified section. The Principles of Ethics of the American Veterinary Medical Association is strict regarding this. It is permissible to secure one listing and only under one heading either “Veterinarians,” “Pet Hospitals,” or “Animal Hospitals.” The listing, however, should be in standard body type and limited to the name, address, and telephone number of the hospital. Office hours may be given, and also a qualifying statement such as “Practice Limited to Small Animals” is acceptable, if such is the case.

Bold face listings, box advertisements, and any information about specialties offered are not acceptable.

1962 Report: The listing of a veterinarian in a telephone directory outside the jurisdiction of his local association should conform to local custom (as far as the local custom is compatible with the annotated Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics).

1962 Report: The Council recommends that telephone directory listings carry not more than two headings pertaining to veterinary practice. Under each heading, a veterinarian’s name should be listed not more than one time.
1963 Report: With respect to telephone directory listings, veterinarians in a city, county, metropolitan area, or other such local geographic district should act together and in concert, so that the public's search for veterinary service will be expedited without impairing the impression of professionalism. The following paragraphs are intended to clarify and expand previous opinions and annotations pertaining to telephone directory listings.

The veterinarians in a community served by a telephone directory should decide first of all whether to list themselves under only one heading ("Veterinarians") in the classified section of the telephone directory or whether to use two headings ("Veterinarians" and "Veterinary Hospitals" or "Veterinarians" and "Animal Hospitals"). Of the two choices, the latter seems preferable.

One heading: In the event that local option specifies one heading only ("Veterinarians"), the veterinarians' names and the hospital names will be listed alphabetically, and the names of veterinarians available at the hospital will be shown under each hospital name. Thus, the name of a veterinary practitioner in the community may not be listed more than twice in the classified section of the directory, if he wishes. Each listing may contain a phone number, address, office hours, and practice restriction, but no listing may be in bold-face type.

Two headings: When the utilization of two headings is chosen at local option, only the names of veterinarians are to appear under the heading "Veterinarians," along with address, telephone number, office hours and practice restrictions, such as "pet animals only." Under the heading "Animal Hospitals" or "Veterinary Hospitals," preferably the former, there should appear the alphabetical listing of hospital names. After each hospital name, there may be listed the names of the veterinarians on the staff, address, phone number, office hours, and practice restrictions, such as "small animals only."

Emergency service: In the classified section of the telephone directory, a local veterinary association may elect to list the number of its emergency service. So that distressed owners of animals will be able to find such a listing easily and quickly, bold-face or box treatment is permissible.

1966 Report: Ethical listings in more than one zone phone directory of a metropolitan area is permissible.

1968 Report: Veterinary associations should not insert in the telephone directory a listing under the heading "Dog and Cat Kennels" in order to call attention to the public that elsewhere in the directory is a listing of veterinarians who provide boarding facilities.

1969 Report: A telephone directory listing of a veterinarian's availability to make house calls is an offer to perform service rather than a statement of a practice restriction and it is therefore not acceptable.

1970 Report: Veterinarians may not advertise veterinary services, but ethical listings in telephone directories are considered to be in the public interest. Such listings may indicate practice restrictions (such as Practice Limited to Pet Animals, Practice Limited to Horses, Feedlot Consultant Practice Only, and House Calls Only) but shall not indicate services and equipment available (such as boarding, grooming, radiology, surgery, nutritional consultation, fertility testing, pet health insurance, and pregnancy examinations).

Welcome Wagon Advertising

1950 Report: Veterinarians in some states have been approached by civic-minded groups of people to advertise with them by placing "cards" or literature in the homes of newly arrived persons in the neighborhood. This type of advertising is sometimes called the "welcome wagon." We do not believe it professional or ethical for veterinarians to enter into any such contract. It is a form of advertising and has no place in veterinary medicine.
Section III

A veterinarian should not employ his professional knowledge and attainments nor dispose of his services under terms and conditions which tend to interfere with the free exercise of his judgment and skill or tend to cause a deterioration of the quality of veterinary service.

Traditional Concepts

Alliance with Unqualified Persons

No member shall willfully place his professional knowledge, attainments, or services at the disposal of any lay body, organization, group or individual by whatever name called, or however organized, for the purpose of encouraging unqualified groups and individuals to diagnose and prescribe for the ailments and diseases of animals. Such conduct is especially reprehensible when it is done to promote commercial interests and monetary gain. Such conduct is beneath the dignity of professional ethics and practice; it can be harmful to both the welfare of the animal-owning public and the veterinary profession; it violates principles of humane animal care; it may cause great economic loss and endanger public health and is, therefore, contrary to sound public policy.

Testimonials and Endorsements

Members of the Association shall not issue endorsements or testimonials pertaining to products, services, or equipment except to report the results of properly controlled experiments or clinical studies, such reports to be given publicity through a scientific journal or at a scientific meeting of a professional association.

No member or employee of the American Veterinary Medical Association shall use the name of the Association in connection with the promotion or advertising of any commercial product or commercial service, or in any way that would imply American Veterinary Medical Association endorsement of such a product or service without written permission from the Board of Governors or the Executive Board.

Annotations

Boarding Kennels and Pet Shops

1955 Report: The committee considered the problem of veterinarians establishing veterinary pharmacies and boarding kennels in conjunction with their veterinary practices. The following was voted as the opinion on that subject:

The committee considers it unethical and a violation of the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics for a veterinarian to establish and advertise a veterinary pharmacy or boarding kennel to be maintained for use by the general public in conjunction with a veterinary practice. It is also unethical to permit his name and title to be associated with such an establishment either directly or on the premises or apart from the established veterinary office or hospital. The committee considers it permissible for a veterinarian to have a financial interest in another business (i.e., boarding kennel), provided it is kept separate from his professional practice and in no way has his name and title advertised to the public through his interest.

1958 Report: Numerous complaints have come to the committee regarding the advertising of boarding kennels in direct association with an animal hospital. Some of these complaints have been in connection with the placing of ads in the boarding kennels listings in the telephone directory and some by direct display ads in the local press. Both situations have been handled in the same manner. The Committee deemed it inadvisable and unethical that such advertisements be continued where there is any question as to the propriety of such action; that is, “the practice of one individual shall not gain at the expense of another.”

The allying of any veterinarian with a private kennel for the purpose of lending his name either in fact or by inference, in order for the kennel to advertise “under veterinary supervision,” would perforce be considered unethical. Inasmuch as the veterinarian would not be in continual supervision, such a statement would border on fraud and misrepresentation.
1964 Report: Ethical standards do not permit signs for veterinary hospitals to include references to boarding and grooming. However, the Council has no jurisdiction over size and location of signs pertaining to boarding and grooming if these operations are carried on separately from the veterinary hospital.

Pet shops and pet supplies should be maintained entirely separate from veterinary hospitals. An adjoining but completely separate building would be acceptable.

Adoption procedures for pets are permissible provided they are not designed for promotional purposes.

If a veterinarian owns both a pet shop and a veterinary hospital, separate ledgers should be kept for bookkeeping purposes.

1966 Report: A commercial boarding kennel may be owned by a veterinarian but must not be operated under the veterinarian's name, and the telephone number must be separate from that used by the veterinarian in the conduct of his practice. Persons answering the boarding kennel telephone should not answer by giving the name of the veterinarian or his hospital.

Dispensing versus Merchandising

1955 Report: "Animal Health Programs," as sponsored by a certain pharmaceutical and biological company in the midwestern states, were discussed with members of the Executive Board and the Committee on Veterinary Supply Problems. The Committee on Ethics voted that these animal health programs, as arranged and sponsored by this commercial company, caused the veterinarian entering into the arrangements to be in violation of the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics, and, therefore, to be unethical. Although certain of these unethical procedures could be eliminated, making them perhaps more acceptable to the profession's principles of ethics, the committee recommended that they not be abandoned by any branch of organized veterinary medicine for, in the long run, they violate the spirit of ethical principles, even though they may not violate the principles in substance.

1958 Report: Dispensing versus merchandising has become a problem for the large animal practitioner in recent years. The situation is acute in some areas and less so in others, depending upon the quality and quantity of veterinary service available. The trend toward merchandising of medical products to the laity, and by the laity, seems to be on the increase. If such is the case, organized action to combat these inroads is overdue.

Dispensing has been interpreted to mean providing veterinary products for lay use, only on the supposition that the veterinarian has had previous knowledge of the particular case or general conditions which apply to the particular farm or kennel. In the veterinarian's office it becomes the distributing of medicine by virtue of verbal information presented by the owner, as an adjunct to the knowledge gained previously by the practitioner. This is in contrast to the written prescription as a service by the pharmacist.

Merchandising on the other hand, is simply a matter of buying and selling medicine for profit, without the due consideration for the patient receiving such products. It leads to radical display advertising, false claims, and a loss of trust in the veterinarian, whose sincerity should never be in a questionable position. In this instance, mercenary tendencies may become paramount to the actual welfare of the patient and its owner.

From the standpoint of ethics, merchandising by the veterinary profession cannot be tolerated.

In like manner, promiscuous dispensing is untenable, for it will lead to the same mercenary tendencies and the same disregard for the patient. It is expedient that organized veterinary medicine take cognizance of the two foregoing concepts, implementing as rapidly as possible a program to combat the inroads of unprofessional schemes. The answer does not lie in more publicity from the higher echelon, but it does lie in the presentation of facts and information directly to the client by way of the local veterinarian's office.

Free Examination of Adopted Pets

1968 Report: With respect to providing free examination of pets offered for adoption by humane societies, the Council reiterated its previous recommendations that the members of local veterinary societies proceed cautiously in matters of this kind, endeavor to obtain the cooperation of all veterinarians in the community, and avoid having the names of participating veterinarians appear on the examination certificate or on a separate listing distributed to the public. The Council cautioned (1) that veterinarians who perform service for less than their usual fees should not render less than their usual quality of service and (2) that the distribution of participants' names is akin to advertising.

1969 Report: With respect to the listing of participating veterinarians' names on the reverse side of examination certificates, the Council noted that this also is a potential basis for misunderstanding and concluded that such listings are as objectionable as the listing of names of veterinarians in bank charge card directories, neighborhood newspaper directories, and the like.

Issuance of Spay-Castration Certificates by Pet Adoption Agencies

1967 Report: Programs promoted by pet adoption agencies sometimes provide for the spaying or castration of pets at reduced fees by veterinarians listed as participants in the plan. Although the Council does not object to all veterinary practitioners in a community agreeing to participate in such plans at their usual fees and without the listing of participants, the Council views such plans as being in conflict with the Principles when:

a) they require that the veterinarians render services for less than the usual fees; and

b) they distribute a list of participating veterinarians.
The Council believes that the veterinarian who performs service for less than his usual fee should be sure to render his usual quality of service. The Council also questions the propriety of placing before the public a listing of participating veterinarians, for it is akin to advertising and gives participating veterinarians an advantage over those who choose not to participate.

**Pet Cemeteries and Pet Crematoria, Veterinary Ownership-Operation of**

1972 Report: The ethical aspects of ownership-operation of pet cemeteries or crematoria by veterinarians should not be significantly different from the veterinarian's involvement in other non-veterinary business activities such as pet shops, boarding kennels, and feed mills. Ideally, the enterprise should be a business entity completely separated from the veterinary practice, with the telephone number, the telephone directory listing, the name of the enterprise, and the mailing address indicating no connection with a veterinary hospital, and with separate business records.

The veterinarian who does not own or operate a cemetery or crematorium as a separate business but does provide such service on request should in no way announce or advertise the service.

The veterinarian who renders a disposal, burial, or cremation service should take special care to avoid the impression that veterinarians are caretakers of the quick and the dead. There is potential for unfavorable public relations and questions of ethics when the healer is in a position to profit from the disposition of deceased patients.

Inasmuch as the pet-owning public views burial and cremation in terms of human reference, these services, when rendered for pet animals, should be fully explained so that the differences, if any, will be understood and the client will not be deceived. For example, if the burial of a client's pet does not include a roughbox or casket, a stone marker, title to the plot of land, and perpetual care, the absence of those details should be clearly stated, preferably in writing.

**Product Endorsement**

1950 Report: There has been correspondence with a state committee regarding a veterinarian endorsing, indirectly, a proprietary dog food by permitting his name and picture to appear in conjunction with this certain dog food and stating that he feeds it to his show animals. We believe this to be unethical and have requested that the state committee take the necessary steps to see that this type of endorsement by a member of our profession does not recur.

**Redemption Coupons**

1970 Report: After reviewing a plan under which a dog food manufacturer provided veterinarians with dog food redemption coupons to distribute to their clients, the Council concluded that the veterinarians were put in the position of participating in the sales promotion of a commercial product and that the plan was therefore unacceptable.

**Vaccination Clinics**

1972 Report: *Definition*.—The term vaccination clinics applies to either privately or publicly supported activities in which veterinarians are engaged in mass immunization of pet animals. Usually, animals are brought in to points of assembly by their owners or caretakers in response to a notification that immunization services will be available. Characteristically, these clinics do not provide the opportunity for the participating veterinarians to (1) conduct a physical examination of the individual animals to be immunized, (2) obtain a history of past immunization or prior diseases, or (3) advise individual owners on follow-up immunization and health care.

*Scientific and Technical Considerations*.—Whereas rabies immunization for the purpose of public health protection can be satisfactorily achieved in a vaccination clinic, the effectiveness of vaccination clinics for canine distemper and hepatitis immunization for the individual patient is hampered by biological variables. Examination of individual animals and acquisition of histories are essential steps in assuring proper immunization against these latter diseases.

*Distribution of Printed Materials*.—Some degree of advertising is inherent in the distribution, at a vaccination clinic, of professional cards and similar materials bearing the veterinarian's name or the name of his hospital. Such a practice is therefore inconsistent with the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics.

**Pet Health Insurance**

1972 Report: Application forms, pamphlets, and other promotional material pertaining to pet health insurance may be kept on hand for the purpose of responding to requests from clients, but such materials should not be on display in a veterinary facility.
Section IV

A veterinarian should strive continually to improve veterinary knowledge and skill, making available to his colleagues the benefit of his professional attainments and seeking, through consultation, assistance of others when it appears that the quality of veterinary service may be enhanced thereby.

Traditional Concepts

Consultations

When a fellow practitioner or laboratory worker or officially employed veterinarian is called into consultation by the attending veterinarian, findings and discussions with the client shall be handled in such a manner as to avoid criticism of the attending veterinarian by his client.

Consultations should be conducted in such a spirit of professional cooperation between consultant and attendant veterinarian as to assure the client's confidence in veterinary medicine.

Consultants shall not revisit the patient or client or communicate directly with the client without the knowledge of the attendant veterinarian.

Laboratory workers in the role of consultants shall deport themselves in the same manner as fellow practitioners whether they are private, commercial, or public functionaries.

In no instance and under no circumstances shall a consultant take charge of a case or problem without the consent of all concerned, particularly when the client's financial obligations to the attendant veterinarian have not been adjusted.

Annotations

Consultations

1956 Report: When in the course of his authorized official duty it is necessary for a veterinarian to render service in the field of another veterinarian, it will be considered unethical to offer free or compensated service or advice other than that which comes strictly within the scope of his official duty. Time alone will correct this evil to a great extent, due in part to his own wider understanding and superior training and to the ever-increasing ability of the local practitioner. There is a continuing increase in degree of specialization within the profession, and it pertains to all species. When it is deemed prudent and necessary, it is entirely within the realm of acceptable ethics to make referrals of selected problems to those persons within the profession who have by additional training and experience equipped themselves to render a wider range of professional service. While this may tend in certain instances to have the effect of bypassing the practitioner most conveniently located, it still is of prime importance that the end result be justified for the profession as a whole rather than for individuals. In this way, the best interests of all are served, rather than permitting the livestock owner to gravitate into the hands of untrained commercial promoters.
Section V

The veterinary profession should safeguard the public and itself against veterinarians deficient in moral character or professional competence. Veterinarians should observe all laws, uphold the honor and dignity of the profession, and accept its self-imposed discipline.

Traditional Concepts

Members shall comply with the common law governing their obligations to their clients and shall obey, without obvious fault, the official public relations and laws governing their acts.

The issuing of false certificates of health on official documents is punishable by summary dismissal from the membership, and careless compliance with official regulations that the veterinarian is entrusted to enforce is deemed a violation of professional honesty.

Annotations

Records

1957 Report: When a veterinarian leaves the salaried employment of another, he is considered not to have patients in that area. The records of the employer are his sole property.
Section VI

The responsibilities of the veterinary profession extend not only to the patient but also to society. The health of the community as well as the patient deserves his interest and participation in nonprofessional activities and organizations.

Traditional Concepts

Loyalty

The veterinarian should first of all be a good citizen and a leader in movements to advance community welfare. He should commit no act that will reflect unfavorably upon the worthiness of his profession.

Press Relations

Members are encouraged to write articles for the local press announcing the presence of contagious diseases and their seasonal prevention or treatment, provided the motive is a bona fide attempt to salvage the livestock of clients, rather than personal gain. Wisely worded articles of this type add to the dignity and usefulness of the veterinary profession, whereas paid advertisements of the same subject are manifestly detrimental and, therefore, are violations of the Principles.

Annotations

1955 Report: Communications to the lay public were considered by the committee and discussed at great length. The following recommendations of the committee were unanimous.

All opinions on veterinary subjects which are communicated to the laity by any medium, whether it be a public meeting, the press, radio, or television, should be presented as from some organized and recognized veterinary medical society or association and not as from an individual veterinarian. Such opinions should represent what is the generally accepted opinion of the veterinary profession and should be presented as such. The presentation should not be for self aggrandizement nor act as a medium of advertising the individual practice of the veterinarian making the presentation.

Veterinarians taking charge of columns in which answers to correspondence on veterinary questions are printed in newspapers and magazines for the public are apt to cause serious ethical repercussions. Such columns should adhere strictly to making known facts which are the expression of veterinary science generally and not of the author of the column. Authors (writers) should avoid controversial subjects. These topics should be discussed in veterinary medical conventions and society meetings and made public only when organized veterinary medicine has decided upon a just solution.

Veterinarians representing colleges of veterinary medicine and agricultural colleges (extension service) should abide by these basic principles. However, they may report research work being done by the college they represent provided the lay audience they address is informed that the report is of research progress and not a fully accepted “fact” from the veterinary profession. Veterinarians employed by the government should adhere to this basic type of presentation also. Professional fees and treatments must not be presented to lay audiences either by printed matter or verbally. Preventive health programs may be discussed.

1955 Report: The Committee recommends that all books written by members of the AVMA for publication to the laity, dealing with the subject of veterinary medicine, be submitted to an appropriate committee appointed by the AVMA for consideration and approval before they are released.

A book written by a veterinarian in California (now serving in the Veterinary Corps) was considered by the committee. The committee unanimously considered the book, as written and promoted, to be unethical on the basis that the information provided in this book to the laity was medical knowledge far beyond the scope of lay treatment.

1956 Report: The printing and dissemination of pamphlets, folders, and brochures which are given or mailed to clients should emanate from associations rather than individuals.

1961 Report: The Council agreed that the veterinarian who participates in programs of radio, television, or other news media is not required to announce to the public that he has the approval of his local or constituent association.

1964 Report: After reviewing examples of what appeared to be abuses in the handling of reprints of scientific articles by industrial firms, the Council recommends that the firm be required to obtain the publisher’s and author’s consent prior to distribution of reprints, and that the publisher in granting permission for a firm to make or distribute reprints should stipulate that the reprint is to remain unchanged, entirely separate, and without any overprint or promotional attachments.
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