



Penbode Pet Vets.

Referrals and Second Opinions

Staff are familiar with referring cases internally and externally when required, and this option is made available to the client and recorded in the clinical records. Where referral of an equine case is considered then the clinician should discuss this with the lead veterinary surgeon at the relevant equine branch.

Introduction

The veterinary surgeon should make a referral appropriate to the case. When considering what is appropriate the veterinary surgeon should consider all relevant factors. These might include the ability and experience of the referral veterinary surgeon, the location of the service, the urgency of treatment and the circumstances of the owner, including the availability and any limitations of insurance. Veterinary surgeons should be prepared to justify their referral decisions and should record the reasons for their decisions.

In cases where the client does not accept the veterinary surgeon's advice regarding referral and would instead prefer referral to a colleague, organisation or institution of which the referring veterinary surgeon has insufficient knowledge to determine appropriateness, they may need to advise their client accordingly. In some such cases, the veterinary surgeon may consider that they cannot be party to such a referral relationship.

The referring veterinary surgeon has a responsibility to ensure that the client is made aware of the level of expertise of appropriate and reasonably available referral veterinary surgeons, for example, whether they are veterinary specialists or advanced practitioners. They must not describe a referral veterinary surgeon as a specialist, or as an advanced practitioner, unless they are on the respective list.

Both the referring veterinary surgeon and the referral veterinary surgeon have a responsibility to ensure that the client has an understanding of the likely cost arising from the referral.

Incentives

Veterinary surgeons' and veterinary nurses' first consideration is animal health and welfare. Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses considering offering or accepting any form of incentive, whether in a referral setting or otherwise, should consider whether the existence of the incentive gives rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest. An incentive should not distract a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse from their professional responsibilities towards animals and clients and, in some cases, should be declined, for example where a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse would not otherwise enter into that arrangement.

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Referring a case

The initial contact should be made by the referring veterinary surgeon, and the referral veterinary surgeon should be asked to arrange the appointment.

The referring veterinary surgeon should provide the referral veterinary surgeon with the case history and any relevant laboratory results, radiographs, scans etc. Any further information that may be requested should be supplied promptly.

The referral veterinary surgeon should discuss the case with the client including the likely costs of the referral work and promptly report back on the case to the primary veterinary surgeon. When reporting back to the referring veterinary surgeon, there should be transparency as to who dealt with the case.

Second opinions

Veterinary surgeons may follow similar procedures for second opinions and should ensure that any differences of opinion between the veterinary surgeons are discussed and explained constructively.