



May 4, 2016

VPOA Executive Committee
c/o Dr. Ernst Marsig
Animal Hospital of Unionville
4568 Highway 7
Unionville, ON L3R 1M5

Dear Dr. Marsig,

Once again, OVMA would like to thank the VPOA Executive Committee for taking the time to meet and discuss issues of common concern. OVMA is always interested in receiving input from members, and commends the VPOA on its efforts to further the veterinary profession.

The OVMA Board of Directors considered the list of issues that VPOA raised at its most recent meeting on April 27th. I've summarized the outcome of that discussion below.

I. Standards of Care

OVMA has always believed that Ontario veterinarians have a duty to provide clients and patients with quality care, and that there is a need for appropriate mechanisms to ensure that veterinarians provide care to an acceptable minimum standard. However, it has not historically been OVMA's mandate to set standards regarding how veterinary medicine is practiced in the province. That role has been left to CVO, which has a legislative mandate from the Province of Ontario (as well as the legal authority) to do so. In the Board's opinion, that is where the responsibility should remain. The Board was therefore not in favour of OVMA embarking on a process to set its own standards of care for Ontario practitioners.

This does not mean that OVMA is abdicating responsibility in this area. Far from it. OVMA routinely consults with CVO on issues around standards of care, and reviews and provides input on every policy change being considered by the College. When the situation warrants it, OVMA has also lobbied CVO to set or raise standards in certain areas (e.g. post-surgical pain management in companion animals).

If there are specific areas where VPOA feels that CVO needs to either establish minimum standards or raise the current standards, please let OVMA know. The association would be happy to review those requested changes and lend its support for the desired changes, where supported by current scientific research.

Further, studies have shown that Canadian veterinary practices sell far more pet food (on average) than their American counterparts, and still have an opportunity to significantly increase diet sales by:

- Incorporating nutrition as part of the conversation during each annual physical appointment;
- Educating clients about the benefits and relative cost-effectiveness of veterinary diets;
- More effectively marketing diets in the practice by displaying prices, proper placement of the bags, etc.; and
- Making use of tools such as a practice webstore to improve the convenience of purchasing pet food from the practice.

At the end of the day, the OVMA Board decided not to ask pet food manufacturers to put more resources into advertising veterinary diets to the public. However, the Board did agree with VPOA's comments in its April 7th letter regarding the need to increase the public's understanding of the merits in obtaining food from their veterinarian. As such, OVMA will be asking pet food manufacturers to put resources into helping OVMA better educate veterinary teams about how to more effectively market their diets to clients.

The other issues raised by VPOA on April 1st were largely dealt with at the time, but OVMA is happy to discuss them further, if VPOA wishes.

Should you have any questions about the decisions reached by the OVMA Board, please do not hesitate to contact me. OVMA looks forward to continuing dialogue with the VPOA for the betterment of Ontario's veterinary profession.

Sincerely,



Christine Coghlan, DVM
President