



## Veterinary Practice Owners Association of Ontario

*The Voice Of The Veterinarian Owned Practice...For A Stronger Profession And Excellent Care.*

### **2016 Survey Results: No Time for Complacency...**

In 2016 the Veterinary Practice Owners Association (VPOA) sent a survey to 921 veterinary practice owners in Ontario and received 146 responses. This survey allowed the respondents to freely comment on the topics and provide valuable insights. The below is a summary of key findings from the survey. To learn more visit [www.vpoa.ca](http://www.vpoa.ca).

#### **Veterinary Associates and Internationally Trained Colleagues:**

The large majority (97%) of veterinarians are discontent with the practical training new graduates have and feel that the amount of mentoring exceeds their expected salary level in the first 6 months. Practice owners complained about the lack of associates' confidence in their clinical skills, which leads to 87% of practice owners complaining that their **associates refer too many cases to specialists**. While this fact is understandable, most practice owners feel that lack of confidence of their associates and an unwillingness to work inconvenient shifts are a problem for their practice. It is especially difficult to find associates who are willing to work outside the urban centres.

**Because of the above the large majority (80.9%) of responding practice owners find it difficult to hire new grads.**

***This Message must be presented to the Educators of our young colleagues.***

The fear about the CVO dominates also our young colleagues and 88.1% are exceedingly worried about discipline complaints, which lead to excessive referrals and profuse file writing. ***This begs the question as to how much of our practical work is being done as a cover against potential litigation.***

There are also concerns with internationally trained colleagues who sometimes don't have the skills or knowledge employers expect, however cultural differences that affect attitude, bedside manner and language skills were cited frequently. The majority (79.6%) of owners are hesitant to hire foreign veterinary colleagues.

#### **The College Of Veterinarians Of Ontario (CVO):**

There is quite some confusion and misunderstandings about the role of the CVO.

About half of all respondents feel that CVO is having reasonable standards protecting the public, while the other half feels the CVO standards don't protect the public well enough. ***However almost 70% of respondents would like CVO to define more precisely the set of standards that all veterinarians need to follow and the same amount of respondents are afraid that they are being held accountable if they don't make the "best recommendations".***

There is also a large confusion about how CVO enforces the standards. This leads to a widespread fear of the CVO. We received comments like:

***"It seems to me that this is the only profession that is guilty until we prove innocence."***

*“Being held accountable if don't make the best recommendations. If I don't do the absolute BEST and offer ALL THE BEST including referral (for nearly everything even a cystotomy), and IF SOMETHING HAPPENS and it ends up in the CVO's lap ... the charge will be: Did not offer best care, did not offer referral.”*

*“It would be beneficial if the CVO set a standard regarding the procedures recommended for elective surgeries - castration and ovariohysterectomy including pre -anesthetic blood tests, intraoperative fluid therapy and pain management.”*

Some respondents commented that CVO is only taking action after a complaint has been launched, while practices continue practicing substandard medicine. As long as nobody complains they get away with it. Spot checks for accreditation were encouraged.

*“They nail people to the wall for fairly minor things but the really bad practitioners get a slap on the wrist over and over.”*

78% of responding veterinarians feel that CVO policy is not in touch with the realities of daily practice.

**The problem most respondents have clearly with the CVO is lack of clearly defined standards and consistent, predictable enforcement, which leads to fear and uncertainties in the daily practice.**

#### **Competition from Low Cost Providers and Shelters:**

80.6% of veterinarians have seen a **significant decline in spays and neuters** because of the low cost providers and **93.2% of veterinarians feel it is unrealistic to do a spay for \$150 and meet all the CVO safety requirements.** At these prices, something isn't done right. Either there are expenses spared by reducing the quality of medicine, or there is other income that covers the real cost. 88.3% of respondents agree that records from low cost clinics are insufficient and indicate substandard practices. Most veterinarians feel that discounted services should be made available only to those in need and shelters should not be allowed to treat animals that they don't own.

92.4% of veterinarians indicate that the public still sees rabies clinics as a substitute for regular veterinary care and should not be conducted by individual practices, but only at the invitation of a local health board. 88.9% believe rabies clinics should be conducted for people in need and not for bargain hunters.

Still about 78% of respondents consider the actions of low cost providers **causing harm to the image of the profession AND to the health and welfare of animals.**

#### **Competition from Non-Veterinary Entities:**

The overwhelming majority (92%) of veterinarians believe that distribution of veterinary care, drugs, and supplies through the internet and through pet stores pose a risk on the food supply and animal health and about two thirds of veterinarians believe they should give their business to suppliers who advertise for them.

There is also quite a discontent among veterinarians who know about lay people and entities practicing without a license, however follow through by CVO does not seem to give results. *“I have twice reported people that are clearly practicing without a license, and I've never heard anything back from the CVO.”*

#### **Public Reputation of Veterinarians:**

100% of all responding veterinarians feel that ALL veterinary organizations nationwide should join forces and educate the public about the value of the veterinary profession. Most also fear that the public does not understand how little veterinarians earn in comparison to other health professions.

## About Us:

The VPOA is a group of engaged, concerned veterinary practice owners advocating for a sustainable environment to provide veterinary care for the safety, health, and welfare of animals.

As both practitioners and business owners, we are uniquely positioned to understand our profession's needs in serving our patients, the public, our staff, and our communities.

The VPOA mission is to represent private practices and by working with the public, our regulators, and our suppliers, ensure the fairness of the delivery of veterinary care in Ontario. Our profession is facing rapid changes in several areas. It is up to us to ensure these changes are beneficial to our patients and do not affect their quality of life!

**We need your continued support to grow stronger and work for the interests of all of us through VPOA.**

Based on the results of the survey, we have met with Hills, OVC and OVMA. We meet with the CVO on June 29<sup>th</sup> and with other stakeholders shortly after. Your membership includes regular updates on what we are doing for our profession to establish generally accepted guidelines and standards for veterinarians, protect the public and increase understanding of the realities of veterinary practice, among others.

**We have a new face and a strong momentum that has grown significantly over the last two years. This would have not been possible without contributions made by colleagues just like yourself.**

## Join Us:

Please visit our revitalized website at [www.vpoa.ca](http://www.vpoa.ca) to bring yourself up to date on the mission, vision, functions and activities of the VPOA. We hope you'll be pleased with the direction we are taking and the progress we are making.

While on our website, please take a moment to complete the "Membership Application Form" under the Join us tab and select one of the two easy payment options. Membership fees are \$169.50, which includes HST. Find more Member Benefits at <http://vpoa.ca/benefits-of-membership>

For more information, E-Mail [info@vpoa.ca](mailto:info@vpoa.ca)

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I thank you for your continued support as we move forward into 2016, and, if you would like to assist on one of our Committees, please let us know.

**VPOA**



Should you not wish to receive further updates from the VPOA, please reply to this message with "unsubscribe" in the subject line and you will be removed from our list.

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