

North Carolina Veterinary Medical Board

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NCVMB Position Statement “Veterinary Specialist Definition”



The NCVMB considers that "Specialist" indicates a veterinarian or registered veterinary technician who has been awarded and has maintained the status of:

- Diplomate of a specialty organization recognized by the American Board of Veterinary Specialties of the American Veterinary Medical Association or
- Specialist by the National Association of Veterinary Technicians or
- Any other organization approved by the NCVMB

Adopted May 2022

What Are the Position Statements of the Board?

The North Carolina Veterinary Medical Board's ("NCVMB") position statements are interpretive statements that attempt to define or explain the meaning of laws or rules that govern the practice of Veterinarians and Registered Veterinary Technicians in North Carolina. They also are intended to set forth criteria or guidelines used by the Board's staff in investigations and in the prosecution or settlement of cases.

When considering the Board's position statements, the following four points should be kept in mind.

1. In the position statements, the NCVMB attempts to articulate some of the standards it believes applicable to the veterinary medical profession it regulates. However, a position statement should not be seen as the promulgation of a new standard as of the date of issuance or amendment.
2. The position statements are not intended to be comprehensive or to set out exhaustively every standard that might apply in every circumstance. Therefore, the absence of a position statement or a position statement's silence on certain matters should not be construed as the lack of an enforceable standard.
3. The existence of a position statement should not necessarily be taken as an indication of the NCVMB's enforcement priorities.
4. A lack of disciplinary actions to enforce a particular standard mentioned in a position statement should not be taken as an abandonment of the principles set forth therein.

The NCVMB will continue to decide each case before it on all the facts and circumstances presented during a disciplinary hearing whether or not the issues have been the subject of a position statement. The NCVMB intends that the position statements will reflect the NCVMB's philosophy on certain subjects and give licensees some guidance for avoiding NCVMB scrutiny. The principles of professionalism and performance expressed in the position statements apply to all persons licensed and/or registered by the NCVMB to render veterinary medical care at any level.

Xylazine

Xylazine, a non-opioid veterinary tranquilizer not approved for human use, has been linked to an increasing number of overdose deaths nationwide in the evolving drug addiction and overdose crisis. Studies show people exposed to xylazine often knowingly or unknowingly used it in combination with other drugs, particularly illicit fentanyl.

While the full national scope of overdose deaths involving xylazine is unknown, research shows overdose deaths linked to xylazine have spread westward across the United States, with the largest impact in the Northeast. From 2015 to 2020, the percentage of all drug overdose deaths involving xylazine increased from 2% to 26% in Pennsylvania. Xylazine was involved in 19% of all drug overdose deaths in Maryland in 2021 and 10% in Connecticut in 2020.

Research has shown xylazine is often added to illicit opioids, including fentanyl, and people report using xylazine-containing fentanyl to lengthen its euphoric effects. Most overdose deaths linked to both xylazine and fentanyl also involved additional substances, including cocaine, heroin, benzodiazepines, alcohol, gabapentin, methadone, and prescription opioids.

Also known as “tranq,” xylazine is a central nervous system depressant that can cause drowsiness and amnesia and slow breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure to dangerously low levels. Taking opioids in combination with xylazine and other central nervous system depressants—like alcohol or benzodiazepines—increases the risk of life-threatening overdose. Learn more about the effects of taking more than one type of drug (polysubstance use) from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In the event of a suspected xylazine overdose, experts recommend giving the opioid overdose reversal medication naloxone because xylazine is frequently combined with opioids. However, because xylazine is not an opioid, naloxone does not address the impact of xylazine on breathing. Because of this, experts are concerned that a growing prevalence of xylazine in the illicit opioid supply may render naloxone less effective for some overdoses. Emergency medical services should always be alerted to a suspected overdose. Learn more about stopping overdose from the CDC.

Repeated xylazine use is also associated with skin ulcers, abscesses, and related complications. People report using xylazine or xylazine-containing drugs by injecting, snorting, swallowing, or inhaling.

NIDA-supported research is underway to continue to elucidate emerging drug use patterns and changes to the illicit drug supply across the United States, including the use of xylazine, synthetic opioids, and changes in patterns of polydrug use.





Assessment of Hazardous Drug Handling in North Carolina

My name is Gillian Miner, and I am a Clinical Veterinary Pharmacy Resident at the NC State Veterinary Hospital. I am conducting voluntary research to understand current hazardous drug handling practices within veterinary clinics in North Carolina, determine veterinarians' familiarity with USP General Chapter <800> Hazardous Drugs – Handling in Healthcare Settings (USP <800>), and examine the impact of pharmacist-provided training on veterinarians' knowledge of USP <800>. Information collected from the survey will be used to determine areas in which pharmacists can help veterinary practices be in compliance with state and local regulations as well as improve their handling of hazardous drugs to protect staff, clients, and patients.

Eligible participants must be 18 years of age or older, reside in the United States, and be a licensed and practicing veterinarian in the state of North Carolina.

This Qualtrics survey includes questions regarding demographics, a pre-video assessment, a short video describing important aspects of hazardous drug handling, a post-video assessment, and questions about current hazardous drug handling practices. Estimated time to complete the entire survey is about 20 minutes. Your responses are anonymous; no identifying information will be collected or associated with your responses.

Please click the link below to read the full consent statement and begin the survey:

https://ncsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5jXl0ZI7PoY7mwS

Be Careful...Use of Heating Pads

The NCVMB Board has heard several complaints of thermal burns to an animal obtained during surgery or post-operatively. Most of the burns occur due to lack of monitoring or the use of heating pads not designed for use in sedate animals. Common heat sources used in clinics are water-filled exam gloves, "rice socks," IV fluid bags, reusable discs, "hard" electric heating pads, heating blankets, water or air blankets, and surgery tables. These burns are significant and can lead to extended medical care. When used appropriately, heat therapy is beneficial to animals. The Board is not against the use of all heating devices. There are several medical devices on the market that safely maintain an animal's body temperature. The best way to avoid complications starts with a basic understanding by all team members of the different heat sources, their intended use, and their risks.



Verifying Veterinary Licenses (It is important for employers to verify the license/registration of new hires)

The only official verification of a Veterinary License or Veterinary Technician

Registration can be found on the NCVMB's website. You can access this information via this link:

<https://portal.ncvmb.org/verification/search.aspx>

A printed license is not considered official since it is possible to alter the date. It is important that all Veterinary facilities verify the licenses of any new hire prior to the start of employment.



Legible Medical Records

The medical record contains valuable information about a patient's medical history and clinical communications. Such information supports the ongoing and efficient care for the patient by the veterinarian.

In addition to its clinical significance, the medical record is also a legal document that can serve as evidence of the care provided. A record appropriately created at the time of presentation/treatment and properly maintained contributes greatly to the successful defense of a complaint to the NCVMB or a civil lawsuit.

