

North Carolina Veterinary Medical Board

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*Regulatory
Bulletin*

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President's Letter: Social Media & Professionalism

We all know the influence that reviews on social media can have on our businesses as well as our professional reputations; it is easy to appreciate the reviews when they are glowing. But what happens when the reviews are less than stellar and delve into personal attacks? It is indeed unfortunate that if owners have an experience that is less than their perceived expectations that they don't communicate directly with the hospital but rather voice concerns and opinions in a public forum. If, and when, this occurs, how should one respond? Maintaining professionalism is key.

The Board has seen an increase in grievances/complaints where a client makes a bad review or remark on a google review or on social media. The veterinarian or hospital administration engages the client in the public forum and starts a "twitter war". And what should have been handled in an open, frank and private conversation, becomes public and hostile and escalates to a complaint being filed with the Board. The medicine in the case may not have been "bad" or "wrong" and many times there is no fault found with the specifics of the medical complaint. But the ethics and lack of professionalism is found with fault and there has been discipline for this.

Additionally, we have seen where the public feud (the "twitter war") is also used in civil cases against the veterinarian. Remember, if you wouldn't say it directly to someone's face, don't say it on social media including responses back to reviews; additionally, once it is put on the internet, there is no getting it back.

Investigators, whether it is through a government licensing agency or a civil legal battle or a reporter, look and judge these comments.

One is certainly in their right to defend their reputations. But it is critical to maintain your professional behavior while doing so. Someone makes a bad review:

– Do say things like "we appreciate your business and ask that you call the office to discuss"; "we are sorry this occurred and want to discuss with you so we can make this right" "we have reached out to try and discuss this with you, please call us so we can determine next steps"

-Don't say things like "if you hadn't been yelling in the reception area at everyone, your cat wouldn't have been scared and it is your fault your cat died" "you were wrong to keep the dog in a carrier while waiting and you caused your dog harm" "you were a b*@*th, never come back". Whether these things are true or not, airing dirty laundry in public never turns out well.

I leave you with Webster's definition of professionalism – the conduct, aims or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person. Ethics and professional demeanor DO matter. Please think before you "knee jerk" a response to a bad review or posting.... remember, once it is posted, there is no longer a delete button.



New Southeastern Veterinary Inspector named:

Dr. Marjorie McFetridge



Controlled Substances Reporting System (CSRS) Utilization Project

The NCVMB is working with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Controlled Substances Reporting System (CSRS) Utilization Project to aid veterinarians in ensuring that they are in compliance with the STOP Act. The Board is working with DHHS to develop reports for the veterinary community that will assist in continuing efforts and adherence to strategies to address the state's opioid crisis. The CSRS Utilization Team is working to identify gaps in understanding and technology needed bridge the differences between human and animal care for this purpose, thus making the database more effective for all members of the medical profession.

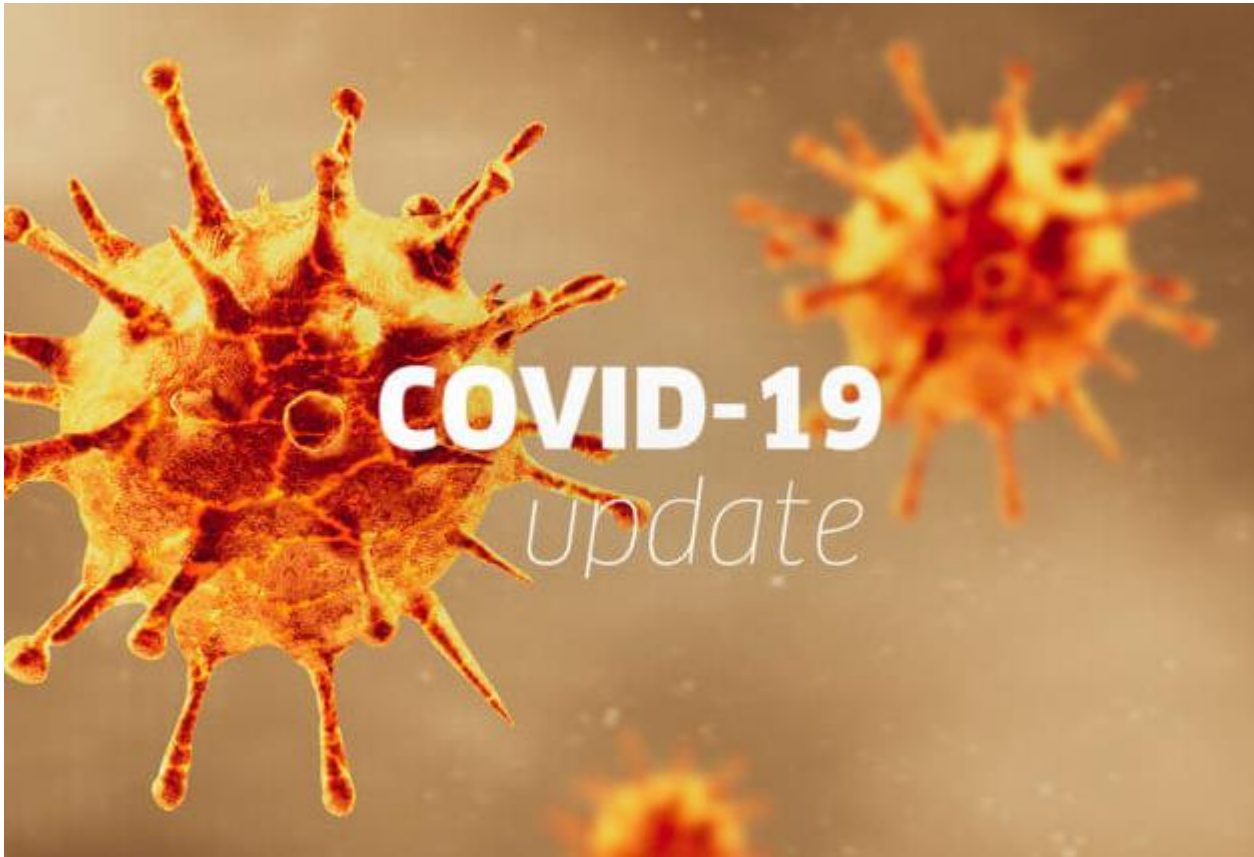
Veterinarians and staff members who find the CSRS confusing will be able to receive training that counts toward the fulfilling the annual opioids CE requirement, and they will be able to receive one to one technical assistance along with the opportunity to find self-help materials for their office. For any immediate questions or concerns you can notify the CSRS Utilization team at CSRS.Utilization@dhhs.nc.gov.

Renewal Reminder!!!!

If you have not yet renewed your license/registration or PC/PLLC that is scheduled to expire 12/31/2021, please renew it as soon as possible. If you have any questions do not hesitate to call our office at 919-854-5601. You may also email Janice@ncvmb.org for licensing questions or Keith@ncvmb.org for corporate questions.



<https://www.facebook.com/NCVetMedicalBoard>



Announcement for the 2022 Continuing Education Requirement for the 2023 Renewal-

In response to the on-going COVID situation, the NCVMB has suspended the requirement that only 10 hours of CE may be obtained via online learning. Therefore, for the years **2022 (2021 Renewal)** & **2023 (2022 Renewal)** Veterinarians and Registered Veterinary Technicians may obtain their CE completely online/virtually (both interactive and non-interactive) if necessary, to complete their requirement. It is important to remember that you are still required to complete 2 CE hours of opioid training each renewal

Verifying Veterinary Licenses

The only official verification of a Veterinary License or Veterinary Technician Registration is 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.





NCVMB Response to ElleVet's Letter Regarding CBDs

It has come to my attention that ElleVet has circulated a document to licensed North Carolina veterinarians entitled "Legal Landscape of Hemp in North Carolina 2021," copy enclosed. In that document which you signed on behalf of ElleVet, you suggest that the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Board has taken an affirmative position regarding the legality of certain CBD products. Your suggestion is misleading, and the ElleVet document omits important context provided by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. To be clear, the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Board has never taken a position on the legality or illegality of any specific CBD products in North Carolina as ElleVet suggests. Rather, as a regulatory body, the Board expects its membership to follow all applicable state and federal laws. Accordingly, ElleVet should not make representations regarding the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Board's position on any CBD or ElleVet product.

To support ElleVet's position, you cite the March 2019 North Carolina Veterinary Medical Board Regulatory Bulletin, which contains a release from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture regarding CBDs. Notably, the update from the Department of Agriculture in the Regulatory Bulletin was meant to provide insight into how the North Carolina Department of Agriculture viewed *both* human and animal CBD products at the time it was published in 2019. While your letter cites one sentence from the release which may or may not apply to animal products, it does not reference the following passages:

- "Under federal Food and Drug Administration laws, CBD is considered a drug," said Joe Reardon, NCDA&CS assistant commissioner of consumer protection. "North Carolina state laws mirror federal laws. This means that CBD cannot legally be added to any human food or animal feed that is for sale."
- "The product can also not make health claims, including statements that the product may prevent, treat or cure any disease. Failure to comply could result in embargo or seizure of products."
- "We are taking an educate before regulate stance with industry," Reardon said. "We know they may not be aware of the state laws regarding the addition of a drug to a food product. However, we reserve the right to be more assertive, as other states have been, if we need to be in the future. Our main concern is consumer health and safety with any product that falls under our regulatory authority."

In contrast to the single passage cited by the ElleVet document, the passages cited above provide critical context from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture on this issue. Additionally, while ElleVet's document notes that "ElleVet products are animal supplements that are legal in North Carolina and federally," it also contains a disclaimer that, "This information is not intended to take the place of legal advice nor should it be considered legal advice or as creating an attorney client relationship. ElleVet shall not be held responsible for any agency's interpretation, application, or enforcement of the information presented herein."

Given the legal assertions set forth in ElleVet's document combined with the lengthy disclaimer contained therein, it would be prudent for veterinarians in North Carolina to seek legal advice before considering the use of any CBD or ElleVet product. Similarly, veterinarians should direct questions about the regulation of CBD to the Department of Agriculture's Food and Drug Protection Division.

Very truly yours,
Matthew W. Skidmore
Attorney for the Board