



Council Policy¹ on Requirements of a Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship for Bee Medicine

Published October 2018

Preamble

Bee medicine is expected to be an in-demand area of veterinary practice when the federal changes to antimicrobial access, aiming for greater stewardship of medically-important antimicrobials, come into effect on December 1, 2018. However, the very nature of beekeeping, and the unique needs of the patients and the industry, will make the necessary establishment of a legitimate Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR) – by its standard definition – impractical and possibly even unnecessary. With this reality, and with an interest to define the requirements of a VCPR as it pertains to bee medicine, in mind, the following policy has been developed.

Policy

Antimicrobial stewardship expectations require that, for a veterinarian to issue a prescription for a medically-important antimicrobial, there must be a legitimate VCPR with the beekeeper and the respective bee colony; and the veterinarian must establish evidence-based medical need for the prescription. The general requirements for a VCPR have been established in the CVBC *Professional Practice Standard: Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationships*. With regards to the practice of bee medicine, the satisfaction of requirement #2 of the Standard (“sufficient knowledge of the animal(s) on which to base the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of the medical condition of the animal(s)”) does not require that the veterinarian examine the animal(s) directly nor make medically-appropriate and timely visits to the premises. Instead, this requirement may be satisfied by achieving both of the following:

1. Developing a relationship with the producer (the beekeeper) that includes the documentation of:
 - Beekeeper’s name
 - Address and location of production sites
 - Confirmation of the registration by the Chief Veterinarian of BC of the beekeeper and each of the beekeeper’s apiaries, which includes recording:
 - The producer’s registration number, and
 - The unique numbers identifying each registered apiary
 - Number of apiaries, and number of colonies or hives
 - Annual production
 - Reasonableness of access to production units by the veterinarian (in case veterinarian determines that a site visit is appropriate or necessary)

¹ Council approved this policy on September 28, 2018. It is available on the CVBC website (www.cvbc.ca) under Resources > Legislation, Standards & Policies.

- History of health and production management practices of the operation, including established protocols in the event of occurrence of a disease requiring an antimicrobial
 - Evidence of live consultation with the producer (either by office visit, production site visit, real-time video communication, or by telephone call)
2. Acquiring sufficient knowledge of the patient(s) on which to base assessment, diagnosis and treatment decisions based on evidence-based establishment of medical need; this may include some or all of the following information:
- Records of colony health
 - Previous disease history
 - Treatment history for all diseases
 - Documentation of site visits by provincial apiculturists/inspectors, including any reports and recommendations made
 - Laboratory reports from all submitted samples, confirming presence of disease/spores
 - Culture results regarding resistance to antimicrobials
 - Results of antibiotic residue testing

Additionally, it is expected that any registrant who undertakes to engage in the practice of bee medicine will:

- Ensure access to resources regarding the industry and bee health management
- Engage in Continuing Education regarding the species
- Access and review disease surveillance data relevant to their region, the province, and across Canada
- Be knowledgeable about provincial and federal legislation as it relates to bee keeping and the production of honey

The other components of a VCPR (as stated in the PPS: VCPR) remain un-modified:

- The veterinarian must assume the responsibility for making clinical assessments and treatment recommendations,
- The client must agree to follow the veterinarian's recommendations and prescriptions, and
- The veterinarian must be available, or make alternate arrangements, for follow-up evaluation, particularly in the event of adverse reactions or treatment failure.

It must also be understood by all parties that this policy in no way precludes the veterinarian from requesting to visit to an apiary prior to prescribing, if the veterinarian determines that circumstances warrant it.

Accreditation: a registrant wishing to practice bee medicine may do so from any form of accredited facility (Fixed vs. Mobile, Food Animal vs. Companion Animal, etc.)

Adapted from the CVMA's "Veterinary Oversight of Antimicrobial Use – A Pan-Canadian Framework of Professional Standards for Veterinarians. Subsection: Providing Veterinary Oversight of Antimicrobial Treatment of Agricultural Bee Populations" and the College of Veterinarians of Ontario's "Information Sheet – Apiculture and Bee Medicine"