

**WHAT I HAVE LEARNED IN MY FIRST YEAR
ON THE EXAMINING BOARD
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I am honored to serve on this board and appreciate the opportunity to do so. I would like to dispell some of the mystery of the board for those who are not directly involved.

The examining board is group of eight volunteers who serve two terms of four years each, and includes: five veterinarians, a certified veterinary technician and two public members. This group of individuals is dedicated, hardworking and committed to serving on this board. There is a great support staff that includes the executive director, an administrative assistant, and a part-time investigator. Additionally, the Board has access to legal counsel through an attorney assigned by the Department of Justice.

The staff takes care of license applications, renewals, and is available daily to answer questions from veterinarians, technicians, and the public. They also accept complaints.

The board meets about five times per year to discuss complaints from clients, employees and veterinarians. The investigator prepares the cases, and presents the collected documents and medical records for us to review ahead of time. At the meetings we review the documents, and give our input on the case. If we are concerned that there is a potential violation of the Veterinary Practice Act, we may ask the licensee to come in to be interviewed at the next meeting. This gives them the chance to answer our questions and concerns.

After that, we discuss the case again to evaluate any violations of the Veterinary Practice Act. We have strict guidelines and laws that we must follow, and we seek the attorney's advice if discipline is being considered. All cases and all discussions in these executive sessions are confidential. Final outcomes that involve discipline become part of the public record.

I have participated in the removal of some veterinarians from practice for valid reasons. Violations and monetary fines were applied to others. The majority of cases in my observations do not result in fines or violations. From my perspective this is a very ethical group of people that makes every effort to do the right thing.

I do recognize that it can be a stressful event for some veterinarians to come before the board and give testimony. I would like to reassure my colleagues that we are your peers and do understand what you are experiencing. Interviews play a vital role in helping the Board understand the veterinarian's treatment decisions.

We focus on our goals to protect the public, our patients, and maintain the minimum level of standards for our profession as described in the Veterinary Practice Act. We are a diverse group that has respect for each individual's contribution. We work well together and I have enjoyed our interactions while learning many new things about people, practice, and veterinary regulations.

After seeing this side of veterinary practice, I continue to be impressed by our profession. I think that at least 95 percent of the veterinarians and technicians in Oregon are dedicated professionals who practice quality medicine and are kind, caring individuals. I consistently see veterinarians who keep good records, practice quality medicine and surgery and are most often far exceeding the minimum standards of the Veterinary Practice Act.

Serving on this board has definitely motivated me to make some changes in my own practice. One of the biggest is better record keeping. If it is not recorded in the medical record, then as far as the board is concerned, it did not happen. For many complaints, we determine that the medical practice was acceptable, but the poor medical records can result in discipline. I now write up my medical records as if every one was going to be reviewed by the examining board. I have seen how important it is to document phone calls, client conversations, treatment and diagnostic options offered and declined, times, all drugs and dosages, discharge instructions, and that all-important physical examination. If in doubt, I write it down, or photograph it. I add notes from clients, including e-mails, to the files.

Some things that I have observed this year:

- *It is the Veterinary Practice Act that guides us, but it is not always well understood by veterinarians. Have you read it lately? Ever? It is available on the OVMEB web page, www.oregon.gov/ovmeh.*
- *Even if you work for or volunteer at a non-profit group, it is still important to create complete medical records.*
- *Poor client communications generate complaints.*
- *It is important to keep accurate and current log books of controlled substances. Employee theft does happen.*
- *Veterinarians can help protect animals and our profession by reporting substandard care by other veterinarians.*
- *Veterinarians are mandatory reporters of animal abuse and neglect. The failure to do so can result in a fine up to \$ 1,000. It is also just the right thing to do.*
- *Clients want to talk with the doctor in person. Continually communicating exclusively through support staff does not always meet their needs and can give the impression that the client is not important.*
- *Did I mention how important it is to keep good medical records, and keep them current?*
- *Be sure licenses are current for you and your staff, and post them in your practice.*
- *Keep current on medication education.*
- *There are many more observations, but I will keep the list short.*

I would like to encourage any individual with an interest in serving on this board to explore it further. It has been a very rewarding, interesting and educational first year for me. Don't hesitate to contact the office if you have questions.

One final note: Keep good medical records!!!!