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**Policy Guideline -- Policy No. 20-01**

**From: Board of Registration of Veterinary Medicine**

**Re: Board Policy Guidelines: Telemedicine COVID19 State of Emergency**

**Date: March 25, 2020**

The Board of Registration of Veterinary Medicine (“the Board”) voted today to adopt the following Policy Guideline. The Policy Guideline does not have the full force and effect of law, as would a statute or a regulation, however, the Board uses policy guidelines as a way to clarify issues related to the practice of veterinary medicine.

During the limited time period while the Governor’s March 10, 2020 declared state of emergency regarding COVID-19 is in effect, the Board of Registration of Veterinary Medicine (“the Board”) encourages and will permit the use of Telemedicine.

Using telemedicine can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 because it allows veterinary patients to be appropriately triaged without jeopardizing the health of veterinary patients, patient owners, and veterinarians and their staff.

In order to safely practice telemedicine, a [Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship](#) (VCPR) must be established. See 256 CMR 2.01. A VCPR generally exists when:

- (a) The Veterinarian has assumed the responsibility for making clinical judgments regarding the health of the patient and the client has agreed to follow the Veterinarian's instructions;
- (b) The Veterinarian has **sufficient knowledge** of the patient to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition of the patient; and
- (c) The Veterinarian is readily available for follow-up evaluation or has arranged for the following: veterinary emergency coverage and continuing care and treatment.

In depth clarification can be found [here](#).

Veterinarians are reminded that they must conform to currently accepted professional and scientific standards in the profession of veterinary medicine, including but not limited to AVMA Principles. See 256 CMR 7.01(1). The AVMA is also encouraging telemedicine to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and provides guidance here. <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/telehealth-telemedicine-veterinary-practice>



The board also reminds veterinarians that *In the event of an emergency situation a veterinarian who does not have a veterinarian-client patient relationship may dispense a prescription or drug for the immediate treatment of the patient when necessary to save life or relieve suffering provided that the quantity prescribed and dispensed is limited to the amount needed for the immediate treatment of the patient during the emergency period. See 256 CMR 5.02 (3).*