



**Testimony of the CVMA Before the Environment Committee  
Raised Senate Bill 918 AAC The Duties of Veterinarians When Prescribing Prescription  
Medications**

February 25, 2013

Representative Gentile, Senator Meyer, Members of the Environment Committee:

We represent the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association, which includes over 95% of Connecticut licensed veterinarians in Connecticut. We oppose Senate Bill 918, An Act Concerning The Duties of Veterinarians When Prescribing Prescription Medications. This proposal is redundant and will not improve the communication between veterinary client and veterinarian. We license veterinarians specifically to ensure they are competent and that they have requisite professional judgment.

Existing Connecticut law governing the practice of veterinary medicine provides a standard for the professional conduct of veterinarians, which includes implied guidance for, and consequences of, inadequate veterinarian - client communication. The Connecticut Department of Public Health, through its Board of Veterinary Medicine and its investigatory and disciplinary processes, already provides for a method with which the public may make complaints about the quality of veterinary care and with which errant veterinarians may be required to remediate or receive discipline.

Connecticut General Statute 20-202 requires that veterinarians maintain themselves professionally competent and skillful. In recent years, a requirement for regular continuing education was added, initiated by the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association itself. We recognize and acknowledge that our members must maintain and enhance their skills throughout their careers, for the benefit of the public and our animal patients. We are not a profession seeking to minimize our responsibilities to our patients or misinform our clients, quite the contrary.

The DPH's oversight process already takes into account all forms of veterinary treatment, including medication recommendations, and puts the onus of defending one's professional conduct and clinical judgment squarely on the licensed veterinarian. The responsibility to perform at an appropriate standard of care remains as a check on any casual or careless professional behavior and serves to reinforce the ordinary exercise of conscience in the licensee. This includes prescribing or recommending medications.

Further, the American Veterinary Medical Association's Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics requires that we first consider the needs of the patient, that we abide by the Golden Rule, that we be honest and fair and obey the law. These Principles also require that we inform our client of the expected results, risks and costs of a proposed treatment regimen.

Finally, the Veterinarian's Oath reminds us we must use our professional skills conscientiously, with dignity, and in keeping with the American Veterinary Medical Association's Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics. Our professional motto, *Primum Non Nocere*, "first do no harm", further highlights our responsibility to both our patients and clients.

Inherent in each of these aspects of oversight is that clear and open communication with our clients, the consumers of veterinary services, is essential. Clear communication within the context of the client - animal - veterinarian relationship is required to build good client relationships, which are how success in veterinary practice is defined. A failure to communicate then, especially as to the merit or hazard of a given course of action, is inherently understood to be a negative influence on the client - animal - veterinarian relationship and our ability to maintain it. Clients who feel inadequately informed are quick to notice and quicker still to move on to a veterinarian with better communication skills. Thus the maintenance of the client - animal patient - veterinarian relationship requires effective, complete and honest communication.

Thus, Senate Bill 918, while seemingly well intentioned, is redundant and unlikely to improve client - veterinarian communication. The consequences and penalties for the licensee exist, and are effective whenever imposed. We urge you to reject SB 918.

Thank you.

Eva Ceranowicz DVM, Chair Government Relations Committee  
Chris Gargamelli DVM, President  
Arnold L. Goldman DVM, AVMA Delegate  
Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association