

Department of Health
Office of Health Professions and Facilities
Veterinary Board of Governors

Interpretive or Policy Statement

Revised – 10/18/11

<i>Title:</i>	Licensed Veterinary Technicians - Independent Practice	<i>Number:</i> 14-02
<i>References:</i>	RCW 18.92.060(6); RCW 18.92.125; WAC 246-935-010; WAC 246-935-040; and WAC 246-935-050	
<i>Contact:</i>	Loralei Walker, Program Manager	
<i>Phone:</i>	360.236.4947	
<i>Email:</i>	loralei.walker@doh.wa.gov	
<i>Effective Date:</i>	December 15, 2015	
<i>Supercedes:</i>	N/A	
<i>Approved By:</i>	 Chair, Veterinary Board of Governors	

Conclusion statement

Licensed veterinary technicians are not authorized to practice independently. Washington state laws and rules require that licensed veterinary technicians must always be under the appropriate level of supervision and control of a licensed veterinarian who first examines the animal patient and then delegates the particular animal health care task.

Background and Analysis

Background:

The following laws and rules govern the practice of a veterinary technician. They state, in part:

RCW 18.92.060(6): The practice of a veterinary technician is limited to the performance of services which are authorized by the board.

RCW 18.92.125: A veterinarian retains professional and personal responsibility for any act which constitutes the practice of veterinary medicine as defined in chapter 18.92 RCW when performed by a veterinary technician or veterinary medication clerk in his or her employ.

WAC 246-935-010 Definitions.

(3) "Direct supervision" means the veterinary supervisor is on the premises, is quickly and easily available and the animal patient has been examined by a veterinarian at such times as acceptable veterinary medical practice requires, consistent with the particular delegated animal health care task.

(5) "Immediate supervision" means the supervisor is in audible and visual range of the animal patient and the person treating the patient.

(6) "Indirect supervision" means the supervisor is not on the premises, but has given either written or oral instructions for treatment of the animal patient and the animal patient has been examined by a veterinarian at such times as acceptable veterinary medical practice requires, consistent with the particular delegated animal health care task and the animal patient is not anesthetized.

WAC 246-935-040(1)(b): A veterinarian must not delegate: (a) to any licensed veterinary technician the performance of any animal health care services not authorized by WAC 246-935-040 or 246-935-050.

WAC 246-935-040(2)(c)(d): The supervising veterinarian shall: . . . (c) Use the level of supervision required for a specific task; and (d) make all decision relating to the diagnosis, treatment, management, and future disposition of an animal patient.

WAC 246-935-050 Animal health care tasks.

No individual, other than a licensed veterinary technician, may advertise or offer her/his services in a manner calculated to lead others to believe that she/he is a trained or licensed veterinary technician.

(1) Licensed veterinary technicians and unregistered assistants are prohibited from performing the following activities:

(a) Surgery except as outlined below;

(b) Diagnosis and prognosis;

(c) Prescribing drugs, medication or appliances;

(d) Initiation of treatment without prior instruction by a veterinarian except as outlined under emergency animal care.

Analysis:

Although not explicitly stated, the Board of Veterinary Governors (board) interprets these laws and rules to mean that licensed veterinary technicians are not authorized to practice independently.

The board does not authorize veterinary technicians to practice independently because a licensed veterinary technician can only provide animal health care tasks, as delegated by and under the supervision and control of a licensed veterinarian. Supervision and control means

that the veterinarian must first examine the animal, issue instruction regarding treatment to be provided, provide the appropriate level of supervision, be available as needed, and retain ultimate legal responsibility for the care provided under delegation.

The board interprets the laws governing veterinary medicine, surgery, and dentistry to require veterinary technicians to practice only when under the employ of a veterinary practice, registered animal control agency, or humane society, or when otherwise exempt under RCW 18.92.060.

Conclusion

Licensed veterinary technicians are not authorized to practice independently. Washington state laws and rules require that licensed veterinary technicians must always be under the appropriate level of supervision and control of a licensed veterinarian who first examines the animal patient and then delegates the particular animal health care task.