

Veterinary Law & Ethics

Veterinary Law & Ethics is a one credit, 15-hour course with over 300 pages of handouts that provides an overview of many of the legal and ethical subjects that apply to the veterinary profession. It uses real world examples from the everyday practice of veterinary medicine to illuminate the subject matter and drive home its learning objectives. Students will experience a variety of instructional methods including: required background reading, lecture presentations, case presentations, classroom discussions, and professionally produced videos. This course is organized into seven units, ideally, to be taken in sequential order. The specific components and approximate viewing times for each unit are outlined below.

Learning Objectives for the Course

Upon completing this course students will be able to:

- Identify the elements required for good moral, ethical, and legal decision making
- Explain the basics of animal law and locate resources to obtain more information about laws that are pertinent to the practice of veterinary medicine
- Tactfully discuss a variety of legal and ethical issues with staff, colleagues and clients
- Summarize the role of contract law in the practice of veterinary medicine
- Appropriately use veterinary drugs in practice and identify the available resources to confirm proper administration of FDA and DEA controlled drugs
- Identify the elements required to prove professional negligence
- Explain the importance of creating a high-quality medical record that meets state board requirements

Unit 1: Moral, Ethical and Legal Decision Making

Required Reading
Video Lecture
Graded Test

Unit Objectives

- Explain the factors involved in moral, ethical and legal decision making.
- Outline the importance that "ethics rounds" play when making choices that will reduce staff disgruntlement and, instead, grow one's leadership skills and stature.
- Define the differences between ethical principles and legal requirements.
- Find resources available to assist in making these decisions.

1.2 hrs

Unit 2: Animal Law

Required Reading
Video Lecture
Professional Video
Graded Test

- Define "pet," "owner" and "guardian" and be able to articulate the debates associated with each term.
- Differentiate between economic and non-economic damages for pet loss.
- Clarify the importance of having a knowledge of state and local laws.
- Evaluate the implications and application of dangerous dog and animal cruelty laws.

4 hrs

Unit 3: Applied Ethics – Relations with Colleagues

Required Reading
Video Lecture
Case Example
Graded Test

- Develop a course of action to take when confronted with potentially negligent veterinary care rendered by colleagues.
- Utilize reference materials to develop scripts for approaching colleagues with difficult, potentially adversarial, medical and legal issues.
- Find and use the AVMA's *Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics*.

1.2 hrs

Unit 4: Contract Law

Required Reading
Video Lecture
Graded Test

- Outline the elements required to create enforceable contracts.
- Describe the role "medical care plans" play as this terminology replaces "estimates."
- Outline remedies for breaches of contracts.
- Explain the "law of unjust enrichment" and its application to patient care.

1.2 hrs

Unit 5: The Legal Use of Veterinary Drugs

Required Reading
Video Lecture
Graded Test

- Identify resources to explain FDA, USDA, EPA, DEA and state laws and regulations regarding drug use.
- Summarize FDA rules regarding the compounding of medications and risks associated with their use.
- Describe the rules for extra-label drug use in food vs. companion animals.
- Articulate the legal requirements for a valid V-C-P-R in veterinary drug use.

1.5 hrs

Unit 6: The Law of Professional Negligence

Required Reading
Video Lecture
Professional Video
Graded Test

- Articulate the veterinarian's role in preventing zoonotic diseases and liability for not doing so.
- Recognize the most common causes of client complaints and how to resolve them.
- Identify the four elements of a cause of action for negligence.
- Explain negligence law's "duty of care" element.
- Describe the role that "standards of care" play in proving negligence cases.
- Articulate the difficulties proving "proximate causation."
- Recognize how damages are determined and how this impacts settlements vs. trials.

3.5 hrs

Unit 7: Medical Records

Required Reading
Video Lecture
Graded Test

- List the information required to fulfill state board regulations for medical records.
- Articulate the business, medical, legal and public relations value of good records.
- Demonstrate innovative strategies for management of patient records.
- Discuss the ownership, retention and confidentiality requirements for records.
- Describe what SHOULD vs. should NOT be entered in medical records.

2.5 hrs

Additional Faculty Resources

Teaching Guide

Access to Vet ICE Content Experts