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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- VETERINARY PRACTICE

Introduced By: Representatives J. Brien, Serpa, Lima, Baginski, and Noret

Date Introduced: February 26, 2025

Referred To: House Corporations

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 5-25-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 5-25 entitled "Veterinary  
2 Practice" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **5-25-2. Definitions.**

4 As used in this chapter:

5 (1) "Animal" means any animal other than humans and includes, by way of illustration,  
6 not limitation, fowl, birds, fish, livestock, and reptiles, wild or domestic, living or dead.

7 (2) "Department" means the Rhode Island department of health.

8 (3) "Director" means the director of the Rhode Island department of health.

9 (4) "Division" means the division of professional regulation within the department of  
10 health established in chapter 26 of this title.

11 (5) "Veterinarian" means a person who ~~practices~~ [is licensed to practice](#) veterinary medicine  
12 [in the State of Rhode Island](#).

13 (6) "Veterinarian/client/patient relationship" means a relationship where all of the  
14 following conditions have been met:

15 (i) The veterinarian has assumed the responsibility for making medical judgments  
16 regarding the health of the animal or animals and the need for medical treatment, and the client has  
17 agreed to follow the instructions of the veterinarian;

18 (ii) The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal or animals to initiate at least a  
19 general or preliminary (e.g. tentative) diagnosis of the medical condition of the animal or animals.

1 This means that the veterinarian has recently seen and is personally acquainted with the keeping  
2 and care of the animal or animals, and/or by medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises  
3 where the animal or animals are kept, or obtained current knowledge of the animal through  
4 electronic means, including via audio-only telephone or a video-based communication medium,  
5 subject to the limitations and requirements of § 5-25-18;

6 (iii) The veterinarian is readily available for follow-up in cases of adverse reactions or  
7 failure of the regimen of therapy; and

8 (iv) The veterinarian maintains records that document patient visits, diagnosis, treatment,  
9 and other relevant information.

10 (7) "Veterinary dentistry" means that part of veterinary science that deals with the  
11 prevention and treatment of diseases, developmental conditions, and injuries of the teeth, gums,  
12 and oral cavity in animals.

13 SECTION 2. Chapter 5-25 of the General Laws entitled "Veterinary Practice" is hereby  
14 amended by adding thereto the following section:

15 **5-25-18. Veterinary telemedicine client patient relationship.**

16 (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, regulation or rule to the contrary, a  
17 veterinarian may establish a client-patient relationship in Rhode Island through electronic means,  
18 subject to the limitations and requirements set forth in subsection (b) of this section.

19 (b) Before establishing a veterinarian client-patient relationship through electronic means,  
20 a veterinarian shall:

21 (1) Be licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the State of Rhode Island pursuant to this  
22 chapter;

23 (2) Establish a veterinarian client-patient relationship in person;

24 (3) Obtain from the client verbal consent to establish the veterinarian client-patient  
25 relationship through electronic means, including an acknowledgement that the same standards of  
26 care under state law and regulations apply to telehealth and in-person visits; and

27 (4) Maintain such documentation for at least one year.

28 (c) A veterinarian shall make a good faith effort to determine whether care service should  
29 be provided through telemedicine instead of in-person. The veterinarian shall use clinical judgment  
30 in considering whether the nature of the services necessitates physical interventions and close  
31 observation and the circumstances of the patient, including diagnosis, symptoms, history, and age.

32 (d) Veterinarians may prescribe after establishing a virtual veterinary client-patient  
33 relationship under the following conditions:

34 (1) Prescriptions based on a virtual veterinary client-patient relationship shall be issued

1 initially for no more than thirty (30) days and shall not be renewed for more than thirty (30) days  
2 without an additional virtual or in-person examination.

3 (2) A prescription renewed once and based upon only virtual examinations shall not be  
4 renewed again without an in-person examination.

5 (d) Services provided through veterinary telemedicine are subject to this state's laws and  
6 regulations governing the veterinary provider's scope of practice.

7 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

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1           This act would authorize a veterinarian to establish a client-patient relationship in Rhode  
2   Island through electronic means, subject to certain limitations and requirements such as by first  
3   establishing a veterinarian client-patient relationship in-person and making a good faith effort to  
4   determine whether care should be provided through telemedicine instead of in-person. The act  
5   would also provide that the veterinarian shall be licensed in Rhode Island, obtain client consent to  
6   establish the veterinarian client-patient relationship through electronic means, and maintain such  
7   documentation for at least one year.

8           This act would take effect upon passage.

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