

# VETERINARY CLIENT PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

A veterinary client patient relationship, or VCPR, is the connection between a veterinarian, his/her client, and the animal patient(s). A valid VCPR is required for veterinarians to prescribe drugs or direct an extra-label drug use, particularly in their absence.

## What makes a VCPR valid?

The requirements are purposely open-ended because every veterinary practice and its clients are unique. If the three parts of the definition can be satisfied, the VCPR is valid.

A signed form is not required to establish a VCPR; however, sometimes veterinarians may ask for a form as a way to start conversations about VCPRs and to keep track of which clients have an established relationship.

The best time to establish a valid VCPR with a veterinarian is *before* an emergency occurs. Veterinarians are *not* required to treat animals, even in an emergency, if the animal is not currently a patient.

## According to the US Food and Drug Administration:

A valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship is one in which:

1. A veterinarian has assumed the responsibility for making medical judgments regarding the health of (an) animal(s) and the need for medical treatment, and the client (the owner of the animal(s) or other caretaker) has agreed to follow the instructions of the veterinarian.
2. The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal(s) to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition; and
3. The practicing veterinarian is readily available for follow up in case of adverse reactions or failure of the regimen of therapy.

Such a relationship can exist only when the veterinarian has recently seen and is personally acquainted with the keeping and care of the animal(s) by virtue of examination of the animal(s), and/or by medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animal(s) are kept.

## Did You Know?

*There are no specific requirements for the number or frequency of farm visits or clinic appointments for a VCPR to be valid. However, many veterinarians require an in-person visit at least once a year for patients to remain current.*



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