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The Attending Veterinarian's Duties

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The role of an attending veterinarian is much more comprehensive than providing veterinary medical care to sick animals. They also provide important guidance to help licensees and registrants keep their animals healthy.

In general, an attending veterinarian’s duties include:

- Providing each individual animal veterinary care that ensures its health and well-being
- Working with the facility to develop a program that covers all aspects of animal health: communication with the veterinarian, disease monitoring and prevention, husbandry, nutrition, provision of emergency care, employee knowledge, and humane euthanasia
    - A written program of veterinary care is required for all facilities with a part-time attending veterinarian or consultant arrangement. It is also required for all dogs, regardless of the attending veterinarian's schedule with the facility. (NOTE: there are specific requirements regarding the written program for dogs.)
- Conducting regular visits to the premises
    - Visits should occur as often as necessary to ensure that the attending veterinarian is aware of the conditions of the animals and facilities; and has the information needed to ensure the provision of adequate veterinary care and to oversee the adequacy of animal care and use. **Visits to facilities with dogs must occur no less than once every 12 months.**
    - Additional site visits may be necessary for disease outbreaks; ill or injured animals; training of caretakers, or for the proper introduction of new animals.
    - Animals in need of care may be taken to the clinic or practice of the attending veterinarian. These visits do not replace the need for regularly scheduled visits to the premises of the licensee or registrant.

The attending veterinarian is also responsible for overseeing and approving additional practices for certain covered species and at research facilities.

Expand All

Dogs and Cats

Facilities require approval from their attending veterinarian to house unacclimated or thermal intolerant dogs or cats in indoor/sheltered temperatures below 50°F or in outdoor environments. This includes animals that are sick, very young, geriatric, short haired, or of breeds that are known to be intolerant of prevalent temperature extremes.
See regulatory sections 3.2(a), 3.3(a), 3.4(a)(1) (1.53 MB) *for more details*

For Dogs Only

(The definition of dogs includes any dog-hybrid cross.)

- A written exercise plan must be approved by the attending veterinarian.
  - The requirement for exercise may be met by providing:
    - Individually housed dogs with at least 2 times the required floor space
    - Group housing dogs with at least 100% the required floor space for each dog, OR
    - Regular exercise at a frequency, method, and duration as determined by the attending veterinarian
  - The attending veterinarian may exempt a dog from the exercise plan due to their health, condition, or well-being.
- *See regulatory section 3.8 for more details*
- **Written program of veterinary care**
  See The written program of veterinary care or How does the new Licensing Rule affect veterinary care for dogs?. Also see regulatory section 3.13(a) (1.53 MB).
  NOTE: the attending veterinarian is required to sign and date the written program of veterinary care for dogs.
- **Annual physical exams**
  See regulatory section 3.13(a) (1.53 MB) *for more details*
- **Medical records**
  See regulatory sections 3.13(b) and 3.13(c) (1.53 MB) *for more details*

Nonhuman Primates

- The attending veterinarian has the authority to determine appropriate temperatures and humidity for primate housing and whether primates are sufficiently acclimated for outdoor housing.
  See regulatory sections 3.76, 3.77, and 3.78 for more details
- The attending veterinarian provides direction on a plan for environment enhancement to promote psychological well-being. Facilities are required to develop a plan that addresses:
  - Social grouping
  - Environmental enrichment
  - Special considerations for certain nonhuman primates
  - Restraint devices
  - Exemptions

- The attending veterinarian may exempt individual nonhuman primates from participation in the environment enhancement plan for their health or well-being. Exemptions must be documented and reviewed every 30 days unless permanent.
  The attending veterinarian will also make determinations or provide direction regarding:
  - compatibility of socially housed primates
  - housing a nonhuman primate where it is unable to see or hear other nonhuman primates
  - isolation of nonhuman primates with a contagious disease
  - special attention provided to nonhuman primates that meet one or more of the criteria for special considerations
- *See regulatory section 3.81 for more details*
  Animal Care has developed a form to facilitate documenting the Environment Enhancement Plan for nonhuman primates (258.72 KB). The form is for your convenience and is not required. Other means of documenting the Environment Enhancement Plan are also acceptable.
- Animal Care Aids
- Approval from the attending veterinarian is required for restriction of water for nonhuman primates and the withholding of food or water for nonhuman primates during transport by a carrier or intermediate handler.
  See regulatory sections 3.83 and 3.86(c) for more details

Marine Mammals

- Any variance requests for marine mammals must include a statement from the attending veterinarian concerning the age, health status, and whether the variance would be detrimental to the marine mammals involved.
  See regulatory section 3.100 (b) for more details
- The attending veterinarian must justify, in writing, housing marine mammals in enclosures that are smaller than required for medical treatment, training, breeding or holding for more than 2 weeks or for transfer for more than 1 week.
  See regulatory sections 3.104 (a) and 3.110 (b) for more details
- The attending veterinarian may direct a facility to feed a marine mammal less than once per day.
  See regulatory section 3.105 (a) for more details
- Inappetence exceeding 24 hours must be reported immediately to the attending veterinarian.

See regulatory section 3.105 (c) for more details

- Insecticides or other such chemical agents must not be applied in primary enclosures housing marine mammals except when deemed essential by an attending veterinarian.
  See regulatory section 3.107 (d) for more details
- Single housing of social marine mammals is prohibited, except when the attending veterinarian, in consultation with the husbandry/training staff, determines that it is necessary for a marine mammal's health or well-being.
  See regulatory section 3.109 for more details
- The attending veterinarian determines when newly acquired marine mammals may be housed with resident animals.
  See regulatory section 3.110 (a) for more details
- Any marine mammal exposed to a contagious animal must be evaluated by the attending veterinarian and monitored and/or isolated for an appropriate period of time as determined by the attending veterinarian.
  See regulatory section 3.110 (c) for more details
- All marine mammals must be visually examined by the attending veterinarian at least semiannually and all cetaceans and sirenians must be physically examined by the attending veterinarian at least annually. These examinations must include, but are not limited to, a hands-on physical examination, hematology and blood chemistry, and other diagnostic tests as determined by the attending veterinarian.
  See regulatory section 3.110 (f) for more details
- A complete necropsy must be conducted by or under the supervision of the attending veterinarian on all marine mammals that die in captivity.
  See regulatory section 3.110 (g) for more details
- The attending veterinarian also makes determinations associated with transportation and care in transport for marine mammals
  See regulatory section 3.112, 3.115, and 3.116 for more details

Exotic Mammals, Including Hoofstock

- Pens or runs using gravel, sand, or dirt, shall be sanitized when necessary as directed by the attending veterinarian.
  See regulatory section 3.131 (b) for more details

Research Facilities

- The attending veterinarian will provide consultation on procedures that may cause more than momentary or slight pain or distress to the animals
  See regulatory section 2.31 (d) for more details
- The housing, feeding, and nonmedical care of the animals will be directed by the attending veterinarian or other scientist trained and experienced in the proper care, handling, and use of the species being maintained or studied
  See regulatory section 2.31 (d) for more details
- The attending veterinarian shall serve as a voting member of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, or they may delegate this responsibility to another veterinarian employed at the research facility
  See regulatory section 2.33 (a)(3) for more details

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