



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*\* Please note that the Office of the Syndic does not issue medical opinions.*

**How do I file a complaint against a veterinarian?** To learn more about filing complaints, please refer to the section [Request an Inquiry](#) on our Website.

**I filed a complaint with the Office of the Syndic, but I haven't heard back from anyone yet. Is this normal?** When the Office of the Syndic receives a request for an inquiry pertaining to a veterinarian's professional conduct, it confirms receipt of the request within 30 days and then opens an investigation. The Syndic proceeds to review the information and evidence collected. An inquiry can take several months, depending on its complexity. In accordance with the *Professional Code*, after the first 90 days, the Syndic must inform the complainant that the inquiry has not been completed. It must continue to do so every 60 days thereafter until the end of the inquiry.

**I believe that my veterinarian has committed an act of professional misconduct, which has been detrimental to me. How can I obtain financial compensation?** You must send a claim to the veterinarian where he or she works. The Office of the Syndic recommends that you consult a lawyer for this purpose. In addition to seeking legal advice, you can also consult the [Justice Québec](#) Website for more information. When veterinarians receive a claim, they contact their professional liability insurer. The insurer will conduct an inquiry and send you its decision. If you do not agree with the decision of the insurer, your next step is to submit a claim in Small Claims Court for disputes of \$15,000 or less. The insurer and the Office of the Syndic are completely independent from one another when conducting their inquiries. These are two separate review processes, which can be launched at the same time.

**How do veterinarians set their professional fees?** There are no set professional fees for veterinary services. These fees may vary from one facility to another. Veterinarians are free to set their own fees, but they must respect certain guidelines established in the [\*Code of Ethics of Veterinary Surgeons\*](#), more specifically regarding the time and effort required to provide the professional services and the experience and expertise of the veterinarian.

**Can I get my pet's medical file?** Yes. According to the [\*Code of Ethics of Veterinary Surgeons\*](#), veterinarians must respect their clients' right to see the medical file on their pets and get a copy of the documents it contains in a timely manner. Veterinarians must reply promptly or no later than 20 days after receiving the request. They can charge fees that may not exceed the reasonable cost of reproducing or transcribing the documents or the reasonable cost of transmitting a copy of the documents.

**Can my veterinarian refuse to reimburse medication that my pet did not use?** According to their [\*Code of Ethics of Veterinary Surgeons\*](#), veterinarians cannot sell, give, administer or distribute expired or unused medication returned by a client. We invite you to contact your veterinarian to discuss the situation.

**Can my veterinarian refuse to give me an external prescription for my pet's medication?** According to the [\*Code of Ethics of Veterinary Surgeons\*](#), veterinarians must respect their clients' right to obtain prescribed medications or treatments from the professional of their choice. As such, when providing external prescriptions, veterinarians cannot charge fees that exceed their regular prescribing fees. For example, if fees of \$15 apply to prescriptions delivered at your veterinarian's clinic, then fees of no more than \$15 will apply to an external prescription.

**Can I buy medication for my pet online?** Prescriptions issued by Québec veterinarians can only be filled by a Québec pharmacist. In addition, when you buy online, you have no guarantee of the quality or effectiveness of the medication since you do not know how it was handled, stored or shipped. We invite the public to be very cautious of ordering online.

**Can a veterinarian require a medical test before administering a vaccine or prescribing a treatment?** Vaccines and medications prescribed by veterinarians are governed by the [\*Regulation Respecting the Terms and Conditions for the Sale of Medication\*](#) (Schedule IV). A medication or vaccine included in this Schedule can only be sold to the public by a pharmacist or veterinarian. Similarly, according to the [\*Code of Ethics of Veterinary Surgeons\*](#), veterinarians must, before prescribing a medication or a vaccine, have personally performed a proper examination of the animal. The same applies to booster shots.

**Can a veterinarian refuse to renew my pet's prescription?** Yes. According to the [\*Règlement sur les ordonnances des médecins vétérinaires\*](#) (in French only), refills cannot exceed a period of one year. Veterinarians also use their professional judgement to determine if, based on an animal's best interest, it should be re-examined to see if its condition has since changed. Some medical conditions require more regular checkups to ensure quality care. Veterinarians can also require additional tests, such as blood work, before renewing a prescription.

**Can I check whether the Office of the Syndic has previously received a complaint about a veterinarian?** Complaints and exchanges of information with the Office of the Syndic are confidential. As a result, the Syndic cannot give you information about a veterinarian. However, disciplinary decisions issued by the disciplinary council are available for consultation on the [SOQUIJ Website](#). In addition the role of disciplinary hearings is described on our Website under [Request an Inquiry](#).

**What about the illegal practice of veterinary medicine?** According to the Veterinary Surgeons Act, the practice of veterinary medicine constitutes any act that involves providing veterinary advice, performing a pathological examination on an animal, issuing a veterinary diagnosis, prescribing medications for animals, performing surgery on an animal, treating a medical or surgical veterinary disorder by using a mechanical, physical, chemical, biological or radiotherapy process, and approving or rejecting the meat of domestic animals for consumption. In other words, anyone who is not a veterinarian cannot diagnose, claim to treat or cure a medical condition or perform any of the above acts.

**How can I report an instance of illegal practice of veterinary medicine?** For more information on this topic, please go to the [Controlling Illegal Practice](#) section of our Website.

**Who do I contact to report a case of animal cruelty or negligence?** Please contact the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec (MAPAQ), division Santé animale au 1 844 ANIMAUX or [online](#).