

## Protection of the Public - Steps in an Inquiry

### Inquiry by the Syndic

When the Office of the Syndic receives a request for an inquiry, it confirms receipt of the complaint within a few days.

During the inquiry, the Syndic, Associate Syndic or Syndic assigned to the case collects all relevant information and documents that will help establish whether or not the veterinarian has committed a breach of ethics. The way in which inquiries proceed may vary, but in most cases, the Syndic will contact the complainant, witnesses and veterinarian in order to obtain the accounts of all parties involved. The Syndic gathers as much information as possible to make the right decision and have sufficient evidence to file a complaint before the Disciplinary Council. When necessary, the Syndic may consult experts or any other person for assistance and support in conducting the inquiry.

The complainant is kept informed of the progress being made in the investigation. The length of the inquiry may vary based on the complexity of the case and inquiry.

Once the inquiry has been completed, the Syndic, based on the facts and evidence found, chooses one of the following options:

- Close the case if the complaint is deemed unfounded
- Apply non-disciplinary measures
- File a complaint before the Disciplinary Council

### Non-Disciplinary Measures

Disciplinary measures are not always the best solution for protecting public interest. As a result, other measures are available:

- Referring the case to the Professional Inspection Committee
- Writing or phoning the veterinarian to settle the dispute
- Sending the veterinarian a non-compliance notice
- Sending the veterinarian a reprimand
- Recommending improvements to the veterinarian's practice
- Obtaining commitments from the veterinarian

### Filing a Complaint before the Disciplinary Council

If the violation is founded and supported by sufficient evidence, the Syndic may file a complaint before the Disciplinary Council.

The Syndic or Associate Syndic then informs the complainant in writing of its decision.

## Disciplinary Hearing

The Office of the Syndic can decide to file a complaint before the Disciplinary Council. The Council will then hear the parties involved and the witnesses summoned at a disciplinary hearing. It receives and studies the evidence before rendering a decision. The hearings are generally public, unless the Disciplinary Council opts for closed proceedings out of regard for public order or morality.

## Decision of the Disciplinary Council

When the Disciplinary Council concludes that a member is guilty of an offence, it will impose one or more of the following penalties set out in the *Professional Code*:

- A reprimand;
- A fine of not less than \$2,500 nor more than \$62,500 for each offence; these amounts may be doubled in case of repeat offences;
- The temporary or permanent removal of the professional from the roll of the Order;
- The restriction or suspension of the licence to practice professional activities;
- The revocation of the professional's licence to practice
- Etc.

If the Disciplinary Council concludes that the professional is not guilty, the procedure ends here. The complainant can, however, appeal this decision before the Professions Tribunal.

## Appeal before the Professions Tribunal

Once the Disciplinary Council has rendered its decision, if the complainant (usually the Syndic, but sometimes a private citizen) or the professional who was the subject of the complaint considers that the Disciplinary Council has made an error, he or she may appeal the decision before the Professions Tribunal.

The Professions Tribunal can confirm, revise or reverse a decision made by the Disciplinary Council. It can make the decision, which in its view, should have been rendered initially. The Tribunal can also replace the penalty imposed by the Disciplinary Council.

To learn more about the appeals process, visit the [Professions Tribunal](#) Website.