

KEY REQUIREMENTS FOR VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS

This summary has been prepared by the Drugs and Poisons Regulation Group (DPRG) to assist veterinary practitioners in understanding their obligations under the Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 and Regulations 2006. Reference must be made to the legislation (at www.legislation.vic.gov.au) for full details of requirements.

Obtaining Schedule 4 or Schedule 8 poisons

Licensed wholesalers or pharmacists must **only** supply drugs to an authorised person. Their records **must** therefore identify the authorised person (e.g. veterinary practitioner) by name regardless of to whom an invoice for payment may be directed. (e.g. veterinary clinic, service company).

Scheduled poisons and storage requirements

Schedule 8 poisons (*labelled Controlled Drug*) are drugs with more strict legislative controls, e.g. morphine (MS-Contin, Kapanol), pethidine, oxycodone (Oxycontin, Endone, Proladone), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), flunitrazepam (Hypnodorm), fentanyl (Durogesic, Sublimaze)

- ❖ **Schedule 8 poisons** must be stored in a locked facility, fixed to the floor or wall, and providing not less security than a (10 mm thick) mild steel drug cabinet **and** must not be stored with any other items (e.g. money) other than other drugs of dependence.
- ❖ When **transported** for use in another location, **S8 poisons** must be stored in a locked receptacle in the veterinary practitioner's possession. *If the receptacle is necessarily out of the veterinary practitioner's possession (for a brief period of time) it should be secured, out of sight, in a lockable facility (e.g. lockable vehicle or cupboard) to prevent unauthorised access.*

Schedule 4 poisons (*Prescription Only Medicine or Prescription Animal Remedy*) include other drugs for which prescriptions are required, e.g. cardiovascular drugs, antibiotics & others.

- ❖ **Schedule 4 poisons** (including professional samples) must be stored in a lockable storage facility. (e.g. cupboard, drawer, fridge, filing cabinet).

The term "**drugs of dependence**" is used to describe **all** S8 poisons **plus** S4 poisons subject to misuse and trafficking, e.g. benzodiazepines, dextropropoxyphene, anabolic steroids.

- ❖ **Schedule 4 drugs of dependence** may be stored in the same manner as other Schedule 4 poisons **or** in the drug cabinet with Schedule 8 poisons.

Schedule 2 and 3 poisons (*labelled Pharmacy Medicine or Pharmacist Only Medicine respectively*) must only be supplied (in an open shop) by pharmacists. (section 13(2) of the Act)

- ❖ Veterinary practitioners may use or supply Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 poisons in a similar manner to Schedule 4 poisons (i.e. for the treatment of animals under their care) but must **not** supply these drugs for human use (including clinic staff).
- ❖ To prevent unlawful supply, it is **recommended** that Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 poisons be stored and handled in a similar manner to Schedule 4 poisons.

Schedule 5 and 6 poisons (*labelled Caution and Poison respectively*) may be sold by retail in an open shop or the reception area of a veterinary practice but only in the manufacturers' unopened primary packs.

Schedule 7 poisons (labelled *Dangerous Poison*) must be stored in a manner that prevents public access and must be supplied only to persons at least 18 years of age, with full details of each transaction recorded. (sections 38 and 40 of the Act)

Access to Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 poisons

Storage facilities for Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 poisons must be secured to prevent access by all persons **not** authorised under the legislation (e.g. staff other than a veterinary practitioner) unless the veterinary practitioner is present. Accordingly, keys should not be accessible to unauthorised staff members.

Staff members may be left in possession of S4 and S8 poisons in the following circumstances:

- ❖ Drugs may be left with a veterinary nurse (in order to administer the drugs to a specific animal at the surgery) in accordance with instructions for administration to the specific animal. The veterinary nurse is **not** authorised to supply such drugs to the owner of the animal or the owner's agent – except as stated below.
- ❖ An employee of the practice may be in possession of drugs that have been lawfully dispensed and labelled (see below) by the veterinary practitioner for delivery to, or collection by a person - provided the drugs are in a sealed package that clearly identifies the animal for which they were dispensed or the animal's custodian.

Supplying Schedule 4 or Schedule 8 poisons

Veterinary practitioners may dispense and supply Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 poisons for the veterinary treatment of animals under their care. This responsibility must **not** be delegated to another person (e.g. nurse, receptionist)

When supplied, Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 poisons must be **labelled** in accordance with the provisions of regulation 29, including - the name of the owner or person having custody of the animal; the name or species of the animal; the date of dispensing; the name, address and telephone number of the veterinary clinic; the name, strength and form (e.g. tablets, capsules) of the medication; precise directions for use. **Note:** There is an exemption for bulk supplies for the treatment of flocks or herds of animals (see regulation 29(7) for details).

Containers used to dispense scheduled poisons must be impervious to the contents, sufficiently sturdy to prevent leakage and capable of being securely re-closed.

Records of transactions

A veterinary practitioner **must** make true and accurate records of all drugs administered or supplied, retain them for 3 years and produce them, on demand, to an authorised officer.

An animal's treatment record (computerised or manual) showing the client's name and address, date of supply, identity of the veterinary practitioner and details of the drug administered or supplied may be sufficient for **Schedule 4 poisons** but for **Schedule 8 poisons** a separate record (almost certainly manually created) is also required.

Records for Schedule 8 poisons must be in a form that shows the true balance remaining after each transaction and that cannot be altered without detection. **Note:** *A drug register or administration book is usually available from wholesalers. For those with limited use of Schedule 8 poisons, a smaller book is available from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.*

Authorisation of veterinary practitioners

Veterinary practitioners are authorised to obtain, possess, use or supply **most** drugs and poisons for the **lawful practice** of their profession, i.e. for the veterinary **treatment of animals under their care** (section 13 of the Act, regulation 13).

A veterinary practitioner is **not** authorised to obtain drugs for personal use or for use by any other person (e.g. spouse or employees) or to sell or supply drugs or poisons by wholesale – an activity for which a Drugs & Poisons licence is required (section 23 of the Act).

Self-administration of Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 poisons is **prohibited** unless the drugs have been lawfully prescribed and supplied by a medical practitioner (or dentist) or supplied by a pharmacist

upon presentation of a prescription from a medical practitioner (Regulation 48). *This does **NOT** mean that, once prescribed by a medical practitioner, a veterinary practitioner may continue the treatment with drugs that were obtained from a wholesale supplier.*

For further information

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