

TITLE 26
PROCEDURAL RULES
WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF
VETERINARY MEDICINE

SERIES 2
DISCIPLINARY AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES OF THE WEST VIRGINIA
BOARD OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

26-2-1. General.

1.1. Scope. -- This establishes the procedures for the investigation and resolution of complaints against licensees.

1.2. Authority. -- W. Va. Code §30-10-1 et seq. and § 30-1-1 *et seq.*

1.3. Filing Date. – November 24, 2010

1.4. Effective Date. – January 1, 2011

26-2-2. Application.

This rule applies to all licensees under the regulatory authority of the board.

26-2-3. Definitions.

The following words and phrases as used in this rule have the following meanings, unless the context otherwise requires:

3.1. "Board" means the West Virginia Board of Veterinary Medicine.

3.2. "License" means a veterinary license, temporary permit, registration of a veterinary technician or certification of an animal euthanasia technician issued by the Board pursuant to W. Va. Code § 30-10-1 *et seq.*

3.3. "Licensee" means an individual who holds a license as specified in 3.2 of this section.

3.4. "Investigator" means a person hired by the Board for the purpose of reviewing and investigating complaints against licensees.

26-2-4. Causes for Probation, Limitation, Discipline, Suspension or Revocation of License.

4.1. The Board may place a licensee on probation, limit, restrict, suspend or revoke any license issued by the Board, upon sufficient proof that a licensee has been convicted of a felony, or is, in his or her professional capacity, engaged in conduct, practices or acts constituting professional negligence, malpractice or a willful departure from accepted standards of professional conduct in violation of West Virginia Code § 30-10-1 *et seq.* or the rules of the Board.

26-2-5. Disposition of Complaints.

5.1. Any person, firm, corporation, member of the Board, or public officer may make a complaint to the Board which charges a licensee with a violation of West Virginia Code § 30-10-1 *et seq.* or of the rules of the Board. The Board may provide a form for that purpose, but a complaint may be filed in any written form, accompanied by a notarized statement from the complainant. In addition to describing the alleged violation that prompted the complaint, the complaint shall contain the following:

5.1.1. The name and address of the licensee against whom the complaint is lodged;

5.1.2. The dates of care;

5.1.3. The identity of any person who may have treated the animal after the alleged incident; and,

- 5.2. A complaint against a licensee shall allege that such person has been convicted of a felony or is, in his or her professional capacity, engaging in conduct, practices or acts constituting professional negligence, malpractice or a willful departure from accepted standards of professional conduct in violation of West Virginia Code § 30-10-1 *et. seq.* or the rules of the Board.
- 5.3. Complainants are immune from liability for the allegations contained in their complaints filed with the Board unless the complaint is filed in bad faith or for a malicious purpose.
- 5.4. The Board shall maintain a complaint log which records the receipt of each complaint, its nature and its disposition.
- 5.5. The Board shall maintain a separate file on each complaint received, and each file shall have a number assigned to it.
- 5.6. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Board shall issue one of the following acknowledgments to the complainant.
- 5.6.1. That the matter will be reviewed by the Board.
- 5.6.2. That the complaint is outside the jurisdiction of the Board, with suggestions as to how the complainant might best obtain a resolution of his or her problem; or,
- 5.6.3. That more information will be required in order to adequately review the individual complaint.
- 5.7. The Board shall send a copy of the complaint, including any supporting documentation, by certified mail to the licensee in question for his or her written response, and he or she shall submit a written response to the Board within 30 days of the date of the Board's correspondence or shall in writing waive the right to do so.

- 5.8. Requests for comment on complaints sent to licensees shall be considered properly served when sent to their last known address. It is the responsibility of the licensee to keep the Board informed of his or her last known address.
- 5.9. Upon receipt of a licensee's comments in response to a complaint, the Board shall promptly send a copy of the same, including any supporting documentation, to the complainant.
- 5.10. After receipt and review of a complaint, unless the complaint is determined to fall within the provisions of sub-division 5.6.2 of this rule, the Board shall cause to be conducted any reasonable inquiry or investigation it considers necessary to determine the truth and validity of the allegations set forth in the complaint. The review of complaints or investigations thereof may, at the discretion of the Board, be assigned to a committee of the Board.
- 5.11. At any point in its investigation of a complaint, the investigation committee of the Board may, at its discretion, assign the matter to an investigator for review and investigation.
- 5.12. Upon receipt of a complaint from the Board, the investigator shall, within 60 days, unless the Board specifies another time period, review and investigate the same and provide the Board with a written report. The report shall contain a statement of the allegations, a statement of facts, and an analysis of the complaint, including a description of the care provided, the records reviewed, persons interviewed and a statement of the investigator's findings. The investigator shall, upon request, be afforded an opportunity to have an investigation interview with the licensee in question, or other involved parties, a report of which shall be placed in the investigation file at the office of the Board.
- 5.13. To facilitate the disposition of a complaint, the Board or the committee of the Board may request any person to attend an informal conference, or to appear at a regular meeting of the Board, at any time prior to the Board entering any order with respect to the complaint. The Board shall give notice of the conference, which notice shall include a statement of issues to be informally discussed. Statements made at a conference may not be introduced at any subsequent hearing on the merits without the consent of all parties to the hearing. No prejudice shall attach for failure to attend a conference pursuant to a request.

5.14. The Board investigating committee or chairperson, or the executive director may issue subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum to complete the Board's investigation and to determine the truth or validity of complaints. The investigator may request the Board or its investigation committee to issue a subpoena or subpoena duces tecum. A brief written statement specifying the necessity for the same shall accompany any such request.

5.15. At any point in the course of the investigation or inquiry into a complaint, the Board may determine that there is not and will not be sufficient evidence to warrant further proceedings, or that the complaint fails to allege misconduct for which a licensee may be sanctioned by the Board: Provided, that in the event the review and investigation of a complaint is assigned to the committee or investigator, the committee or investigator shall make their respective findings and recommendations to the Board prior to the Board dismissing the complaint.

26-2-6. Contested Case Hearings.

6.1. The Board may suspend a license or refuse to renew a license if it determines there is probable cause to believe that the licensee's conduct, practices or acts constitute an immediate danger to the public.