



IDAHO VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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February 18, 2022

The Honorable Senator Holland
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 115
Juneau AK, 99801-1185

Dear Senator Holland,

We are writing this letter in support of the AKVMA (Alaska State Veterinary Medical Association) and the veterinarians who practice in Alaska. We felt it was important to share our experience with our prescription drug monitoring program here in the state of Idaho.

We had originally included veterinarians in our drug monitoring program as well, but soon began to realize that doing so was not only costly, but quite ineffective. We found that veterinarians do not commonly prescribe the most frequently abused opioids. Additionally, identifying and tracking the minute number of pet patients in our database proved difficult and onerous. Also, our practice management systems are not very compatible with human systems because we often don't have accurate birthdates, there can be confusion if it is under patient or client names, etc. The Board of Pharmacy never found a way to input the data that would be meaningful for them or practitioners. And, when veterinarians in our state tried to search the database regarding patients, they were unable to find information. Thus, this added staff time for both veterinary clinics and the Board of Pharmacy with little benefit to society or the decrease in opioid abuse in humans.

Besides reporting not being very useful, in general, veterinarians generally don't prescribe opioids as "front line" pain medication and they are generally only prescribed after extensive procedures or injuries, not in chronic pain cases like human medicine. We tend to start with NSAIDS, amongst other recommendations like joint supplements, physical therapy, and weight management for chronic conditions, so this situation does not lend itself to getting opioids with a simple office call. In addition, this database generally is set up to prevent "doctor shopping" in humans. In veterinary medicine, this practice is almost non-existent due to no third-party payers (Medicare, Medicaid, etc.) to cover the cost of appointments and medications prescribed. Clients have more barriers to reporting potential false injuries of their pets because we do physical exams and health care is not free. The cost to diagnose an injury (i.e. x-rays & blood work) would make veterinary doctor shopping a very expensive and unlikely endeavor.

We, as a state, realized the futility in having veterinarians attempt to comply with an unwieldy system that was better designed to assist human health care providers. Because of this we have changed our requirements and have since exempted veterinarians from participation in our drug monitoring program. We hope you consider doing the same in Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathy J. Ponzio".

Kathy J. Ponzio, DVM
President
Idaho Veterinary Medical Association

“Serving Idaho Veterinarians”