



American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists

Code of Ethics

(ACVO BOR approved March 4, 2017)

Preamble

The Code of Ethics of the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists (ACVO) applies to ACVO Members. This document, and the requirements herein, are enforceable by the ACVO.

The ACVO maintains a standing Ethics Committee (formerly the Professional Practice, Disciplinary and Appeals (PPDA) Committee) which is responsible for reviewing inquiries regarding potential ethics violations by the ACVO Members. The Ethics Committee is also responsible for recommending disciplinary actions when it has been determined that ethical violations have occurred including violations related to the inappropriate use of the term “specialist” or the like and/or misuse of trademarks owned by the ACVO. Lastly, the Ethics Committee is responsible for hearing appeals by individuals or entities that have received adverse rulings by the ACVO Board of Regents (BOR) or ACVO committees, and for making recommendations to the BOR if involving an ACVO Member.

A. Principles of Ethics

The Principles of Ethics form the first part of this Code of Ethics. They are aspirational and inspirational model standards of exemplary professional conduct, and serve as goals for which ACVO Members should constantly strive.

1. Ethics in Ophthalmology

Ethics address conduct and relate to what behavior is appropriate or inappropriate, as reasonably determined by the entity setting the ethical standards. An issue of ethics in ophthalmology is resolved by the determination that the best interests of patients and their owners are served.

2. Providing Ophthalmic Services

Ophthalmic services must be provided with compassion, respect for animal welfare, and with honesty and integrity.

3. Competence of the Ophthalmologist

An ophthalmologist must maintain competence. Competence can never be totally comprehensive, and therefore must be supplemented by other colleagues when indicated. Competence involves technical ability, cognitive knowledge, and ethical concerns for the patient. Competence includes having

adequate and proper knowledge to make a professionally appropriate and acceptable decision regarding the patient's management.

4. Communication with the Client

Open communication with the owner or caretaker of the animal is essential.

5. Corrective Action

If an ACVO Member has a reasonable basis for believing that another person has deviated from professionally accepted standards in a manner that adversely affects patient care or from the Rules of Ethics, the ACVO Member should attempt to prevent the continuation of this conduct. This is best accomplished by direct communication with the other person. When that action is ineffective or is not feasible, the ACVO Member has a responsibility to refer the matter to the appropriate authorities and to cooperate with those authorities in their professional and legal efforts, in order to prevent the continuation of the conduct.

6. An ACVO Member's Responsibility

It is the responsibility of an ACVO Member to act in the best interest of the patient and their owner.

7. Professional Integrity in Research

It is the responsibility of the ACVO Member to maintain integrity in clinical and basic research. Professional relations with industry regarding research should advance the best interests of patients and the profession.

B. Rules of Ethics

The Rules of Ethics form the second part of this Code of Ethics. These are mandatory and are standards of minimally acceptable professional conduct for all ACVO Members. The Rules of Ethics are enforceable by the ACVO.

1. Competence

An ACVO Member is a veterinarian who is educated and trained to provide medical and surgical care of the eyes and related structures. An ACVO Member shall perform only those procedures in which he/she is competent by virtue of specific training or experience or are assisted by one who is. An ACVO Member shall not misrepresent credentials, training, experience, ability, or results (historical or anticipated).

2. Informed Consent

The performance of medical or surgical procedures shall be preceded by informed consent.

3. Clinical Trials and Investigative Procedures.

Clinical trials and investigative procedures are those conducted to develop adequate information on which to base prognostic or therapeutic decisions or to determine etiology or pathogenesis, in circumstances in which insufficient information exists. Informed consent for these procedures performed on client-owned animals must recognize their special nature and ramifications.

4. Other Opinions

The owner's request for additional opinion(s) shall be respected.

5. The Impaired Ophthalmologist

A physically, mentally, or emotionally impaired ACVO Member shall withdraw from those aspects of practice affected by the impairment. If an impaired ACVO Member fails to withdraw in such circumstances, other ACVO Members who know of the impairment shall take action to attempt to assure correction of the situation. This may involve a wide range of remedial actions, including reporting such failure to withdraw to appropriate authorities.

6. Pretreatment Assessment

Treatment shall be recommended only after a careful consideration of the patient's physical needs and in consideration of the owner's objectives and expectations. The ACVO Member, and individuals under their supervision, must assure that an evaluation accurately documents the ophthalmic findings and the indications for treatment.

7. Medical and Surgical Procedures

An ACVO Member shall not misrepresent the service that is performed or the charges made for that service.

8. Procedures and Materials

An ACVO Member shall order only those laboratory and diagnostic procedures or pharmacological agents that are in the best interest of the patient.

9. Commercial Relationships

An ACVO Member shall not permit his or her clinical judgment and practice to be affected by economic interest in, commitment to, or benefit from professionally related commercial enterprises.

10. Communications to Colleagues

Communications to colleagues shall be accurate and truthful. Interrelations between colleagues shall be conducted in a manner that advances the best interests of the patient and client, including the sharing of relevant information.

11. Communications to the Public

Communications to the public shall be accurate and truthful. They shall not convey false, untrue, deceptive, or misleading information through statements, testimonials, photographs, graphics, or other

means. They shall not omit material information without which the communications would be deceptive. Communications shall not appeal to an individual's anxiety in an excessive or unfair way; and they shall not create unjustified expectations of results. If communications refer to benefits or other attributes of ophthalmic procedures that involve significant risks, then realistic assessments of their safety and efficacy shall also be included, as well as the availability of alternatives and, where necessary to avoid deception, descriptions and/or assessments of the benefits or other attributes of those alternatives. Communications shall not misrepresent an ACVO Member's credentials, training, experience, or ability, and shall not contain material claims of superiority that cannot be substantiated.

12. Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists when professional judgment concerning the well-being of the patient has a reasonable chance of being influenced by other interests of the provider. An ACVO Member shall disclose such a conflict of interest to patients, the public, and colleagues.

(END ETHICS DOCUMENT)