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The Attending Veterinarian's Role in the USDA Inspection Process

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Communication with the attending veterinarian is important to the USDA inspection process. USDA inspectors want to verify that regulated facilities are keeping their attending veterinarian informed about any animal health concerns and that they are following the guidance of their attending veterinarian.

When the attending veterinarian is able to be present for a USDA inspection, it provides opportunity for in-depth discussions between them, the USDA inspector, and the licensee or registrant. Such discussions are helpful in ensuring that everyone has the same understanding regarding any animal health issues and all instructions from the attending veterinarian.

Since USDA inspections are unannounced, we recognize that the attending veterinarian may not be available during the time we are at the facility. If the attending veterinarian is not able to be present during an inspection, written records are our primary source of information regarding the attending veterinarian's directions for clinical and preventive care.

An inspector will routinely review the written program of veterinary care and make sure the facility understands the instructions and is correctly carrying out the veterinarian's directions. We may also review other written records such as medical records or any treatment orders.

On occasion a USDA inspector may have questions that are not addressed in any of the written records at the facility. When this occurs, we will reach out to the attending veterinarian for more information.

When the attending veterinarian can make themselves available to answer the USDA inspector's questions, either during an inspection or in a timely manner following the inspection, it helps us verify that regulated facilities are providing the attending veterinarian with sufficient authority to ensure adequate care and welfare.

The attending veterinarian is also encouraged to reach out to the USDA inspector if they have any questions or concerns about an inspection or any citations. See the "[How should attending veterinarians contact USDA?](#)" topic for more information.

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