



Animal Care Tech Note

Veterinary Care Changes Under the 2020 Licensing Rule

In 2020, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) published the 2020 Licensing Rule. It amended the Animal Welfare Act and added several veterinary care requirements for dogs. These additional requirements strengthen safeguards and help to ensure humane care for dogs covered under the Act.

Veterinary Care Requirements

The following requirements continue to apply to all animals:

- All licensees and registered research facilities must employ an attending veterinarian.
- Part-time or consulting attending veterinarians must develop a written program of veterinary care and make regularly scheduled visits to the facility.
- Licensees and registered facilities must give the attending veterinarian appropriate authority to ensure adequate veterinary care is provided to all animals at the facility. That means the attending veterinarian directs or approves all protocols and decisions on preventive, diagnostic, and treatment plans, and animal caretakers must follow this guidance.
- Facilities must provide adequate care as directed by the attending veterinarian, including daily observation of animals and having direct and frequent communication with the attending veterinarian when there are signs of health or behavioral problems.



Veterinary Care Requirements for Dogs Added in 2020

The 2020 Licensing Rule expands requirements for the written program of veterinary care and medical records for dogs. Section 3.13 of the Animal Welfare Act contains the new requirements. These additional requirements do not change, supersede, or nullify any of the requirements listed above.

Program of Veterinary Care for Dogs

One significant change established by the 2020 Licensing Rule is that all facilities with dogs, **even those with a full-time attending veterinarian on staff**, must develop a written program of veterinary care that includes the following:

- Regularly scheduled visits by the attending veterinarian to assess the facility and its care and use of dogs at least once every 12 months
- Head-to-tail physical examinations of each dog by the attending veterinarian or designated consulting veterinarian at least once every 12 months
- A vaccination schedule* for contagious and/or deadly diseases of dogs (including rabies, parvovirus, and distemper)
- A schedule* for the sampling and treatment of parasites and other pests, including fleas, worms, coccidia, giardia, and heartworm
- A preventative care plan to ensure dogs have healthy, unmatted coats; properly trimmed nails; and clean and healthy eyes, ears, skin, and teeth

* Research facilities may exempt specific dogs from these schedules if required by a research protocol that the facility's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee has approved.



Medical Records for Dogs

Section 3.13(b) of the Animal Welfare Act also requires all facilities to keep copies of medical records for dogs and have them available during inspections. Medical records must include the following:

- The dog's identity, including tag, tattoo, or microchip number; identifying marks; breed; sex; and age*
- The date and description of any problem identified, examination and test results, plan for treatment and care, and procedures performed, when appropriate
- Names of all vaccines and other treatments administered and the dates given
- Dates and results of all screening, including routine or recommended testing (such as for heartworms and intestinal parasites)

** Routine husbandry, such as vaccines, preventive medical procedures, or parasite prevention or treatments, performed on all animals in a group or herd may be kept in a group or kennel record (but must identify each individual dog if not all animals in the group are treated).*

Licensed facilities must keep medical records for at least 1 year after the euthanasia, death, or disposition of a dog. Research facilities must keep medical records for the duration of the research activity and for 3 additional years. APHIS may extend these recordkeeping requirements, if needed, to comply with any applicable Federal, State, or local law or as notified in writing by the APHIS Administrator (such as in the event of an investigation).

Written Program of Veterinary Care and Medical Records

There is no required form for the written program of veterinary care; however, facilities and attending veterinarians can use APHIS Form 7002A, Program of Veterinary Care for Dogs. It contains sections for all required information listed above. You can download this form as a fillable PDF from the APHIS website and complete it with your attending veterinarian. Go to www.aphis.usda.gov and search for "Form 7002A." Be sure to download and save the document before filling it out. You and your attending veterinarian can use this form or another method that meets the requirements.



Similarly, there is no specific form required for medical records, as long as the records include the information listed in section 3.13(b) of the Animal Welfare Act. Both the written program of veterinary care and medical records should be easy to read and understand, and copies must be made available during all APHIS inspections (including when exhibitors are traveling with regulated animals).

For More Information

Visit APHIS' website (www.aphis.usda.gov) and search for "2020 Licensing Rule." You can also download a copy of the rule at www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-05-13/pdf/2020-07837.pdf.

If you have questions, contact us:

Animal Care
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
2150 Centre Avenue, Building B, Mailstop #3W11
Fort Collins, CO 80526-8117
(970) 494-7478
animalcare@usda.gov