

Model Regulations: Appropriate Prescribing and Use of Controlled Substances

*As approved by the AAVSB Delegate
Assembly in September 2026*



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Introduction

AAVSB Model Regulations are meant to support the statutory language that can be found in the AAVSB Practice Act Model (PAM). They suggest regulatory language for complex emerging trends in Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Technology. Each model regulation from the AAVSB is presented separately from each other and from the PAM for ease of use for the AAVSB Member Boards to utilize as a model in developing regulations or rules specific to targeted topics. AAVSB recognizes that there is no single solution for the association's diverse group of Member Boards, and that these models may not fit within the existing governance framework. AAVSB recognizes that jurisdictional needs vary by the mission and scope of the governing agency, as well as the needs of the public and the veterinarian community within its boundaries. The AAVSB respects the differing governance structures within the regulation of the profession and encourages the use of language that best fits each Jurisdiction's needs. The AAVSB will continue to develop Model Regulations for addressing pressing issues in the regulation of Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Technology.

Revisions

Created in 2020

Revised in 2026

Structure and Format

The AAVSB Model Regulations have been structured to assist Member Boards in developing new or modifying existing regulations or bylaws. Each document has been formatted to include corresponding commentary in blue comment boxes. This commentary serves multiple purposes, providing insights into broader areas of discussion and rationale for recommended language. Member Boards are strongly encouraged to read and discuss the commentary, including considerations germane to the local jurisdiction.

Appropriate Prescribing and Use of Controlled Substances

Model Regulation

Commentary: Model Regulation

Veterinarians should be aware that some substances are not Controlled Substances, such as alpha 2 adrenergic agonists, but are still drugs of concern and may be diverted. Listed Controlled Substances may change as new drugs are misused. Veterinarians should remain aware and cautious when dispensing drugs of concern.

Opioids and other Controlled Substances (i.e. benzodiazepines, tranquilizers, and barbiturates) are commonly used in the practice of Veterinary Medicine. However, they have a high potential for misuse, addiction and overdose death in humans. Therefore, these Controlled Substances are closely regulated by Jurisdictions and the federal government. The magnitude of the veterinary community's role in the opioid epidemic and drug diversion is unclear. However, Veterinarians prescribe, dispense, administer, and stock many of the same drugs that have the potential to be diverted and abused by humans. Therefore, the veterinary community needs to be aware of this public health crisis.

In some Jurisdictions, Controlled Substances may also include drugs that require a prescription but are not Schedule II through V drugs as set forth in the U.S. Controlled Substances Act of the Drug Enforcement Act and Canadian Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Veterinarians are allowed to prescribe, administer, and dispense controlled substances in keeping with the requirements of the laws of this Jurisdiction, and the statutes and regulations governing the practice of Veterinary Medicine. A Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR) as set forth in the Act, must first be established before drugs may be prescribed by a Veterinarian. Refer to the **AAVSB Practice Act Model (PAM)** for additional information.

Commentary: Model Regulation (continued).

Veterinarians are required to be compliant with all applicable Jurisdictional and federal laws and regulations related to Controlled Substances. Many jurisdictions require their Licensees to participate in prescription monitoring programs. Regulatory boards should seek to provide input and coordinate with their jurisdictional pharmacy boards to ensure that special circumstances pertaining to veterinary medicine are taken into consideration when discussing these programs. In light of the opioid crisis, veterinarians should consider dispensing fewer Controlled Substances and determine whether prescriptions should be dispensed from a commercial establishment based on Jurisdictional laws and statutes. Jurisdictions may wish to require continuing education surrounding best practices in prescribing, dispensing, and handling Controlled Substances.

Section 1. Use of Controlled Substances

- (a) In order to prescribe, dispense, and administer Controlled Substances, Veterinarians must meet requirements of the federal and Jurisdictional licensing body, and comply with all federal, and Jurisdictional laws
- (b) Except in cases of Emergency Care, the Veterinarian must establish a Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR) prior to providing Controlled Substances.
- (c) The Veterinarian shall assess the Patient's history and complete an in-person physical examination appropriate to the complaint as part of the initial evaluation.
- (d) For initial prescribing of a Controlled Substance:
 - (1) the Veterinarian shall prescribe it in the lowest effective dose appropriate for the condition, the size and species of the Patient, and for the least amount of time;
 - (2) The initial dose shall not exceed a XX-day supply; and
 - (3) The Patient shall be reevaluated for continued prescribing of a Controlled Substance.
- (e) For extended prescribing of a Controlled Substance:
 - (1) For prescribing beyond XX days, the Veterinarian shall develop a treatment plan for the Patient with the following:
 - (i) Measures to be used to determine progress in treatment;
 - (ii) Lowest effective dose appropriate for the size and species;
 - (iii) Further diagnostic valuations or modalities;
 - (iv) Criteria to guide owners when a follow-up evaluation is warranted; and
 - (v) The extent to which the condition is associated with physical impairment;
 - (2) The Patient shall be reevaluated at least every XX months, and the justification for continued prescribing shall be documented in the Patient record.
- (f) The Medical Record for prescribing Controlled Substances shall comply with regulations as set forth in **Medical Recordkeeping**.
- (g) Except in cases of Emergency Care or when used in the hospital, prior to prescribing or dispensing a Controlled Substance, the Veterinarian shall provide in writing to the Client and discuss with the Client the known risks and benefits of the therapy, the responsibility for the security of the drug, and proper disposal of any unused drug.

Commentary: Section 1. Use of Controlled Substances.

Regulations may wish to cite the specific sections of the Jurisdiction's drug control act or section(s) of the Veterinary Medicine Act related to prescribing or dispensing controlled substances.