

Client relations and concerns



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Veterinary Medical Centre
WESTERN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE
VMC.USASK.CA

The WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC) has a client relations and concerns process to assist with your concerns if you are unable to find answers to your questions. Our goals are to provide a mechanism for objective review and response to client concerns and to ensure that all complaints are addressed in a timely and respectful manner.

What can I do if I have a complaint?

If you have questions or concerns about the care provided to your animal or the service that you received while at the VMC, we want to ensure that you're aware of the options available to you. You're welcome to:

- voice your concerns to one or more of the clinical team members (veterinarian, registered veterinary technician or support staff) who are providing care to your animal
- contact the clinical team's supervisor or unit manager

If you still have unanswered questions and/or are uncomfortable about discussing the issue with those involved in your animal's care, please consider contacting the VMC's manager of client experience.

VMC manager of client experience

Just like a patient advocate in a human hospital, the VMC's manager of client experience serves as an advocate for our patients and clients. Here's an overview of the manager's role:

- ensures that our clinical team hears and responds to clients' concerns
- helps to connect clients with the people or information that they need, and co-ordinates responses from various departments or services
- ensures that concerns are dealt with in a thorough and timely fashion and that procedural or policy changes are implemented
- helps clients decide if they want to proceed through an informal internal investigation or if they wish to have their case heard by the VMC client relations and concerns committee

To contact the VMC manager of client experience, call 306-966-8795 or email vmcclientconcerns@usask.ca

Complaint resolution procedure

- Submit your complaint in writing to the manager of client experience at vmcclientconcerns@usask.ca. The manager will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and may arrange a follow-up phone call.
- You will be contacted to clarify any questions about your complaint, to discuss available options for resolution and to decide if you would like to proceed to an informal internal review or a referral to the client relations and concerns committee.

Option 1: informal internal review

Your complaint will be reviewed and responded to through an email message or a phone call. The VMC's manager of client experience will follow up internally about allegations including (but not limited to):

- gathering additional details from VMC staff/clinicians
- soliciting outside advice
- reviewing processes as necessary

Option 2: client relations and concerns committee

Cases involving multiple or complex concerns may be elevated to the VMC client relations and concerns committee through a client request or upon the manager of client experience's recommendation. If you choose to participate in this process, there are several steps involved.

- Before the meeting, a case summary is compiled. The summary includes a written statement detailing the allegations, a timeline of events and any other information relevant to the submitted allegations.
- If there's a dispute over facts, the committee chair will interview any witnesses and gather any relevant evidence that will assist in the process. Based on the facts, the chair will determine whether the complaint is of substance.

- If VMC staff or clinicians involved in the case are unable to attend the meeting, follow up with individual staff members may take place on a one-on-one basis.
- A final report documenting the client concerns and results of the investigation/committee discussion process will be provided to the complainant. Due to the complex nature of cases handled by the client relations and concerns committee, it may take eight to 12 weeks before receipt of a formal response.

What if a concern cannot be resolved?

It is the responsibility of the VMC to fully investigate all concerns within its jurisdiction. However, some concerns will not be resolved to the client's or initiator's satisfaction. In efforts to attain resolution of concerns, the manager of client experience or the client relations and concerns committee may receive input from various supervisory levels of the organization.

Appeals

If a concern remains unresolved after input from the WCVM's associate dean, clinical programs, and a client/initiator desires to pursue an appeal of the response from the client representative, an appeal can be made to the WCVM dean. The dean's appeal decision is final.

VMC client experience survey

We are always working to improve our clients' experience at the WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC), so we would love to hear from you about what we are doing right and what we can do better. If you wish to give your feedback, please visit www.vmc.usask.ca/survey and your name will be entered in a monthly draw for \$50 worth of pet food.

VMC client rights and responsibilities

Our clients have the right to:

- Responsive and objective care and service from all clinical and operational staff at the WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC).
- Accurate, timely and easy to comprehend information about patient health and VMC policies.
- If required, assistance in understanding information (including service fees), so clients may make informed decisions about medical treatment of their animals.
- Participation in decisions about their animals' treatment and care.
- Confidentiality of their animals' health care information and ability to receive information from their animals' health record in a timely manner.
- Fair and impartial review of complaints or concerns about the VMC.

Our clients are responsible for:

- Maintaining their animals' health through exercise and diet, and scheduling regular visits with their primary veterinarian.
- Treating VMC staff with respect, kindness and understanding. The hospital has a zero-tolerance policy for verbal abuse toward VMC staff.
- Communicating wants or needs and communicating clearly if there are questions about animals' health care or diagnoses.
- Recognize that the VMC operates on a triage basis and has an obligation to prioritize patient care to those with the greatest medical urgency.
- Using the VMC's client feedback process to address issues that arise during patient visits.
- Abiding by the VMC hospital and financial agreements.
- Recognizing that there are risks and limitations present in veterinary medicine.