



FACT SHEET

EVERYONE WITH PIGS NEEDS A VET!

Why have a vet?

Anyone who owns and/or cares for pigs should have a veterinarian they can call on to help them manage the health of their animals. Veterinarians are able to provide advice and medicines for the prevention and treatment of disease on-farm. Although disease may not always be obvious, “subclinical” disease can often be expensive as pigs grow slower, have poorer feed conversion efficiency and reduced carcass value compared to healthy pigs. There are also some legal reasons for having a veterinarian visit your farm:

- The Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals (Pigs) now has a requirement that all farms have a “Herd Health Program” designed in collaboration with a veterinarian to ensure disease does not impact on the welfare of animals;
- It is a requirement of the Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance Program (APIQ[✓]®) that farms seeking accreditation have a Herd Health Program developed in collaboration with their veterinarian.
- It is a legal requirement for a veterinarian to have a bona fide veterinarian-client relationship before they can prescribe, authorise and dispense/supply Schedule 4 (vet-only) medicines to animal owners and custodians.

Further information on this can be found in the Australian Veterinary Association Guidelines for Prescribing, Authorising and Dispensing Veterinary Medicines (2005), found at: http://www.ava.com.au/sites/default/files/documents/Other/Guidelines_for_prescribing_authorising_and_dispensing_veterinary_medicines.pdf.

A bona fide veterinarian-client relationship exists where each of the following occurs:

- The veterinarian has assumed responsibility for making judgments regarding the health and welfare of the animal(s) and the need for treatment, with the owner’s (client’s) agreement.
- The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal(s) to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of their medical condition.

This means that the veterinarian has recently seen and is personally acquainted with the keeping and care of the animal(s) by virtue of a clinical examination, or by medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animal(s) are kept.

- The veterinarian is available, or has arranged for adequate emergency coverage, for follow-up evaluation in the event of an adverse reaction or failure of the treatment regimen.

The care of the animal or herd by the veterinarian should be real and not merely nominal, i.e. there must be evidence of personally having contact with the animal/herd for diagnosis and treatment and of assuming personal responsibility for the diagnosis, treatment and outcome.

The veterinarian should know the client and have clinical records relating to the client’s animal(s). In the case of a new client, the veterinarian should personally familiarise him/herself with the client and their animal or herd (by establishing the clinical history and performing appropriate clinical and pathological examinations), and commence keeping appropriate records, prior to dispensing restricted drugs.

Associates and locums working in the practice can deputise for the veterinary practitioner provided they have unrestricted access to the client’s records.

A client may have a bona fide professional relationship with more than one veterinarian, or more than one veterinary practice. When dealing with a request for dispensing from a client with whom the veterinarian does not have a current professional relationship it is advisable to ask the client if they have a current professional relationship with another veterinary practitioner. Having established the current veterinary provider, a veterinarian is then in a position to either refer the client back to that provider and/or establish a current bona fide professional relationship.

A veterinarian must be registered to practice in the state/territory in which the animal or herd is located.

Veterinarians and this Herd Health Program

Producers with very few pigs may not have regular contact with a veterinarian. There are fewer than 30 practising pig-specialist veterinarians in Australia – so your local vet may need to refer you on if they can’t assist you. No matter what number of pigs you have, the legal obligations stated above still apply.



This Herd Health Program Checklist is designed to assist you when talking with your veterinarian to develop a Herd Health Program. Read through the checklist and the supporting resource materials. Once you have completed this, talk with your veterinarian about the design of a Herd Health Program based on your responses.

We hope that this program is helpful to you and your business.

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