



Telemedicine Position Statement

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The ASV believes that telemedicine,^{1,2} defined as the use of remote communication technology to provide medical examination and treatment, can safely and meaningfully broaden shelter, foster, and client access to expert veterinary care. Telemedicine is a tool that can enhance individual animal and animal population welfare in many ways: by removing geographical barriers that limit or delay medical care; by eliminating the time and stress of travel for pets, clients, and veterinarians; and by promoting biosecurity when animals, populations, or people harbor infectious diseases. Many veterinarians currently use telemedicine for animals within shelter populations, communicating via video conference, phone, text and email with trained personnel, foster care-givers, and adopters. However, telemedicine may not be appropriate for all veterinary cases, and legal and practical limitations may exist.

The ASV believes that veterinarians should be able to use their professional discretion to determine whether telemedicine is an appropriate examination modality to generate a diagnosis or to make medical judgements, just as veterinarians currently determine their own comfort and capability when diagnosing and treating animals or populations examined in person.³ The ASV supports legislation and practice act revisions that allow the creation of veterinary-client-patient relationships (VCPRs) through telephone, digital, or other electronic communication, as well as provisions that allow the prescription of medications through such VCPRs. As with any other medical consultation, it is incumbent upon the practicing veterinarian to keep appropriate medical records for each encounter, and to ensure appropriate follow-up. Veterinarians practicing telemedicine should be aware of the jurisdictional limits of veterinary licenses and the limitations on telemedicine practice set out in their regional laws and practice acts.

1. Gyles, Carlton. Veterinary Telemedicine. Canadian Veterinary Journal, 2019 Feb, 60(2): 119-112. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6340261/>
2. "AVMA Guidelines for the Use of Telehealth in Veterinary Practice: Implementing Connected Care." AVMA, 2021.
3. "Telemedicine," AVMA Policies, 2020 <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/telemedicine>

The mission of the ASV is to advance and support the practice of shelter medicine in order to improve community animal health and well-being.