

GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

Your Questions Answered Here

The Texas Veterinary Medical Association understands that in the real world there will be times a disagreement or miscommunication can jeopardize the relationship between a client and veterinarian. As the first course of action, TVMA always encourages clients to make every attempt to express their concerns directly to the veterinarian involved before taking further action. When all attempts have failed, TVMA has an Ethics and Grievance Committee to help resolve grievances. These highly trained veterinary professionals serve to provide a method of reaching a reasonable and mutually agreed solution. Their goal is to help everyone involved have a better understanding of the medical aspects of the case and to help the veterinarian learn from the experience.

PLEASE NOTE:

The TVMA Ethics and Grievance Committee can only accept cases that involve TVMA members. Our organization has no legal authority to take punitive action, nor can we discipline a veterinarian for their conduct.

We encourage clients to also contact the local veterinary medical association in their area as they may have a peer review process. Contact the TVMA office at 512/452-4224 or info@tvma.org for contact information.

If you have already filed a formal complaint with the Texas State Board of Veterinary Examiners or if you have initiated legal proceedings concerning this complaint, the TVMA Ethics and Grievance Committee cannot engage in the review.

GRIEVANCE REVIEW PROCESS

- Client contacts the TVMA Office to confirm the veterinarian's membership status.
- Client downloads the official grievance form from the TVMA website, completes requested information and then forwards documentation to the TVMA Office by mail, email or fax. The complainant should include as much detail about the incident as possible. It is vital the Committee is made aware of all veterinarians who have and are currently treating the pet(s). These practitioners will be asked to provide information that may be vital to the case.
- The TVMA Ethics and Grievance Committee reviews complaint and determines eligibility.
- The client is notified whether the Committee can or cannot review the case.
- If it is determined that the Committee can review the case, the client will be notified by mail and the veterinarian in question will receive a copy of the original complaint. The veterinarian has 30 days to respond.
- If the practitioner does not respond, the client will be notified. TVMA does not have the authority to force a response.
- If the practitioner does respond, the Committee has 90 days to complete their review and communicate their findings to the client and the veterinarian.

Most Frequently Asked Questions About Filing a Complaint

What is the TVMA Ethics and Grievance Committee?

The TVMA Ethics and Grievance Committee is made up of 20 practicing veterinarians who are dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of excellence with regard to the practice of veterinary medicine. The Committee's goal is to help resolve conflicts by promoting open discourse between the pet owner and the TVMA member. Please note this Committee does not have legal standing to impose any type of monetary or disciplinary action against the license of a veterinarian and the results of our mediation do not constitute a legal opinion or a finding of fault. However, this grievance process continues to serve as an effective quality control mechanism because pet owners are provided with a way to air their grievances before an impartial group of Doctors of Veterinary Medicine. The Committee members have the opportunity to review the actions of their peers and provide them with opinions as to whether appropriate action was taken in a particular situation. They strive to give instruction and advice to their peers to help them become better practitioners.



What are ways I can avoid future miscommunication with my veterinarian?

Always ask the veterinarian to provide an estimate of fees and services prior to agreeing to the service. Make certain you understand what services are being recommended, how you are to be billed and what additional services may be needed in the future. If you have concerns or questions, do not be afraid to address them prior to agreeing to the estimate. Clearly state you want to be notified of any additional charges outside of the estimate before the service is provided. Good communication will help keep a misunderstanding from occurring.

What steps should I take if I am unhappy with my veterinarian?

Sometimes problems can occur as a result of either a miscommunication or inadequate direct communication between you and your veterinarian or even members of their staff. Often these problems can be cleared up by simply discussing the matter directly with the veterinarian. This is why the TVMA Ethics and Grievance Committee recommends you speak with your veterinarian first or send a certified letter clearly addressing your concerns to their office. If this option has already been exercised without a satisfactory response, you may consider filing a grievance as instructed on this page.

How do I file a grievance against a TVMA Member?

Because our organization can only address complaints against members, we ask you contact the TVMA office either by phone (512/452-4224) or by email (info@tvma.org) to determine whether the veterinarian is a member. Once we make that determination, you can submit your complaint in writing on the downloadable "peer review" form attached to this flyer. The TVMA staff can also email or fax the form if that is preferred.

What happens after a grievance has been filed?

Upon receipt of the completed "Client Grievance Review Form," the information will be forwarded to the Chair of the TVMA Ethics and Grievance Committee. The Chair will review the information and verify the complaint is within the Committee's scope of expertise. A copy of the complaint will be sent to the veterinarian in question and a letter will be sent to the complainant confirming the Committee's decision to review the case. The veterinarian has 30 days to respond to the complaint. Please note our involvement is strictly on a voluntary basis. If the veterinarian chooses to not accept the Committee's offer to mediate the case, you will be notified. If the veterinarian does respond, the Committee will receive a full copy of the original complaint plus the veterinarian's response. You will receive a written summary of the Committee's findings and recommendation within 30-45 days after we confirm we can review the case. All inquiries are strictly confidential and are not public record.

Is there a cost for mediation through the TVMA Ethics and Grievance Committee?

There is no charge. The ethics and grievance process is a free public service provided by TVMA in order to maintain a high level of quality professional veterinary care and to foster communication between clients and their veterinarians.

What are my alternatives if the veterinarian involved is not a member?

If the veterinarian is not a member of TVMA, there are other options available.

Many regions and cities in Texas have a local veterinary medical association whose membership consist of veterinarians in the area. Some of these organization may offer a peer review service. We recommend checking to see if this service is available locally before proceeding further. For contact information on local VMA's, please contact the TVMA office.

The Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners operates under the authority of Chapter 801, Texas Occupations Code. The Veterinary Licensing Act, along with the Board, was created in 1911. The purpose of the Board is to protect the public by ensuring that persons entering the profession meet minimum academic and examination requirements. The Board also establishes and enforces policies to ensure the best possible quality of veterinary services for the citizens of Texas. If you have a complaint about veterinary services you received from a veterinarian licensed by the Board, you may file a formal complaint. The Board also accepts complaints concerning an unlicensed individual practicing veterinary medicine. Complaints must be on the Board's Official Complaint Form, which may be obtained by calling, writing, sending e-mail to the Board offices or downloading the Official Complaint Form (refer to website list below). Contact information for the State Board is:

Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners
333 Guadalupe Street Tower III, Ste. 810
Austin, TX 78701
512/305-7555 (office) • 512/936-0837 (fax)
Web address: tbvme.state.tx.us/Complaints.php

Have you personally talked with your veterinarian about your concerns?

If not, we urge you to take the time to personally speak with him or her before proceeding in the grievance process. Most misunderstandings can be resolved through open and honest communication.



How does the Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners differ from the Texas Veterinary Medical Association?

The Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners is a state agency that enforces the Veterinary Licensing Act and its Rules of Professional Conduct. They have the authority to revoke or suspend licenses, issue administrative penalties, administer oaths and subpoenas, and compel witnesses to attend hearings concerning alleged violations of the Veterinary Licensing Act.

The Texas Veterinary Medical Association is a volunteer organization whose membership is primarily made up of dedicated veterinarians who live and work in Texas. We are governed by volunteer leaders chosen each year by the members of the association. Unlike TVMA staff and unlike their counterparts in private business, our leaders do not get paid for their time and effort. They are dedicated veterinarians who give many hours and much energy each year to the governance, management and operations of TVMA out of duty and devotion to their profession.

The TVMA Ethics and Grievance Committee is one of many Committees who service our membership.

Client Information Section *(Complete contact information must be provided. Print or type clearly.)*

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ Phone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Preferred means of communication (please check one): mail phone email

Has this dispute been sent to the Texas Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners? Yes No

Has a law suit been initiated concerning this dispute? Yes No

What resolution would you like to see from this dispute? _____

Information on Primary Veterinarian Involved in Dispute

(Complete contact information must be provided. Print or type clearly.)

Veterinarian's Name: _____

Clinic Address: _____

Clinic City: _____ Clinic State: _____ Clinic Zip: _____

Clinic Phone Number: _____

Is this your regular veterinarian? Yes No

If not, who is? _____

Information on Second Veterinarian Involved in Dispute

(Complete contact information must be provided. Print or type clearly.)

If there is another veterinarian who is involved in this grievance, please provide that information here. Should there be more than one additional veterinarian, please include that information in the "statement of facts" listed below.

Veterinarian's Name: _____

Clinic Address: _____

Clinic City: _____ Clinic State: _____ Clinic Zip: _____

Clinic Phone Number: _____

