



Corporate Practice

NYSVMS Position:

New York State law currently restricts the practice of veterinary medicine (and many other professions) to licensed veterinarians, professional service corporations and professional limited liability companies. This system assures that professional liability accrues to the individual license holder. The public interest is best served when individual practitioners are responsible for veterinary decision-making and thus subject to license suspension or revocation for improper veterinary treatment.

Today in New York State, we face lay corporate intrusion into veterinary practice. Although practice acquisition by lay corporations is not permitted under New York State law, various shell "management contracts" have served to shield these transactions from the enforcement of our current laws. NYSVMS is concerned about this trend, as it establishes a separate category of veterinary practitioner (the lay corporation) that may not possess any veterinary knowledge, and is effectively removed from the oversight and control of NYSED. Ultimately, in these cases, an important layer of protection is lost to the consumer. In all cases, the ultimate treatment plan is the sole responsibility of the licensed veterinarian treating each animal, rather than non-veterinary business managers.

The vertical integration of laboratory services, pet foods, supplies and ancillary care under the same corporate umbrella exposes the public to marketing practices that might be seen as unprofessional conduct if conducted by individual practitioners. There is now no mechanism for state oversight for practices conducted and controlled by lay corporations.

We believe the risks to the public will increase if this consolidation of practice continues. The New York State Board of Regents has voiced their concerns about the erosion of state control that would occur if the ban on lay corporate practice were allowed to lapse. The NYSVMS adds the voice of the veterinarian to this issue.

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