

## **Procedure for Issuing Advisory Opinions on the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics**

1. Advisory opinions on the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics (“PVME”) will be issued in writing by the AVMA Board of Directors (“Board”) in accordance with these procedures. Opinions will only be issued in response to written requests from AVMA members and organizations that are represented in the AVMA House of Delegates. Upon request from an Officer or Director of the AVMA or upon its own initiative, the AVMA may examine subject matter of a general interest under the PVME and may issue an Advisory Opinion.
2. Requests for opinions shall:
  - a. Be in written form signed by the individual or organization making the request, including contact information (email address, phone number);
  - b. Relate to prospective conduct only and must not be the subject of pending litigation, disciplinary or other adjudicatory proceedings;
  - c. Contain a complete statement of all facts upon which the opinion is requested;
  - d. Include a concise question of professional ethics under the PVME; and
  - e. Not involve a question of law.
3. All requests for an Advisory Opinion must be sent to the AVMA Executive Vice President who will promptly forward the request to the Board Chair. The Executive Vice President or General Counsel may reply to the individual or organization making the request by providing information relevant to such request or asking for additional information. The AVMA is not obligated to issue an advisory opinion for each such request it receives.
4. Upon receipt of a request for an Advisory Opinion, the Board Chair may appoint a panel of three AVMA members (“Ethics Panel”) to consider the request and render a recommendation to the Board. Preference will be given to AVMA members with a demonstrated history or specific knowledge related to the PVME, such as former members of the AVMA Judicial Council.
5. The identity of the individual making the request, as well as the identity of the subject of the request (if any), shall be disclosed to the Ethics Panel.
6. The Ethics Panel may research the issue(s) raised by the Advisory Opinion request, but any expenditures must be approved in advance by the Board Chair.
7. The Ethics Panel shall provide its recommendation to the Board no more than ninety (90) days after the date the AVMA received the request for the Advisory Opinion. In the event the Ethics Panel members do not agree on the recommendation, the disagreeing member(s) may draft a minority recommendation(s) for the Board’s consideration.
8. The Board shall consider the recommendation(s) of the Ethics Panel at its next regularly scheduled meeting following receipt of the recommendation(s), or as soon thereafter as is reasonably practicable. The Board shall render the Advisory Opinion by majority vote. In the

event that a Board member(s) does not agree on the Advisory Opinion, the disagreeing Board member(s) may draft a minority opinion for publication along with the majority opinion of the Board.

9. The Executive Vice President shall provide a copy of the Advisory Opinion, along with any minority opinion(s), to the individual or organization requesting the Opinion. The Board may, in its sole discretion, publish the Advisory Opinion (and any minority opinion(s)) through any AVMA communication channels, such as the AVMA website or social media accounts.
10. Each Advisory Opinion shall contain the following language: "This is an Advisory Opinion of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and is intended to be the AVMA's best interpretation of the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics as applied to the written facts presented to the AVMA. The AVMA makes no representations or warranties about its completeness, reliability, or accuracy. Any action you take in reliance on this Advisory Opinion is strictly at your own risk and will not relieve you from any liability for conduct consistent with this Advisory Opinion."
11. The files of the Ethics Panel, or any part or copy of any file, or of any member of the Ethics Panel relating to its work, shall be treated as confidential and shall not be disclosed or made available in any way to any person other than the Board and AVMA staff who are involved in the process.
12. The Board may decline to render an Advisory Opinion in its sole discretion.