



# FAQs: Complaints

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## General Information

### **Q** What is the Veterinary Examining Board (VEB)?

The VEB defines professional standards and regulatory policies for credential holders, who are licensed or permitted veterinarians and certified veterinary technicians. The board determines the education and experience required for obtaining a credential, develops and evaluates credentialing examinations, and establishes and enforces standards of professional conduct for credential holders.

Members of the VEB are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature to serve four-year staggered terms. Each appointee is limited to two terms. The board consists of five licensed veterinarians, one certified veterinarian technician, and two public members.

### **Q** What can the VEB investigate, and when can it take action?

Generally speaking, the VEB has authority to investigate and take action on violations of the standard of care, practice of veterinary medicine, and unprofessional conduct for both veterinarians and veterinary technicians.

- [Wis. Admin. Code ch. VE 7](#) defines the standards of practice and unprofessional conduct for veterinarians.
- [Wis. Admin. Code ch. VE 9](#) defines the standards of practice and unprofessional conduct for certified veterinary technicians.

The VEB does not have jurisdiction over fees or any other financial aspects of a credential-holder's operation.

## Complaint Process

### **Q** How do I file a complaint?

[Visit the VEB webpage](#). On the menu at the left side of the page, click "File a Complaint." This will walk you through the steps to file a complaint.



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## **Q How long after an incident occurs can I file a complaint? Is there a deadline?**

There is no deadline for filing a complaint. In general, a more timely complaint means that information may be fresher in everyone's mind and documents more readily available. This assists in getting the investigation completed in the most efficient and timely manner.

## **Q Can a complaint be made anonymously?**

Yes, complaints can be made anonymously. However, if additional information is needed from the complainant prior to moving forward with the complaint, and no contact information is available, it may hinder the ability of the VEB to fully investigate the complaint.

## **Q What happens after a complaint is filed?**

A received complaint is reviewed by a VEB investigator who will follow-up with the complainant and credential holder. The investigator will contact other persons, as needed, to gather facts, potential evidence, and other information relevant to the complaint. VEB staff members do not have authority to judge or make decisions on complaints. The VEB investigation staff process complaints, investigate to gather facts and evidence, present the findings to the VEB screening committee, and assist disciplinary counsel and the case advisor with drafting the resolution and communications with the complainant and respondent.

The VEB screening committee is comprised of a subset of Veterinary Examining Board members. The screening committee meets monthly at meetings that are open to the public, and it reviews all complaints that fall under the jurisdiction of the VEB. The screening committee decides whether there is evidence of a violation of VEB rules and regulations and, if so, it opens the complaint for further investigation and potential disciplinary action against the credential holder, now titled "respondent." If the screening committee does not believe there is evidence of a violation, the complainant and credential holder are notified after the screening committee meeting.

## **Q What happens when a complaint is filed against a person who is practicing veterinary medicine but is not licensed?**

The VEB only has authority over licensed persons. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has authority over unlicensed practice of veterinary medicine. While the VEB is attached to DATCP, its authorities are separate. If a complaint against an unlicensed person is made to the VEB, it is referred to DATCP staff to investigate and determine if there is enough evidence to take action. Actions may include issuing a cease and desist notice or, if necessary, requesting an administrative injunction from DATCP or a court-ordered injunction.



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dah-adc-128 (6/21)

## **Q How long does it take for action on a complaint?**

A specific timeline cannot be provided, as each complaint is reviewed and handled on an individual basis. Many variables exist, including but not limited to: current VEB caseload; timeliness of communication with the respondent and/or complainant; complex matters which may involve more in-depth investigation; whether a case is referred for further investigation; and whether the case is settled or moves to hearing. Depending on those variables, it is not uncommon for a case to be open for 12 months or longer.

## **Q Can you tell me when my case will be heard by the screening committee or the full VEB?**

VEB investigators do not inform complainants individually when cases will come before either body. However, this information is publicly available, as all meetings of the screening committee and the VEB are noticed to the public with an agenda. The meeting agenda lists cases by case number and initials of the Respondent. [Public meeting notices are posted here.](#)

## **Q I need clarification on a statute or rule, or legal advice about a complaint. Can you help?**

Neither the VEB nor its staff may offer legal advice, including statute or rule interpretation, to a complainant or respondent. The VEB always recommends that any complainant or respondent seek legal counsel. The VEB or its staff may not provide recommendations for engaging legal counsel services.

## **Q When a complaint is opened for further investigation and a violation is found, what happens next?**

If the complaint is opened for further investigation, a member of the board is assigned to the case as a case advisor. The case advisor and a VEB investigator work together to further investigate and to gather additional facts. The case advisor recommends a specific action, which is then reviewed by the disciplinary counsel. The disciplinary counsel will then contact the respondent or respondent's attorney to see if the parties can reach a negotiated settlement. If achieved, disciplinary counsel will write a stipulation, to be signed by the parties, and a draft decision and order to be considered by the VEB. All draft decisions are presented to the full VEB at the next quarterly board meeting for a final decision.

If a stipulation is not reached, disciplinary counsel drafts a complaint for hearing. The VEB then refers the case to the state agency that employs administrative law judges (ALJ) to assign an ALJ to conduct the hearing and make a proposed decision and order to the VEB for final decision making. The ALJ oversees all proceedings in the case until either a settlement is reached or a proposed decision is issued for final VEB review, with the decision and order issued by the VEB.



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## **Q May I be provided specific updates and details prior to the closing of my complaint or the case?**

You may receive updates on where the complaint is in the process — for example, when it is up for review by the VEB — but not specific details of findings in the investigation. Disclosing details of an open investigation or pending action could hinder both the investigation and case resolution efforts.

## **Q When and how may I request records of the case?**

Once your case is closed, you will receive a letter notifying you of this. If you wish to obtain records related to the case, you may send a public records request to [datcppublicrecords@wisconsin.gov](mailto:datcppublicrecords@wisconsin.gov). Include your case number and other helpful identifying information in your request.

## **Q Are complaints a public record?**

Yes, after the case has been closed.

## **Q How do I find out if a veterinarian or veterinary technician has had prior discipline?**

[Visit the VEB webpage](#). Scroll down to “Current and Previous License Holders” and click the corresponding link for the type of credential holder you are trying to locate. A document will open that lists all credential holders. In that list, the final column is titled “Board Orders.” If there is a board order listed in this column, it means that there has been prior discipline imposed on this credential holder. You may view the board order by clicking on it.

## **Medical Records, Billing & Prescriptions**

### **Q Is my veterinarian required to provide medical records if I ask for them?**

Yes. Per [Wis. Stat. § 89.075\(1\)](#), the veterinarian is required to provide records to the owner of the animal, or another person with authorization from the owner, upon payment of reasonable costs.

### **Q Can my veterinarian charge me for my medical records?**

Yes, the clinic/veterinarian may charge for reasonable costs, per [Wis. Stat. § 89.075\(1\)](#).

### **Q Can the VEB make a clinic/veterinarian reimburse me for expenses?**

No. The VEB does not have authority over any financial aspect of a veterinarian or clinic.



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**Q Can my veterinarian withhold my medical records if I do not pay my bill?**

[Wis. Stat. § 89.075\(1\)](#) requires a veterinarian to provide records to the owner of the animal, or another person with authorization from the owner, upon payment of reasonable costs. If you feel that the fee assessed for records is not reasonable, you may file a complaint with the VEB. The VEB will review it and determine if they feel the costs are reasonable.

**Q Can a veterinarian refuse treatment of my animal or decline to provide services to me as a client? Even if it is an emergency?**

There are no statutes or administrative rules that require a veterinarian to examine or treat any animal patient or continue the veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

**Q Do I have to fill my prescription at the clinic where it was prescribed?**

No. A veterinarian/clinic cannot require you to fill a prescription at their clinic or by their selected provider(s). The veterinarian is required to give you the prescription so it may be filled elsewhere.

**Q Does the VEB provide oversight on the price veterinarians charge for prescriptions?**

No. The VEB does not have authority over this issue.

**Q What happens if I cannot pay my bill?**

The VEB does not have authority over this issue. You would need to discuss the problem with the veterinarian or clinic staff.



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