

# Nevada Veterinary Board Bulletin



## VETERINARY DENTISTRY

AVOID HAVING A PATIENT'S TOOTHACHE TURN INTO YOUR HEADACHE.

Veterinary practices often face challenges related to dental procedures, underscoring the importance of effective communication and informed consent.

In this article, you will find a sample case study, a simplified guide to managing unexpected dental extractions, and actionable tips for ensuring client trust and animal welfare.

### Case Facts

- a) The patient, a dog, is dropped off for routine dental cleaning.
- b) During the previous exam, you mentioned that extractions may be needed.
- c) You stated your estimate at 3-5 extractions.
- d) During the procedure, you find that nearly all teeth require extraction.
- e) Your client consent form states the owner wishes to be contacted.

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- a. Proceed with all necessary extractions and explain the need to the client later.
- b. Extract only the most affected teeth and wait for client approval for the rest within a reasonable and safe amount of time to keep your patient under anesthesia.
- c. Extract the most affected teeth and recover the patient, waiting for further contact from the owner.

*Find out what's next on page 3...*

### UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS

RENEWALS OPEN 4/1/2025

RENEWALS DUE 6/30/2025

BOARD MEETING: JULY 24, 2025 (RENO)

BOARD MEETING OCTOBER 23, 2025  
(LAS VEGAS)



# WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A VETERINARIAN IN ANIMAL CRUELTY INVESTIGATIONS?

This article offers tips for veterinary professionals involved in animal cruelty investigations, from recognizing signs of abuse to effective documentation and reporting.

Veterinarians play a vital role in identifying and addressing animal cruelty and in supporting broader criminal investigations. However, not much guidance is given to professionals on what to look for, when to report, and how to properly document their concerns. Veterinary professionals should be equipped with knowledge and tools to intervene safely and effectively.

Here are 5 practical guidelines to consider:

## 1. Understand the Link Between Animal Cruelty and Other Crimes

Animal cruelty often occurs in households where other forms of abuse, such as child or partner abuse, are present. Studies show that 60% of households with animal abuse also involve child abuse. Moreover, individuals who abuse animals may also display other behaviors linked to mental health issues, addiction, or antisocial traits. It's important for veterinarians to recognize these patterns, as they can be crucial indicators for further investigations.

## 2. Document Everything – The Power of Forensic Exams

Forensic exams are essential in investigating animal cruelty cases, as they provide key evidence that can be used in court. A thorough forensic examination should include body condition scoring, detailed photography, and communication with authorities. Radiographs and diagnostic tests can help determine the cause and extent of injuries, while careful documentation of observations is also important. With detailed medical records created for each individual, particularly in cases like animal hoarding. In these situations, documentation of each animal's condition is vital to understanding the scope of abuse.

## 3. Recognize Common Signs of Abuse and Neglect

Veterinarians should be vigilant for common signs of animal cruelty. These signs include poor body condition, unexplained fractures (old and new), pressure sores, and unhealthy appearance or hygiene. For instance, in cases of hoarding, signs of nasal and ocular discharge, serious dental disease, and poor body score are common. Often, hoarders will refuse to disclose the true number of the animals in their care, so questioning pet owners and looking beyond the obvious can uncover critical information. Similarly, emaciation in pets can point to intentional neglect, particularly if it occurs alongside other forms of neglect such as lack of proper animal husbandry, unexplained injuries, or pressure sores.

## 4. Be Prepared for On-Scene Investigations

Veterinarians may be called to participate in on-scene investigations, especially in cases of suspected hoarding or abuse. In these situations, having a contact guide for your county or city law enforcement or animal control can ensure a swift and coordinated response. Veterinarians and staff can act as valuable resources to law enforcement and animal control officers, providing expertise in evaluating evidence. This might include identifying hidden injuries, understanding animal behavior under stress, or helping assess the overall health and welfare of animals seized during an investigation.

*continued on page 3*



## 5. Know When and How to Report

In Nevada, veterinarians are not legally required to report suspected animal cruelty. Beyond the legal obligations, veterinarians can also serve as expert witnesses in court, offering testimony about their findings and the extent of the animal's suffering. A well-documented report can significantly influence the outcome of the case.

Veterinarians can play a critical role in preventing and addressing animal cruelty. Through forensic exams, careful observation, and close collaboration with law enforcement, veterinary professionals can be vital in assisting and reporting suspected animal abuse. By understanding the signs of abuse, documenting evidence thoroughly, and knowing the reporting protocols, veterinary professionals can significantly contribute to the fight against animal cruelty and improve both animal and human welfare

### Resources:

6 hours RACE approved CE: <https://www.victim2verdict.com/online-course-details>

International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association: <https://www.ivfssa.org/>

AVMA: <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/animal-abuse-resources-veterinarians>


ASPCA: <https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/veterinary-resources-recognizing-and-reporting-animal-cruelty-and-neglect>

Minimum Standards and Best Practices for Clinical Veterinary Forensic Examinations: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2665910720301006>

VIN: Veterinary Forensics Comes of Age: <https://news.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=210&Id=11730935&f5=1>

## What Would You Do? Dentistry Continued...

1. **Document Thoroughly:** As soon as you recognize the severity of the dental condition, document your findings, the initial consent, and your rationale for the necessary treatment. Accurate record-keeping ensures that you can provide comprehensive details if questioned later.
2. **Attempt to Reach the Client:** Make reasonable efforts to contact the client before proceeding with the extensive extractions. If the client is unreachable, you could consider proceeding with the extractions or consider staging the procedure by performing a partial full mouth extraction. Ensure your documentation reflects the attempts to reach the owner and justifications for the extractions.
3. **Follow-Up Post-Procedure:** Communication is key. After the procedure, provide a thorough update to the client detailing what was done, the condition of the teeth, and the reasons for the greater scope of extractions than initially anticipated. This transparency not only fosters trust but also prepares the owner for post-operative care.



As a veterinary professional, you often face a challenge between doing what you believe is what is best for your patient and the client's consent.

This is where client education and clear communication *before* you get to the procedure matters most. Everyday events for a veterinary professional can seem shocking and overwhelming to a client who hears '32 extractions' and feels that they had no say in the wellbeing of their pet—even if *you* know you did what would be professionally recommended. Make sure your client knows before you go into the procedure that things can change, and more extractions may be needed.

Consider improvements to intake and client communication before you find yourself caught in the middle of client consent and patient well-being. Improve client communication, education, and ensure robust informed consent for dental procedures.

**Written Consent:**

Use a consent form that addresses common potential scenarios and owner preferences if you find that during the procedure modifications regarding what you discussed with the client are required. Include a discussion of decisions that you may need to make during a procedure. List clear and concise options for the client with common situations such as discovering additional extractions and allow the client to designate their wishes in writing. What would your client prefer if you find full mouth extractions are needed and you cannot reach the client. Do you proceed or stage it?

**Discuss Dental Disease:**

Educate clients about the limitations of the exam. Explain that dental issues may only be revealed during anesthesia and radiographic evaluation. You and your client want what is best for the patient, they may just not know enough about 'the why'.

**Offer Staging Options:**

If multiple extractions are needed, discuss the option to stage the procedure.

**Acknowledge a Client Emotions:**

Be empathetic when discussing unexpected findings. Provide reassurance and detailed explanations to help clients understand their pet's dental health needs.

**Document Conversations:**

Keep thorough records of all discussions regarding dental health, consent, and treatment decisions to enhance transparency and accountability.

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*Questions? Comments? Ideas?*

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