

What is expected from the Peer Review Committee?

This is an informal process. Once a grievance form has been received at the IVMA office, it is forwarded to the Chair of the Peer Review Committee. This is done in strictest confidence. The Committee chair will contact the veterinarian against whom the complaint is directed, requesting an explanation or commentary. The investigation then consists of sending the entire grievance information to no fewer than four members of the Committee. They will be asked to provide their opinions and evaluation of both the grievance and the veterinarian's response.

The Chair of the Committee will evaluate the responses and will attempt to make a fair and impartial analysis with the evaluations supplied by the Committee members. Every attempt will be made to resolve the grievance with a mutually acceptable solution. Both parties will be advised of the Peer Review Committee's final decision.

How can I avoid disputes in the future?

Ask your veterinarian to provide you with a written agreement of fees and services to be rendered. Make certain you understand what specific services are covered by the agreement, how you will be billed, and for what services you will be charged. If you have questions, bring them to your veterinarian's attention before the procedure or treatment is rendered. A clear understanding of the initial agreement and the expectations of all parties will help prevent future misunderstandings.

What you CAN expect from the IVMA Peer Review Committee:

- Your grievance will receive prompt and full attention.
- Every attempt will be made to handle the grievance fairly.
- Written notice of the final decision concerning your grievance will be sent to you and the veterinarian.
- Your grievance will be dealt with in confidence.

What you should not expect from the IVMA Peer Review Committee:

- You should not expect that your grievance will be decided solely on the basis of what you claim to have happened, just as, in fairness to you, the veterinarian about whom you complained cannot expect the matter will be decided solely on the basis of his or her version.
- While a monetary settlement may be reached you should not *expect*, as a result of our grievance, that you will receive money or reimbursement of loss. If the solution reached is not satisfactory, you may seek recovery of any monetary or animal loss through the usual civil means.

This brochure was supplied by the Indiana Veterinary Medical Association. Additional copies of this brochure or grievance forms can be obtained by contacting:

*Indiana Veterinary Medical Association
210 South Capitol Avenue, Suite 405
Indianapolis, IN 46225*

Grievances Involving Indiana Veterinarians.....

Your Questions Answered



Indiana Veterinary Medical Association

201 S. Capitol Avenue, Suite 405

Indianapolis, IN 46225

Veterinarians must maintain standards.....

The Indiana Veterinary Medical Association is the professional association for the veterinarians in Indiana. Over 75% of all practicing veterinarians are members. The IVMA has a Peer Review Committee which was established to facilitate communications between member veterinarians and clients and complaints from other veterinarians as well. The procedures for handling a grievance are designed to provide a thorough review of the situation and to resolve it in a way that is fair to all concerned. All inquiries are conducted confidentially between the parties involved and the Peer Review Committee.

Where do I file a grievance against a veterinarian?

There are three avenues through which you can file a grievance against a veterinarian: the Indiana Veterinary Medical Association; the Indiana Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (IBVME); and the court system. A grievance may be handled in any or all of these places.

(1) **The Indiana Veterinary Medical Association** has a Peer Review Committee which fields complaints against veterinarians. This committee consists of veterinarians representing all parts of the state. These veterinarians are not compensated for their time on the committee. They do not have authority to discipline veterinarians. They review the grievance, talk with the parties, and attempt to come to a reasonable and acceptable solution.

(2) **The Indiana Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (IBVME)** is the licensing board for veterinarians in Indiana. The IBVME consists of five Veterinarians and one consumer member, each appointed by the governor. In addition to granting licenses, the board is charged with protecting the public by overseeing the veterinary medical profession. Complaints are filed with the Office of the Attorney General, Consumer Protection Division. The Attorney General's office forwards the complaint to one member of the IBVME for review. If the complaint has merit, it is investigated by the office of the Attorney General. After investigation, the case may be dismissed or formal disciplinary charges may be initiated. Following a formal disciplinary proceeding before the IBVME, the case may be dismissed, or the veterinarian could be reprimanded, suspended, revoked, or placed on probation, depending on the severity of the infraction. This process takes roughly 17 months from opening of the case to closure. To initiate a grievance against a veterinarian through the IBVME, contact the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General, at (317) 232-6330.

(3) **The court system** is available to any citizen who wishes to use it. Contact a local attorney for information on how to proceed.

How do I decide if I should contact the IBVME?

The IBVME reviews cases to determine if unprofessional or unethical conduct has occurred. This is often referred to as "malpractice". Unprofessional conduct is clearly defined in the Indiana statutes in IC 25-1-9.

The IVMA does not review cases of unprofessional conduct. They mediate and arbitrate situations where there are complaints against veterinarians. They do not have the authority to take disciplinary action.

What situations does the IVMA review?

Fee disputes, questions regarding the appropriateness of services rendered and other differences between the client and the veterinarian are reviewed by the Peer Review Committee. You must file your grievance within 120 days from your most recent professional contact with the veterinarian against whom the complaint is directed. If you have contacted legal counsel about your grievance, the IVMA Peer Review Committee will terminate its involvement with the complaint. Also, refusal of either party to cooperate with the complaint resolution process terminates the Peer Review Committee's participation.

How do I request a review by the IVMA?

You may complete a grievance form, which may be obtained by writing or calling the IVMA, 201 South Capitol Avenue, Suite 405, Indianapolis, IN, 46225 or (317) 974-0888.

How much do I pay for this service?

Nothing! The IVMA Peer Review program is a free public service, not restricted to just Indiana residents.

Does the client have to participate in the program?

Yes. The client who initiated the grievance is expected to cooperate with the veterinarian from the Peer Review Committee who is assigned to the case.

Does the veterinarian mentioned in the grievance have to participate in the program?

No. Veterinarians are not required to participate. If they decide not to participate, you will be advised to forward your complaint to the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General. Further, if the veterinarian is not an IVMA member, you will be advised to forward your complaint to the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General.