

Key legislative requirements – Veterinary surgeons and Veterinary nurses

Fact sheet current as at July 2025

Introduction

The legislation that defines the lawful way to deal with medicines and poisons in Queensland is contained in the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2019* (the **MPA**), subordinate regulations and associated legislative instruments.

Current versions of the legislation can be found on the [Queensland Legislation website](#) at:

- [Medicines and Poisons Act 2019 \(MPA\)](#)
- [Medicines and Poisons \(Medicines\) Regulation 2021 \(MPMR\)](#)
- [Medicines and Poisons \(Poisons and Prohibited Substances\) Regulation 2021](#)
- [Medicines and Poisons \(Pest Management Activities\) Regulation 2021.](#)

The legislative instruments made under the MPA, including the Departmental Standards, can be found on [our website](#).

The [Poisons Standard](#), which contains details of the schedules for medicines and poisons and packaging and labelling requirements can be found on the TGA's website www.tga.gov.au.

Poisons and pest management activities

Information in this document pertains to scheduled medicines only. Further information is available on our website about the regulation of [poisons](#) and [pest management activities](#).

Commonly used terms and phrases

Prescribe is a term that relates to the action of a practitioner authorising treatment with a medicine, either administration or supply, to be carried out by another person.¹

Supply means to sell or give a medicine to a person and includes supplying medicines for the treatment of an animal (by dispensing or giving a treatment dose) and supplying stock of medicines on a purchase order.²

Dispense is a term that applies in relation to a person (e.g. a pharmacist or a veterinary surgeon) selling a medicine to a person for the treatment of an animal on a prescription from an authorised prescriber.³

The phrase '**give a treatment dose**' relates to supplying a medicine to the owner/custodian of an animal however this phrase is not interchangeable with dispense. For example, a veterinary

¹ Prescribe, in relation to a medicine, is defined to mean direct a person, orally or in writing, to administer, dispense or give a treatment dose of the medicine for the treatment of a person or animal. (Schedule 1 of the MPA)

² Supply, for a regulated substance, is defined to mean sell or give the substance to a person. (s24 of the MPA)

³ Dispense, for a medicine, is defined to mean sell the medicine to a person on prescription. (s25 of the MPA)

surgeon may give the owner or custodian of an animal a medicine as treatment dose for the animal during a consultation. 'Giving a treatment dose' allows one or more doses to be given, for example, as a course of treatment.

Diversion-risk medicines are medicines that are at an increased risk of misuse or being diverted to the illicit drug market. They are listed in Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the MPMR.

Restricted medicines are medicines that have additional restrictions on who can prescribe them due to specific health risks, for example, it is teratogenic. Restricted medicines are listed in Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the MPMR. In this Part, Division 1 lists restricted medicines where the medicine is used for human use (and so unrestricted for veterinary use). Division 2 lists the restricted medicines whether for human or veterinary use.

S2, S3, S4 and **S8** means medicines listed in Schedules 2, 3, 4 or 8 of the Poisons Standard respectively.

Veterinary surgeons' authority to deal with medicines

The MPMR has 13 Schedules that contain the authorisations for people to carry out certain activities (or 'dealings') with medicines. Those people who have an authorisation to deal with a medicine in Schedules 3-15 are termed *approved persons*.

The authorisations for veterinary surgeons to deal with medicines are contained in Part 1 of **Schedule 11** of the MPMR.

Prescribing medicines (other than medicated feed)

Veterinary practitioners may prescribe medicines for the treatment of an animal under their care if the veterinary surgeon has assessed the medicine to be reasonably necessary for the therapeutic treatment of the animal.

The requirements for prescribing medicines are contained in Part 6 of Chapter 4 of the MPMR.

Some key points regarding veterinary surgeons prescribing medicines are:

- There is no restriction on the number of repeat supplies that a veterinary surgeon may specify on a prescription. For S8 medicines, the number of repeat supplies should reflect the 6-month expiry of prescriptions for S8 medicines. Prescriptions for S4 medicines are valid for 12 months.
- If a prescription is for a diversion-risk medicine (see definition above), the total quantity that is authorised to be supplied (taking into account the initial supply and any repeat supplies) must be **no more** than would be sufficient to provide treatment for an animal for 6 months.
- A paper prescription for an S8 medicine that has been generated on a computer in accordance with the requirements set out in section 85 and 86 of the MPMR, must contain a hand-written signature.
- A paper prescription that has been generated on a computer may not be amended once it has been printed. If an error is identified after a prescription has been printed, the error must be corrected in the prescribing software and a new prescription generated.

- Veterinary surgeons cannot prescribe restricted medicines listed in Division 2 of Part 1, Schedule 2 of the MPMR, being amfetamines, lenalidomide, methylphenidate, and pomalidomide.
- Veterinary surgeons also cannot prescribe cannabis other than S4 cannabidiol in preparations for therapeutic use where:
 - (a) cannabidiol comprises 98% or more of the total cannabinoid content of the preparation; and
 - (b) any cannabinoids, other than cannabidiol, must be only those naturally found in cannabis and comprise 2% or less of the total cannabinoid content of the preparation.

A quick reference guide to the requirements for writing prescriptions can be found in [Writing lawful prescriptions](#).

Supplying medicines (other than medicated feed)

A veterinary surgeon may dispense⁴, or give a treatment dose⁵ of a medicine to the owner or custodian of an animal, for the treatment of that person's animal. The veterinary surgeon must **attach a label to the medicine** and **make a record of the supply**. The requirements for labelling medicines are contained in section 134 of the MPMR⁶. Section 136 contains the information that must be in a record of supply when giving a treatment dose of an S3 medicine containing pseudoephedrine or an S4 or S8 medicine.

The MPMR authorises a veterinary surgeon to dispense (on a prescription) a non-restricted medicine to the owner or custodian of an animal for its veterinary treatment. When dispensing a prescription, including a prescription from another veterinary surgeon, the dispensing veterinary surgeon must:

- meet the professional obligations required by the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Queensland (VSBQ) including having a bona fide relationship with the animal being treated such that the dispensing veterinary surgeon is satisfied that the medicine they are supplying is appropriate treatment for the animal;
- only dispense prescriptions that are compliant with the requirements for a lawful prescription;
- not dispense previously fulfilled or cancelled prescriptions, prescriptions reasonably suspected to be unlawful (section 120 of the MPMR) or expired prescriptions (section 121 of the MPMR);
- keep the fulfilled prescription, record the information about dispensing on the prescription, and make the required dispensing record as required in sections 122 to 124 of the MPMR. These records must be kept for a period of 2 years as per section 224 of the MPMR.

⁴ The term **dispense** has a defined meaning under section 25 of the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2019 (MPA)*, which may be different to how the term is used within the veterinary profession. Under the MPA, to **dispense** a medicine, means sell the medicine to a person on prescription.

⁵ As per section 25 of the MPA, to **give a treatment dose** of a medicine, means give 1 or more doses of the medicine to a person to be taken by a particular person, or administered to an animal, at a later time.

⁶ These labelling requirements do not apply to an S2 or S3 medicine given in a manufacturer's pack.

For diversion-risk medicines, the quantity that may be dispensed or given must be no more than would be sufficient to treat an animal for up to 6 months if the medicine is administered to the animal in the way directed by the veterinary surgeon.

In supplying a medicine to the owner or custodian of an animal, the veterinary surgeon is also required to comply with the requirements of the *Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988* including requirements for the animal to be under the care of the veterinary surgeon supplying a veterinary chemical.

Further guidance on the VSBQ requirements for an animal to be under the care of a veterinary surgeon can be accessed from www.vsb.qld.gov.au/resources/guidelines-and-policies/guidelines/bona-fide-veterinarian-client-patient-relationship.

A veterinary surgeon may, however, dispense a prescription from another veterinary surgeon where, for example, the veterinary surgeon had referred an animal under their care to a specialty veterinary surgeon and the prescription was a course of treatment prescribed by the specialty veterinary surgeon. The veterinary surgeon must dispense the medicine; dispensing cannot be delegated to a staff member.

Medicated animal feed

Prescribing and supplying medicated animal feed have their own particular requirements given the form, nature and use of these medicines, allowing for medicated feed to be supplied directly to farmers. Further information can be found in the specific [Medicated feed](#) factsheet.

Biosecurity and using medicines to treat food producing animals

Veterinary surgeons are reminded that they may have obligations under other legislation, in addition to the MPA, when using medicines to treat animals. The *Biosecurity Act 2014* and the *Biosecurity Regulation 2016* contain the Code of Practice for Feed for Food Producing Animals and other measures to safeguard the economy, agricultural industry and environment from contaminants. The *Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary Control) Act 1988* places controls on the use of chemicals (including medicines) in relation to residues.

Advice about obligations under these Acts should be sought from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Disposal of S8 medicine waste

Chapter 4 Part 11 of the MPMR contains the requirements for disposing of medicines, including S8 medicines and other diversion-risk medicines. To prevent environmental contamination, medicines must not be disposed of as general waste. They may not be poured down a sink, flushed down a toilet, or sent to landfill. Medicine waste should be sent to an approved waste management contractor for destruction by high temperature incineration.

If the medicine waste is from an S8 medicine, the waste may be destroyed (rendered unusable and unidentifiable) by a veterinary surgeon before being sent away for disposal. Such destruction must be witnessed by another person authorised to destroy S8 medicine waste in s147(1) of the MPMR (those persons include an ambulance officer, dentist, medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, midwife, registered nurse or enrolled nurse, pharmacist, podiatrist or podiatric surgeon, or veterinary surgeon). The S8 medicine waste can then be sent away for disposal. The specific requirements for destroying S8 medicines are explained in the factsheet [Disposal and destruction of diversion-risk medicine waste](#).

Storage and record-keeping

Medicines must be stored to maintain their integrity and limit the opportunity for diversion or unintended poisoning. The requirements for storing medicines are contained in Chapter 8 Part 2 of the MPMR and in the [Queensland Health Departmental Standard Secure storage of S8 medicines – version 2](#).

Where more than one person will possess (have custody or control of) medicines at a place, e.g. a veterinary practice, section 196 of the MPMR includes an obligation for the person in charge of the place to appoint an ‘appropriately qualified person’ to be responsible for establishing and maintaining a medicines store and an S8 safe (if one is required). This person is referred to as the medicine store establisher.

If pentobarbital is kept at a place, it must always be kept in a locked medicine store (e.g. a safe or a cupboard) when not in use by a veterinary surgeon, veterinary nurse or another person authorised under a General Approval (Emergency Management of Animals) (section 198(3) of the MPMR). Pentobarbital must not be left unattended (MPMR section 202).

Storage of medicines in vehicles

The [Departmental Standard for Secure Storage of S8 Medicines](#) states that S8 medicines can be transported to a place for the purpose of attending to animals. S8 medicines must be kept in a locked bag, box or similar container in the veterinary surgeon’s personal custody, and must not be left in a vehicle overnight or when the vehicle is unattended.

S4 medicines can be kept in a ‘medicine store’ (being any receptacle, structure or part of a vehicle used for the storage or preservation of medicines) and can remain in a vehicle provided they can be kept in accordance with the manufacturer’s conditions for the medicines. If pentobarbital is to be stored or possessed in a vehicle, the same requirements apply as above where the medicine store establisher must ensure the medicine store for the pentobarbital is lockable.

Veterinary nurses

A veterinary nurse is a person who is employed to practise veterinary nursing and who holds a qualification that makes the person eligible for full membership of the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia Inc.

The authority for veterinary nurses to deal with medicines is contained in Part 2 of Schedule 11 of the MPMR.

This authority allows a veterinary nurse to administer :

- S2, S3 and S4 medicines at a veterinary premises under the *supervision*⁷ of a veterinary surgeon;
- S2, S3 and S4 medicines at a place other than a veterinary premises, under the **direct supervision**⁸ of a veterinary surgeon.

⁷ **supervision**, by a supervisor of another person, means the oversight by the supervisor of the dealings of the other person for— (a) directing, demonstrating and monitoring the dealings; and (b) checking the other person’s level of competency for the dealings.

⁸ **direct supervision**, by a supervisor of another person, means supervision of the other person— (a) by the supervisor being in physical proximity to the other person; or (b) by the supervisor using technology that allows the supervisor to see and communicate with the other person in real time. *Examples for paragraph (b)*—video conferencing, online streaming

- S8 medicines at veterinary premises in the following limited circumstance:
 - when a veterinary surgeon is not able to be physically present but is available to be contacted to communicate with a veterinary nurse in real time (for example, to provide afterhours post-operative care); and
 - The S8 medicine is administered on a prescription or in accordance with the medicine's approved label; and
 - The S8 medicine has been pre-prepared into treatment doses by a veterinary surgeon or a pharmacist (labelled with directions for a known animal).

For details about the dealings with medicines that a veterinary nurse can perform, refer to Part 2 of Schedule 11.

Reporting matters to the chief executive

There are a number of reporting obligations for veterinary surgeons under the MPA. The notification requirements are contained in Chapter 8 of the MPMR and include requirement to notify lost or stolen S8 medicines or pentobarbital and for a pharmacist to notify non-receipt of a paper copy of a prescription that was sent to a pharmacy by digital communication (fax/email).

There are specific forms that must be used when notifying Queensland Health. These can be found on the Qld Health website at: www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/licences/medicines-poisons/reporting-medicines-matters.

For further information

Contact the Medicines Approvals and Regulation Unit (MARU): MARU@health.qld.gov.au.