

**First Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 25-0604.01 Christopher McMichael x4775

SENATE BILL 25-159

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Winter F. and Cutter,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

(None),

Senate Committees

Agriculture & Natural Resources

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING THE USE OF VETERINARY TELEHEALTH.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

The bill modifies certain laws related to the practice of veterinary telehealth. Under current law, in order to practice veterinary telehealth in Colorado, a licensed veterinarian must establish a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) through an in-person, physical examination of the animal (patient) or by a medically appropriate and timely visit to the premises where the animal is kept.

The bill allows a veterinarian to establish a VCPR through telehealth. An in-person, physical examination of the patient or visit to the

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

premises is not necessary, and the veterinarian may establish the VCPR through an electronic examination using synchronous audio-video based communication technology.

The bill clarifies the definition of "telehealth" and changes references throughout current law from "telemedicine" to "telehealth".

Under current law, a licensed veterinarian is prohibited from prescribing drugs to a patient through telehealth unless the veterinarian has conducted an in-person, physical examination of the patient. The bill removes that requirement and permits a veterinarian to prescribe drugs to a patient through telehealth as long as the veterinarian has established a VCPR and follows certain requirements. However, the bill still requires an in-person, physical examination of the patient in order to prescribe the patient a controlled substance or an antimicrobial for longer than 14 days.

The bill removes the requirement under current law that a veterinarian who uses telehealth be available in person at a veterinary premises that is accessible to the client and patient for follow-up evaluations. The bill also repeals a provision in current law that prohibits a veterinary specialist to whom a patient has been referred from prescribing medication to the patient unless that veterinary specialist has established a VCPR through an in-person, physical examination of the patient.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 12-315-104, **amend**

3 (19)(a)(II) as follows:

4 **12-315-104. Definitions.** As used in this article 315, unless the
5 context otherwise requires:

6 (19) (a) "Veterinarian-client-patient relationship" means the
7 relationship established when:

8 (II) There is sufficient knowledge of an animal by the veterinarian
9 to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical
10 condition of the animal, which means that the veterinarian ~~has recently~~
11 ~~seen and~~ is personally acquainted with the keeping and care of the animal
12 by virtue of:

13 (A) An in-person, physical examination of the animal;

1 (B) AN ELECTRONIC EXAMINATION USING A SYNCHRONOUS
2 AUDIO-VIDEO BASED COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY; or by

3 (C) A medically appropriate and timely ~~visits~~ VISIT to the premises
4 where the animal is kept; and

5 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **amend** 12-315-301
6 as follows:

7 **12-315-301. Definitions - rules.** As used in this part 3, unless the
8 context otherwise requires:

9 ~~(1) "Tele-advice" means the provision of any health information,~~
10 ~~opinion, or guidance by a veterinary professional that is not intended to~~
11 ~~diagnose, treat, or issue prognoses of an animal's, or group of animals',~~
12 ~~physical or behavioral illness or injury. A veterinarian-client-patient~~
13 ~~relationship is not required to provide tele-advice.~~

14 ~~(2) "Teleconsulting" means a veterinarian who communicates~~
15 ~~with a veterinary specialist or other qualified expert using~~
16 ~~telecommunications technology to gain insight or advice regarding the~~
17 ~~care of a patient.~~

18 ~~(3) "Tele-education" means the use of information and~~
19 ~~telecommunications technology for distance learning.~~

20 ~~(4) (a) (1) "Telehealth" means the use of telecommunications~~
21 ~~technology to provide veterinary services or to collect and deliver~~
22 ~~veterinary health information or education virtually and can encompass~~
23 ~~general veterinary services or patient-specific veterinary services~~ A
24 METHOD OF DELIVERY OF VETERINARY HEALTH-CARE SERVICES THROUGH
25 TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, INCLUDING INFORMATION, ELECTRONIC,
26 AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES, TO FACILITATE THE ASSESSMENT,
27 DIAGNOSIS, OR TREATMENT OF A PATIENT WHILE THE PATIENT IS LOCATED

1 AT ONE SITE AND THE VETERINARIAN IS LOCATED AT A DIFFERENT SITE.

2 ~~(b) "Telehealth" may include tele-advice, teleconsulting,~~
3 ~~tele-education, telemedicine, telemonitoring, telereferral, telesupervision,~~
4 ~~teletriage, and other tools that help veterinary professionals deliver~~
5 ~~veterinary education and services virtually.~~

6 ~~(5) "Telemedicine" means the remote practice of veterinary~~
7 ~~medicine through the use of telecommunications technology that allows~~
8 ~~a licensed veterinarian with an established veterinarian-client-patient~~
9 ~~relationship to evaluate, diagnose, and treat a patient virtually.~~

10 ~~(6) "Telemonitoring" means the use of telecommunications~~
11 ~~technology to augment veterinary services by collecting and delivering~~
12 ~~health information from a patient.~~

13 ~~(7) "Telereferral" means a veterinarian with an established~~
14 ~~veterinarian-client-patient relationship who refers the client to a~~
15 ~~veterinary specialist to provide veterinary services using~~
16 ~~telecommunications technology under the established~~
17 ~~veterinarian-client-patient relationship.~~

18 ~~(8) "Telesupervision" means the supervision of individuals~~
19 ~~providing veterinary services using media such as audio, audio-visual~~
20 ~~conferencing, text messaging, e-mail, or other virtual or digital~~
21 ~~technologies.~~

22 ~~(9) "Teletriage" means the safe, appropriate, and timely~~
23 ~~assessment of an animal, or a group of animals, under conditions of~~
24 ~~uncertainty and urgency, and the possible referral to a licensed~~
25 ~~veterinarian, after discussion with the individual responsible for the~~
26 ~~animal or group of animals, using telecommunications technology. A~~
27 ~~veterinarian-client-patient relationship is not required for such an~~

1 assessment or referral. "Teletriage" does not include the rendering of a
2 diagnosis but may include the provision of tele-advice.

3 (10) (2) "Veterinary specialist" means a veterinarian who is
4 formally recognized as a specialist from a specialty organization that is
5 recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association's American
6 Board of Veterinary Specialties, or its successor organization, or another
7 association that recognizes veterinary specialists that the state board of
8 veterinary medicine has approved by rule.

9 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 12-315-302, **amend**
10 (2)(a) and (3) as follows:

11 **12-315-302. Veterinarian-client-patient relationship -**
12 **telehealth.** (2) (a) A veterinarian-client-patient relationship must be
13 established by:

14 (I) An in-person, physical examination of the animal;

15 (II) AN ELECTRONIC EXAMINATION USING A SYNCHRONOUS
16 AUDIO-VIDEO BASED COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY; or

17 (III) A MEDICALLY APPROPRIATE AND timely ~~visits~~ VISIT to the
18 premises where the animal is kept.

19 (3) An established veterinarian-client-patient relationship may be
20 maintained through examinations that occur using telecommunications
21 technology. ~~in between appropriate in-person, physical examinations or~~
22 ~~visits to the premises where the patient is kept.~~

23 **SECTION 4.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 12-315-303, **amend**
24 (1), (2), and (4)(b)(II) as follows:

25 **12-315-303. Treatment of patients using telehealth - licensure**
26 **- technology - consent.** (1) (a) ~~A person~~ AN INDIVIDUAL must be
27 licensed to practice veterinary medicine in Colorado in order to practice

1 ~~telemedicine~~ TELEHEALTH in Colorado.

2 (b) ~~A person~~ AN INDIVIDUAL who is not a licensed veterinarian in
3 Colorado and who uses ~~telemedicine~~ TELEHEALTH to provide veterinary
4 services to animals and individuals responsible for the animals engages
5 in the unauthorized practice of veterinary medicine. Such ~~person~~
6 INDIVIDUAL is subject to penalties for the unauthorized practice of
7 veterinary medicine pursuant to section 12-315-114.

8 (2) A licensed veterinarian shall employ sound, professional
9 judgment when determining whether to provide veterinary services to a
10 patient through ~~telemedicine~~ TELEHEALTH and shall use ~~telemedicine~~
11 TELEHEALTH only when such use is medically appropriate based on the
12 patient's condition.

13 (4) (b) A veterinary professional using telehealth to provide
14 veterinary services shall inform the client, or the client's authorized
15 representative, of:

16 (II) Whether, in the veterinarian's professional opinion, the
17 patient's condition can be accurately diagnosed or treated using
18 ~~telemedicine~~ TELEHEALTH; and

19 **SECTION 5.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **amend** 12-315-305
20 as follows:

21 **12-315-305. Prescribing medication through telehealth.**

22 (1) (a) Except as provided in ~~subsection (3)~~ SUBSECTIONS (1)(b) AND
23 (1)(c) of this section, ~~only a licensed veterinarian with an established~~
24 ~~veterinarian-client-patient relationship may prescribe medication through~~
25 ~~telemedicine~~ A LICENSED VETERINARIAN MAY USE TELEHEALTH TO ORDER,
26 PRESCRIBE, OR MAKE AVAILABLE A PRESCRIPTION DRUG IN ACCORDANCE
27 WITH ALL APPLICABLE STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS.

1 (b) A licensed veterinarian USING TELEHEALTH shall ~~use~~
2 ~~professional judgment when determining if it is appropriate to prescribe~~
3 ~~medication through telemedicine~~ NOT ORDER, PRESCRIBE, OR MAKE
4 AVAILABLE A PRESCRIPTION DRUG THAT IS A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE, AS
5 DEFINED IN SECTION 18-18-102 (5), UNLESS THE VETERINARIAN HAS
6 PREVIOUSLY PERFORMED AN IN-PERSON, PHYSICAL EXAMINATION OF THE
7 PATIENT OR MADE MEDICALLY APPROPRIATE AND TIMELY VISITS TO THE
8 PREMISES WHERE THE PATIENT IS KEPT.

9 (c) A LICENSED VETERINARIAN USING TELEHEALTH SHALL NOT
10 ORDER, PRESCRIBE, OR MAKE AVAILABLE A PRESCRIPTION DRUG THAT IS
11 AN ANTIMICROBIAL DRUG FOR A PERIOD LONGER THAN FOURTEEN DAYS OF
12 TREATMENT. THE VETERINARIAN SHALL NOT ISSUE ANY ADDITIONAL
13 ANTIMICROBIAL DRUG PRESCRIPTION, INCLUDING A REFILL, UNLESS THE
14 VETERINARIAN HAS CONDUCTED AN IN-PERSON, PHYSICAL EXAMINATION
15 OF THE PATIENT.

16 (2) A licensed veterinarian who prescribes medication through
17 ~~telemedicine~~ TELEHEALTH is subject to the limitations on prescriptions
18 specified in section 12-30-109.

19 (3) In accordance with section 12-315-105 (2)(b) RELATING TO
20 EMERGENCY VETERINARY SITUATIONS, a licensed veterinarian who does
21 not have an established veterinarian-client-patient relationship with an
22 animal and its owner may use ~~telemedicine~~ TELEHEALTH to administer,
23 distribute, or dispense a prescription drug that has been prescribed by
24 another licensed veterinarian who has an established
25 veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

26 **SECTION 6.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 12-315-306, **repeal**
27 (4) as follows:

1 **12-315-306. Referrals.** (4) ~~(a) A veterinary specialist to whom~~
2 ~~a patient is referred shall not prescribe medications to the patient unless~~
3 ~~the veterinary specialist establishes a veterinarian-client-patient~~
4 ~~relationship through an in-person, physical examination of the patient.~~

5 ~~(b) The licensed veterinarian with the established~~
6 ~~veterinarian-client-patient relationship may prescribe medications to the~~
7 ~~patient after consultation with the veterinary specialist to whom the~~
8 ~~patient was referred.~~

9 **SECTION 7.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 12-315-307, **amend**
10 (1) and (2) introductory portion as follows:

11 **12-315-307. Supervision using telehealth - rules.** (1) A licensed
12 veterinarian may, ~~provide,~~ at the veterinarian's discretion, ~~telesupervision~~
13 ~~of USE TELEHEALTH TO SUPERVISE A registered veterinary technicians~~
14 ~~TECHNICIAN~~ for tasks that do not require direct or immediate supervision,
15 pursuant to board rules.

16 (2) A supervising licensed veterinarian who has an established
17 veterinarian-client-patient relationship may use ~~telesupervision~~
18 ~~TELEHEALTH~~ to supervise registered veterinary technicians who are not
19 located on the same premises as the supervising veterinarian if:

20 **SECTION 8.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **amend** 12-315-308
21 as follows:

22 **12-315-308. Emergency care - continuity of care.** ~~(1) A~~
23 ~~licensed veterinarian who practices veterinary medicine through~~
24 ~~telemedicine shall be available in person at a veterinary premises that is~~
25 ~~accessible to the client and patient or shall arrange for another licensed~~
26 ~~veterinarian in Colorado to be at a veterinary premises that is accessible~~
27 ~~to the client and patient in case of an emergency or for necessary~~

1 ~~follow-up evaluations.~~

2 (2) A licensed veterinarian shall provide ~~the~~ A client with a plan
3 for emergency or follow-up care when providing veterinary services
4 through ~~telemedicine~~ TELEHEALTH.

5 **SECTION 9. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
6 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the
7 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except
8 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V
9 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this
10 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take
11 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in
12 November 2026 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the
13 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.