

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, HOSPITALS AND
HUMAN SERVICES

01/31/18-AMENDED AND REPORTED OUT TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND THE
JUDICIARY

BILL NO. 32-0026

Thirty-Second Legislature of the Virgin Islands

February 23, 2017

An Act amending title 27 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 3 by establishing the Virgin Islands Veterinary Practice Act; repealing title 3 Virgin Islands Code, section 415a; adding a chapter 68 to title 19 Virgin Islands Code addressing matter related to pet shops, pet groomers, and animal shelters; and for other related purposes

PROPOSED BY: Senators Nereida Rivera O'Reilly and Janette Millin Young
Co-Sponsor: Sammuell Sanes

1 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:*

2 **SECTION 1.** This Act may be cited as the “Virgin Islands Veterinary Practice
3 Act of 2017.”

4 **SECTION 2.** Title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 23, section 415a is repealed.

5 **SECTION 3.** Title 27 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 3 is repealed and reenacted
6 with amendments to read as follows:

7 **“Chapter 3. The practice of veterinary medicine in the Virgin Islands.**

8 **§ 171. Purpose of chapter.**

1 In order to promote the public health, safety, and welfare by safeguarding the
2 people of this Territory against unqualified or incompetent practitioners of veterinary
3 medicine, the Legislature of the Virgin Islands declares that the practice veterinary
4 medicine is a privilege conferred by legislative grant to persons having the personal and
5 professional qualifications specified in this chapter. This chapter does not diminish the
6 statutory authority as established under any sections of title 19, chapters 63 or 65 or title
7 14, chapter 7.

8 **§ 172. Definitions.**

9 When used in this chapter, these words and phrases have the following meaning:

10 (1) "Accredited college of veterinarian medicine" means any veterinarian
11 college, school, or division of a university or college that offers the degree of Doctor of
12 Veterinary Medicine or its equivalent and is accredited by the Council of Education of
13 the American Veterinary Medical Association ("AVMA").

14 (2) "AVMA" means the American Veterinary Medical Association

15 (3) "AVMA accredited program in veterinary technology" means any
16 postsecondary educational program that is accredited by the Committee on Veterinary
17 Technician Education and Activities of the AVMA.

18 (4) "American Veterinary Medical Association Accredited Program in
19 Veterinary Technology" means any postsecondary educational program that has fulfilled
20 the essential criteria established by the Committee on Veterinary Technician Education
21 and Activities and approved by the AMVA House of Delegates.

22 (5) "Animal" means any living organism, other than human, having sensation
23 and the power of voluntary movement and requiring for its existence oxygen and organic
24 nutrients.

25 (6) "Board" means the Virgin Islands Board of Veterinary Medicine.

1 (7) "Client" means the patient's owner, owner's agent, or other person
2 responsible for the patient.

3 (8) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands
4 Department of Health.

5 (9) "Consultation" means when a licensed veterinarian receives advice in
6 person, telephonically, or electronically, or by any other method of communication from
7 a veterinarian licensed in this or any other jurisdiction or other person whose expertise, in
8 the opinion of the licensed veterinarian, would benefit the patient. The licensed
9 veterinarian receiving consultation maintains the veterinarian-client-patient-relationship.

10 (10) "Credentialed veterinary technician or technologist" means a veterinary
11 technician or veterinary technologist who is currently registered, certified, or licensed by
12 the Board.

13 (11) "ECFVG® certificate" means the certificate issued by the Educational
14 Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates® of the AVMA indicating that the holder
15 has demonstrated knowledge and skill equivalent to that possessed by a graduate of an
16 accredited college of veterinary medicine.

17 (12) "Examination" means a qualifying, territorial licensure test as defined by
18 the regulations governing the practice of veterinary medicine in the Virgin Islands.

19 (13) "Impaired" means a licensed veterinarian or credentialed veterinary
20 technician who is unable to perform veterinary medicine with reasonable skill and safety
21 because of a physical or mental disability as evidenced by a written determination from a
22 competent authority or written consent based on clinical evidence, including deterioration
23 of mental capacity, loss of motor skills, or abuse of drugs or alcohol of sufficient degree
24 to diminish the person's ability to deliver competent patient care.

25 (14) "Licensed veterinarian" means a person who is currently licensed to
26 practice veterinarian medicine in the Virgin Islands.

1 (15) "Owner consent" means the veterinarian has informed the client, in a
2 manner that would be understood by a reasonable person, of the diagnostic and treatment
3 options, risk assessment, and prognosis and has provided the client with an estimate of
4 the fees expected for the provision of veterinary services and the client has consented to
5 the recommended treatment.

6 (16) "Patient" means an animal or group of animals examined or treated by a
7 veterinarian.

8 (17) "Person" means any individual; firm; partnership -- general, limited, or
9 limited liability; association; joint venture; cooperative; corporation; limited liability
10 company; or any other group or combination acting in concert; and whether or not acting
11 as a principal, partner, member, trustee, fiduciary, receiver, or as any other kind of legal
12 or personal representative, or as the successor in interest, assignee, agent, factor, servant,
13 employee, director, officer, or any other representative of such person.

14 (18) "Practice of veterinary medicine" means:

15 (A) To diagnose, prognoses, treat, correct, change, alleviate, or prevent
16 animal disease, illness, pain, deformity, defect, injury, or other physical, dental, or
17 mental conditions by any method or mode; including the:

18 (i) performance of any medical or surgical procedure, or

19 (ii) prescription, dispensing, administration, or application of
20 any drug, medicine, biologic, apparatus, anesthetic, or other therapeutic or
21 diagnostic substance, or

22 (iii) use of complementary, alternative, and integrative
23 therapies, or

24 (iv) use of any procedure for reproductive management,
25 including but not limited to the diagnosis or treatment of pregnancy,
26 fertility, sterility, or infertility, or

1 (B) "Indirect supervision" means that a licensed veterinarian is not
2 necessarily on the premises, but has given either written or oral instructions for
3 treatment of the patient and is readily available by telephone or other forms of
4 immediate communication; and has assumed responsibility for the veterinary care
5 given to the patient by a person working under the licensed veterinarian direction.

6 (21) "Veterinarian," means a person who has received a doctor's degree in
7 veterinary medicine from an accredited school of veterinary medicine.

8 (22) "Veterinarian-client-patient relationship" means that all of the following
9 are required:

10 (A) The veterinarian has assumed the responsibility for making
11 medical judgments regarding the health of the patient and the client has agreed to
12 follow the veterinarian's instructions;

13 (B) The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the patient to initiate
14 at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition of the patient.
15 This means that the veterinarian is personally acquainted with the keeping of the
16 patient by a timely examination of the patient or by medically appropriate and
17 timely visits by the veterinarian to the premises where the patient is managed;

18 (C) The veterinarian is readily available for follow-up evaluation or
19 has arranged for veterinary emergency coverage and continued care and
20 treatment;

21 (D) The veterinarian provides oversight of treatment, compliance and
22 outcome; and

23 (E) Patient records are maintained.

24 (23) "Veterinary assistant" means an employee of a licensed veterinarian who
25 has not received a degree in veterinary technology from an accredited program, or has

1 received a degree in veterinary technology from an accredited program, but is not
2 licensed in the Virgin Islands.

3 (24) "Veterinary license" or "license" means a license to practice veterinary
4 medicine issued by the Board.

5 (25) "Veterinary medicine" means the branch of medicine that deals with the
6 causes, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases and injuries of animals, and includes
7 veterinary surgery, obstetrics, dentistry, and all other branches or specialties of veterinary
8 medicine.

9 (26) "Veterinary prescription drug" means a drug that may not be dispensed
10 without the prescription of a veterinarian and that bears the label statement: "CAUTION:
11 Federal law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian."

12 (27) "Veterinary specialist" means a veterinarian who has been awarded and
13 maintains certification from an AVMA-recognized veterinary specialty organization.

14 (28) "Veterinary technician" means a graduate of a two or three-year accredited
15 program in veterinary technology.

16 (29) "Veterinary technologist" means a graduate of a four-year accredited
17 program in veterinary technology.

18 **§ 173. Practice of veterinary medicine.**

19 (a) A person is regarded as practicing veterinary medicine within the meaning
20 of this chapter who represents himself, directly or indirectly, publicly or privately, as a
21 veterinary doctor or uses any title, words, abbreviation or letters in a manner or under
22 circumstances that may reasonably induce the belief that the person using them is
23 qualified to practice veterinary medicine.

24 (b) A person is considered to be practicing veterinary medicine if the person
25 performs the diagnosis, treatment, correction, change, relief or prevention of animal
26 disease, deformity, defect, injury, or other physical or mental conditions; including the

1 performance of surgery or dentistry, the prescription or administration of any drug,
2 medicine, biologic, apparatus, application, anesthetic, or other therapeutic or diagnostic
3 substance or technique, and the use of any manual or mechanical procedure for embryo
4 transfer, for testing for pregnancy, or for correcting sterility or infertility, or to render
5 advice or recommendation with regard to any of the above.

6 **§ 174. Veterinarian-client-patient relationship requirement.**

7 (a) No person may practice veterinary medicine in the Virgin Islands except
8 within the context of a veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

9 (b) A veterinarian-client-patient relationship cannot be established solely by
10 telephonic or other electronic means.

11 **§ 175. Exemptions.**

12 (a) This chapter may not be construed to prohibit:

13 (1) A federal or local government employee from performing the
14 employee's official duties.

15 (2) A student who is enrolled in:

16 (A) an accredited college of veterinary medicine from
17 performing duties or actions assigned by instructors or working under the
18 direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian, or

19 (B) an accredited program of veterinary technology from
20 performing duties or actions other than diagnosis, prognosis, prescription,
21 or surgery, as assigned by instructors or working under the direct
22 supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

23 (3) A person from advising the Board with respect to, or performing
24 acts that, the Board has designated by rule as accepted livestock management
25 practices.

1 (4) Any person from providing consultation to a licensed veterinarian in the
2 Territory on the care and management of a patient.

3 (5) A licensed individual of a licensed or regulated profession in the Virgin
4 Islands from providing assistance when requested by a veterinarian licensed in the Virgin
5 Islands, acting with owner consent from the client, and acting under the supervision of
6 the licensed veterinarian. The licensed veterinarian maintains responsibility for the
7 veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

8 (6) A veterinarian employed by an accredited college of veterinary medicine
9 from providing assistance when requested by a veterinarian licensed in the Virgin
10 Islands, acting with owner consent from the client, and acting under the direct or indirect
11 supervision of the licensed veterinarian. The licensed veterinarian maintains
12 responsibility for the veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

13 (7) A pharmacist, merchant, or manufacturer from selling at his regular place
14 of business medicines, feed, appliances, or other products used in the prevention or
15 treatment of animal diseases as permitted by law.

16 (8) A person from lawfully engaging in the art or profession of farriery.

17 (9) Subject to the Virgin Islands animal cruelty laws, 14 V.I.C., chapter 7, an
18 owner of an animal and any of the owner's regular employees from caring for and treating
19 the animal belonging to such owner, except where the ownership of the animal was
20 transferred for purposes of circumventing this chapter. Individuals shall comply with all
21 laws and regulations relative to the use of medicines and biologics.

22 (10) A person from providing training for animals that does not include
23 diagnosing or the prescribing or dispensing of any therapeutic agent.

24 (11) An instructor at an accredited college of veterinary medicine or accredited
25 program in veterinary technology from performing his regular functions or a person from
26 lecturing or giving instructions or demonstrations at an accredited college of veterinary

1 medicine or accredited program in veterinary technology or in connection with a
2 veterinary or veterinary technology continuing education course or seminar.

3 (12) A person from selling or applying pesticides, insecticides, or herbicides as
4 permitted by law.

5 (13) A credentialed veterinary technician, veterinary technologist, or other
6 employee of a licensed veterinarian from performing lawful duties under the direction
7 and supervision of such veterinarian who is responsible for the performance of the
8 employee.

9 (14) A veterinarian licensed or a veterinary technician credentialed in any other
10 state, commonwealth, district, territory or possession of the United States, or foreign
11 country from practicing in the Virgin Islands during an emergency or natural disaster
12 within the scope and location of assigned veterinary medical duties of the response
13 efforts without written examination or other qualification if:

14 (A) an official declaration of the disaster or emergency has been made
15 by the Governor; and

16 (B) an official invitation has been extended to the veterinarian or
17 veterinary technician for a specified time by the authority that has jurisdiction for
18 coordinating the animal/agricultural issues in the Virgin Islands during
19 emergencies.

20 (15) A person who, without expectation of compensation, from providing
21 immediate veterinary care in the event of an emergency or accident situation.

22 (16) A person from acting under the direct or indirect supervision of a licensed
23 veterinarian to provide care to animals that are the property of an animal shelter when the
24 three following conditions are met:

25 (A) the person is an employee of an animal shelter or its associated
26 agencies;

1 (B) the person is performing tasks in compliance with a written
2 protocol developed in consultation with a licensed veterinarian; and

3 (C) the person has received proper training.

4 These persons are not allowed diagnose, prescribe or perform surgery.

5 (17) A person from lawfully providing care and rehabilitation of wildlife
6 species under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian; and

7 (18) Veterinarians providing free care in underserved areas of the Virgin
8 Islands who:

9 (A) do not regularly practice veterinary medicine in the Virgin Islands;

10 (B) hold a current valid license or certificate to practice veterinary
11 medicine in another state, commonwealth, territory, district or possession of the
12 United States;

13 (C) volunteer to provide free care in an underserved area of the Virgin
14 Islands under the auspices of a publicly supported all volunteer, nonprofit
15 organization that sponsors the provision of health care to populations of
16 underserved people;

17 (D) file copies of their licenses or certificates issued in such other
18 jurisdiction with the Board;

19 (E) notify the Board at least five business days prior to the voluntary
20 provision of services of the dates and location of such service; and

21 (F) acknowledge, in writing, that such licensure exemption is only
22 valid, in compliance with the Board's regulations, during the limited period that
23 such free health care is made available through the volunteer, nonprofit
24 organization on the dates and at the location filed with the Board.

25 (b) The Board may deny the right to practice in the Virgin Islands to any
26 veterinarian whose license has been previously suspended or revoked, who has been

1 convicted of a felony or who is otherwise found to be in violation of applicable laws or
2 regulations. However, the Board may allow a veterinarian who meets criteria set forth in
3 (a)(18) to provide volunteer services without prior notice for a period of not more than 30
4 days, provided the nonprofit organization verifies that the practitioner has a valid,
5 unrestricted license in another state, commonwealth, territory, district or possession of the
6 United States.

7 **§ 176. Practice facility; names and levels of service.**

8 (a) In order to accurately inform the public of the levels of service offered, a
9 veterinary practice facility must use in its name one of the descriptive terms defined in
10 subsection (b) of this section. The name of a veterinary practice facility must, at all
11 times, accurately reflect the level of service being offered to the public. If a veterinary
12 facility or practice offers on-call emergency service, that service must be as that term is
13 defined in subsection (b) of this section.

14 (b) The following definitions are applicable to this chapter:

15 (1) "Animal health center" or "animal medical center" means a
16 veterinary practice facility in which consultative, clinical, and hospital services
17 are rendered and in which a large staff of basic and applied veterinary scientists
18 perform significant research and conduct advanced professional educational
19 programs.

20 (2) "Emergency facility" means a veterinary medical facility whose
21 primary function is the receiving, treatment, and monitoring of emergency
22 patients during its specified hours of operation. At these facilities, a veterinarian is
23 in attendance at all hours of operation and sufficient staff is available to provide
24 timely and appropriate emergency care. An emergency facility may be an
25 independent veterinary medical after-hours facility, an independent veterinary

1 medical 24-hour facility, or part of a full-service hospital or large teaching
2 institution.

3 (3) "Mobile facility" means a veterinary practice conducted from a
4 vehicle with special medical or surgical facilities or from a vehicle suitable only
5 for making house or farm calls; provided, the veterinary medical practice must
6 have a permanent base of operation with a published address and telephone
7 facilities for making appointments or responding to emergency situations.

8 (4) "Office" means a veterinary practice facility where a limited or
9 consultative practice is conducted and which provides no facilities for the housing
10 of patients.

11 (5) "On-call emergency service" means a veterinary medical service at
12 a practice facility, including a mobile facility, where veterinarians and staff are
13 not on the premises during all hours of operation or where veterinarians leave
14 after a patient is treated. A veterinarian must be available to be reached by
15 telephone for after-hours emergencies.

16 (6) "Veterinary clinic" or "animal clinic" means a veterinary practice
17 facility in which the practice conducted is essentially an outpatient practice.

18 (7) "Veterinary hospital" or "animal hospital" means a veterinary
19 practice facility in which the practice conducted includes the confinement as well
20 as the treatment of patients.

21 (c) If a veterinary practice facility uses as its name the name of the
22 veterinarian or veterinarians owning or operating the facility, the name of the veterinary
23 practice facility must also include a descriptive term from those listed in subsection (b) to
24 disclose the level of service being offered.

25 (d) Facilities existing and approved by the Board, as of the date of the passage
26 of this act, may continue to use their approved name or designation until there is a partial

1 or total change of ownership of the facility, at which time the name of the veterinary
2 practice facility must be changed, as necessary, to comply with this section.

3 **§ 177. Virgin Islands Board of Veterinary Medicine; appointment, membership,**
4 **organization.**

5 (a) In order to properly regulate the practice of veterinary medicine, there is
6 established a Board within the Department of Health to be known as the Virgin Islands
7 Board of Veterinary Medicine.

8 (b) The Board consists of seven members appointed by the Governor for
9 terms of three years.

10 (1) Four members, two residents from the district of St. Thomas/St.
11 John and two residents from the district of St. Croix, must be licensed to practice
12 veterinary medicine in the Virgin Islands, in good standing, actively engaged in
13 the practice of veterinary medicine, and have at least one year of experience in the
14 practice of veterinary medicine within the Virgin Islands.

15 (2) One member must be a credentialed veterinary technician or
16 technologist who is not employed by a veterinarian on the Board.

17 (3) Two members who are at least twenty-one years of age and who
18 are not and have ever been a veterinarian or the spouse of a veterinarian, or who
19 have never had any material financial interest in the provision of veterinarian
20 services or who have never engaged in any activity directly related to the practice
21 of veterinary medicine.

22 (4) All non-veterinarians appointed to the Board must have been
23 residents of the Virgin Islands for at least six months immediately preceding
24 appointment.

25 (c) Each member is appointed for a term of three years or until a successor is
26 appointed, except that the terms of the first appointees may be for shorter periods to

1 permit a staggering of terms. Members of the predecessor board, Board of Examiners for
2 the Practice of Veterinary Medicine, may continue as members of the Virgin Islands
3 Board of Veterinary Medicine until the expiration of the term for which they were
4 appointed.

5 (d) Vacancies due to death, resignation, or removal must be filled for the
6 remainder of the unexpired term in the same manner as regular appointments. Not more
7 than 30 days after a vacancy, the Board shall nominate two qualified persons to the
8 Governor to fill each vacancy. The Governor is not bound to make an appointment from
9 the nominees submitted by the Board.

10 (e) No person who has been appointed to the Board shall continue his
11 membership on the Board if during the term he:

12 (1) transfers legal residence outside of the Virgin Islands; or

13 (2) owns or is employed by any wholesale business dealing in
14 supplies, equipment, or instruments used or useful in the practice of veterinary
15 medicine; or

16 (3) has had his license to practice veterinary medicine revoked for any
17 of the causes listed in § 189 of this chapter.

18 (f) The Board shall elect officers annually from its membership as may be
19 prescribed by regulations. Officers of the Board serve for terms of one year and until a
20 successor is elected, without limitation on the number of terms an officer may serve. The
21 duties of officers shall be prescribed by regulations.

22 (g) The Governor may remove an appointee for the reasons specified in
23 subsection (f) or for any good cause shown and may appoint members to fill the
24 unexpired terms.

1 (h) A Board member shall be reimbursed pursuant to 3 V.I.C. § 65 and for
2 expenses incurred for activities related to the business of the Board, subject to approval
3 by the Commissioner.

4 (i) At the end of each fiscal year, the Commissioner of Health shall submit to
5 the Governor the annual report of the transactions of the Board.

6 **§ 178. Board meetings.**

7 The Board shall meet at least quarterly each year at the time and place fixed by
8 rules of the Board. Other necessary meetings may be called by the Board by giving
9 notice as may be required by its rules. Except as may otherwise be provided, a majority
10 of the Board constitutes a quorum to transact business, except that the vote of five
11 members is required for suspension or revocation of a license. Meetings must be open
12 and public, except that the Board may meet in closed session to prepare, approve,
13 administer, or grade examinations or to deliberate the qualifications of an applicant for
14 license or the disposition of a proceeding to discipline a licensed veterinarian, veterinary
15 technician or technologist.

16 **§ 179. General powers of the Board.**

17 (a) The Board shall:

18 (1) Examine and determine the qualifications and fitness of applicants for a
19 license to practice veterinary medicine in the Virgin Islands.

20 (2) Adopt, promulgate, and enforce regulations relating to specific duties and
21 responsibilities; certification, registration, or licensure; and other matters pertaining to
22 veterinarians, veterinary technicians, veterinary technologists, or non-licensed persons
23 consistent with the provisions of this act.

24 (3) Issue, renew, deny, limit, suspend, or revoke licenses and temporary
25 permits to practice veterinary medicine in the Virgin Islands; and discipline veterinarians,

1 veterinarian technicians or veterinary technologists consistent with the provisions of this
2 chapter and the regulations adopted pursuant to this act.

3 (4) Conduct investigations of suspected violations of this chapter to determine
4 whether there are sufficient grounds to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

5 (5) Inspect veterinary premises and equipment, including practice vehicles, at
6 any time in accordance with protocols established by regulation.

7 (6) Initiate disciplinary proceedings and hold hearings on all matters properly
8 brought before the Board and in connection thereto to administer oaths, receive evidence,
9 make necessary determinations, and enter orders consistent with the findings. The Board
10 may commission depositions and require by subpoena the attendance and testimony of
11 witnesses and the production of papers, records, or other documentary evidence. The
12 Board may designate one or more of its members to serve as its hearing officer.

13 (7) Bring proceedings to the Commissioner for the enforcement of this
14 chapter or any regulations promulgated pursuant to this chapter.

15 (8) Bring proceedings in the courts against any person for the enforcement of
16 this chapter or any regulations promulgated pursuant to this chapter.

17 (9) Upon the approval of the Commissioner, employ full-time or part-time
18 personnel - professional, clerical, or special - necessary to effectuate the provisions of
19 this chapter, and purchase or rent necessary office space, equipment, and supplies.

20 (10) Appoint from its own membership one or more members to act as
21 representatives of the Board at any meeting within or without the Virgin Islands where
22 such representation is desirable.

23 (11) Adopt, amend, or repeal all rules necessary for its governance and all
24 regulations necessary to carry into effect the provisions of this chapter, including the
25 establishment and publication of standards of practice and professional conduct for the
26 practice of veterinary medicine.

1 (12) Establish and publish annually a schedule of fees for licensing and
2 registration of veterinarians.

3 (b) The powers enumerated in subsection (a) are granted for the
4 purpose of enabling the Board to effectively supervise the practice of veterinary medicine
5 and veterinary technology and are to be construed liberally to accomplish this objective.

6 **§ 180. Additional powers of the Board.**

7 (a) In addition to the general powers set forth in § 179, the Board shall:

8 (1) Fix minimum standards for continuing veterinary medical education for
9 veterinarians and technicians, which shall be a condition precedent to the renewal of a
10 veterinary license, limited license, veterinary faculty certificate, or veterinary technician
11 registration, respectively;

12 (2) Inspect any hospitals, clinics, mobile units or other facilities used by any
13 practicing veterinarian, either by a member of the Board or its authorized representatives,
14 for the purpose of reporting the results of the inspection to the Board on a form
15 prescribed by the Board and seeking disciplinary action for violations of health, sanitary,
16 and medical waste disposal rules of the Board, affecting the practice of veterinary
17 medicine, or violations of regulation or laws of any territorial or federal department or
18 agency having jurisdiction in these areas of health, sanitation, and medical waste disposal
19 that relate to or affect the practice of veterinary medicine;

20 (3) Upon complaint or information received by the Board, prohibit through
21 summary emergency order of the Board, prior to a hearing, the operation of any
22 veterinary practice facility that the Board determines is endangering, or may endanger,
23 the public health or safety or the welfare and safety of animals, and suspend the license of
24 the veterinarian operating the veterinary practice facility, provided that upon the issuance
25 of any summary emergency order, the Board shall initiate, within ten days, a notice of
26 hearing under the administrative rules issued pursuant to this chapter;

1 (4) Provide special registration for veterinary technicians and adopt
2 regulations concerning the training, registration and service limits of such assistants while
3 employed by and acting under the supervision and responsibility of veterinarians. The
4 Board has exclusive jurisdiction in determining eligibility and qualification requirements
5 for these assistants. Renewals of registrations for veterinary technicians are required at
6 least every twenty-four months, provided that the certificate of registration for the
7 veterinary technician is otherwise eligible for renewal;

8 (5) Provide, pursuant to regulations, requirements for the inactive status of
9 license and limited veterinary licenses; and

10 (6) Pursuant to regulations, to assess and recover against persons holding
11 licenses, limited licenses, temporary permits or any certificates issued by the Board, costs
12 reasonably incurred by the Board in the investigation, prosecution, hearing, or other
13 administrative action of the Board in final decisions or orders where those persons are
14 found to have violated the Veterinary Practice Act or regulations of the Board issued
15 pursuant to the act.

16 (b) All costs recovered is property of the Board.

17 **§ 181. License required.**

18 No person is allowed to practice veterinary medicine or practice as a veterinary
19 technician in the Virgin Islands unless that person has been licensed by the Board.

20 **§ 182. Application for license qualifications.**

21 (a) A person desiring a license to practice veterinary medicine in the Virgin
22 Islands must make written application to the Board.

23 (b) By way of application, an applicant must establish that he is a graduate of
24 an AVMA accredited or approved college of veterinary medicine or the holder of an
25 equivalent certificate as defined in the regulations governing the practice of veterinary

1 medicine in the Virgin Islands; a person of good moral character; and provided other
2 information and proof as may be provided for by regulations.

3 (c) The application must be accompanied by a fee established and published by
4 the Board.

5 (d) If necessary, the applicant must submit with the application proof of
6 professional medical malpractice insurance.

7 **§ 183. Examinations.**

8 (a) The Board shall administer or cause to be administered at least two
9 examinations annually and may hold such additional examinations as are necessary to
10 avoid delay in issuing licenses to qualified applicants. The Board shall give public notice
11 of the time and place for each examination not less than 90 days prior to the date of the
12 examination. A person desiring to take an examination shall make application not less
13 than 30 days before the date of the examination.

14 (b) The Board may employ, cooperate, and contract with any organization or
15 consultant in the preparation, administration and grading of the examination.

16 (c) After each examination, the Board shall notify each examinee of the result
17 of the examination. The Board shall issue licenses to the persons successfully completing
18 the requirements for licensure.

19 (d) Notwithstanding this section, the Board shall waive the requirement that a
20 veterinarian pass an examination if the Board is unable to provide an examination as
21 provided in this section or for a veterinarian who:

22 (1) has submitted a complete application,

23 (2) holds a license issued by another state, district, commonwealth,
24 territory or possession of the United States, or foreign country,

25 (3) is in good standing;

26 (4) shows that he is a person of good moral character, and

1 (5) who has actively practiced clinical veterinary medicine for 3,000
2 hours during the 5 years preceding the application for licensure.

3 **§ 184. Temporary permit.**

4 (a) The Board shall issue a temporary permit to practice veterinary medicine:

5 (1) To a qualified applicant pending examination, provided that the
6 temporary permit expires upon applicant's failure to pass the examination;

7 (2) To a nonresident veterinarian validly licensed in another state,
8 commonwealth, district, territory, or possession of the United States, or a foreign
9 country, provided that the temporary permit is issued for a period of no more than
10 60 days;

11 (3) In the case of need for disaster emergency relief as declared by the
12 Governor;

13 (b) Temporary permits, as provided in (a) (1), (2) and (3), may contain
14 restrictions as to time, place, or supervision that the Board considers appropriate. The
15 Board shall notify the Commissioner of Health of all temporary permits issued and the
16 restrictions, if any.

17 (c) The Board may promulgate such regulations as may be necessary to carry
18 out the provisions of this section, including regulations addressing renewal, duration,
19 termination, and fees for temporary permits.

20 **§ 185. License renewal.**

21 (a) A license expires two years after its issuance, but may be renewed by
22 application to the Board and payment of the renewal fee as established and published by
23 the Board.

24 (b) The Board shall establish the continuing education requirements that must
25 be met for license renewal. The Board shall also publish the types of continuing
26 education that will meet its requirements. The Department of Health shall maintain a

1 record of all continuing education credits submitted by licensees and report the credits
2 earned by each licensee to the Board.

3 (c) The Board shall issue a new license to all persons registering under this
4 chapter. Failure to apply for a renewal license not later than 30 days after expiration of a
5 license results in the automatic revocation of the license and any person who practice
6 veterinary medicine after revocation are practicing in violation of this chapter.

7 (d) Any person may renew an expired license at any time not later than three
8 years following the license expiration upon application and compliance with the Board's
9 requirements and the payment of all applicable fees allowed by this chapter or by
10 regulations promulgated by the Board, but the applicant must be otherwise eligible to
11 have the license renewed.

12 (e) As provided by Board regulations, the Board may, after giving due
13 consideration to the protection of the public, waive examination if that renewal
14 application is received, together with all fees by Board rule as may apply, not later than
15 three years from the date of the expiration, providing that the applicant has complied
16 with the continuing education requirements.

17 (f) A licensed veterinarian may place his or her license in inactive status by
18 written notification to the Board. The Board shall issue a renewal license upon written
19 request and payment of all applicable fees and if the qualifications set forth in § 182 are
20 met.

21 (g) The Board may waive the payment of the license renewal fee of a licensed
22 veterinarian during the period when he is on active duty with any branch of the armed
23 services of the United States, not to exceed the longer of three years or the duration of a
24 national emergency.

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1 **§ 186. Continuing education.**

2 The Board shall adopt regulations that provide for continuing education
3 requirements for re-licensure and licensure by endorsement of veterinarians and
4 veterinary technicians. Upon the passage of this act, a veterinarian is required to
5 complete a minimum of 15 hours of approved continuing education annually and a
6 veterinary technician is required to complete a minimum of six hours of approved
7 continuing education annually as a condition for renewal of a license. The Commissioner
8 must approve must education courses.

9 **§ 187. Licensed veterinary technicians.**

10 (a) No person shall assist in the practice of veterinary medicine under the
11 direction, supervision and responsibility of a veterinarian as a veterinary technician
12 without first applying for and obtaining a certificate of qualification as a veterinary
13 technician from the Board and registering his employment in accordance with Board
14 regulations.

15 (b) A veterinary technician may perform only those acts and duties assigned
16 to him by a supervising veterinarian that are within the scope of practice of the
17 supervising veterinarian, but those acts may not include the diagnosis, prescribing of
18 medication, treatment or surgery in the practice of animal husbandry.

19 (c) An applicant applying for a certificate of qualification as a veterinary
20 technician in the Virgin Islands may make written application to the Board showing that
21 the applicant is a person of moral integrity and acceptable ethical standards.

22 (d) The application for certification as a veterinary technician must be written,
23 signed by the applicant, include an non-refundable application fee, and submitted to the
24 Board not later than 30 days before the examination and must also include, but is not
25 limited to, the following:

26 (1) A current photograph of the applicant;

1 (2) A copy of the diploma or its equivalent from a college level
2 program accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association;

3 (3) the National Board Examinations passing score provided by the
4 national testing agency; and

5 (4) A notarized letter of recommendation from by a licensed
6 veterinarian.

7 (e) Each certified veterinary technician must annually register his
8 employment with the Board, providing his name, current address, the name and office
9 address of both his employer and the supervising licensed veterinarian, and additional
10 information the Board considers necessary. Upon any change of employment, the
11 registration is automatically suspended until written notification to the Board that new
12 employment has been obtained.

13 (f) Nothing in this section prevents a veterinarian from utilizing the services
14 of an employee to perform services not requiring the skill and judgment of a veterinary
15 technician and the services are performed under the direct personal supervision of the
16 veterinarian. The employee may not be identified as a “veterinary technician”, “animal
17 technician” or “technician”.

18 (g) A veterinarian licensed may not establish a separate office or clinic in a
19 location other than his regular office and place that separate office or clinic under the
20 control or supervision of a veterinary technician.

21 (h) After obtaining a degree from an accredited program in veterinary
22 technology, and upon completing the application for certification in the Virgin Islands, an
23 applicant will be issued a certificate of qualification.

24 (i) Every veterinarian using, supervising or employing a registered veterinary
25 technician is individually responsible and liable for the performance of the acts and
26 omissions delegated to the veterinary technician. Nothing in this subsection may be

1 construed to relieve the veterinary technician of any responsibility and liability of any of
2 his or her own acts or omissions.

3 (j) A veterinary technician or technologist who performs veterinary
4 technology contrary to this chapter is subject to disciplinary actions in a manner
5 consistent with the provisions of this act applicable to veterinarians.

6 (k) To renew their license, veterinary technicians and technologists are
7 required to complete continuing education as prescribed in this act or by regulations.

8 (l) No person licensed as a veterinary technician may perform surgery,
9 diagnose or prescribe medication for any animal.

10 **§ 188. Veterinary technician; denial, suspension, or revocation of certificate or**
11 **license.**

12 (a) The Board may deny or suspend any registration or deny or revoke any
13 certificate of qualification upon a finding that the applicant or veterinary technician:

14 (1) solicited patients for any practitioner of the veterinary healing arts;

15 (2) solicited or received any form of compensation from any person
16 other than his or her registered employer for performing as a veterinary
17 technician;

18 (3) willfully or negligently divulging a professional secret or
19 discussing a veterinarian's diagnosis or treatment without the express permission
20 of the veterinarian;

21 (4) was convicted of any offense punishable by incarceration in a
22 territorial, state or federal prison. A copy of the record of conviction, certified by
23 the clerk of the court entering the conviction, is conclusive evidence;

24 (5) is unable to practice as a veterinary technician with reasonable skill
25 and safety to patients because of illness or the use of drugs, alcohol, narcotics, or
26 other chemicals, or as a result of any mental or physical condition;

1 (6) committed fraud or make a misrepresentation in applying for or
2 procuring a certificate of qualification to perform as a veterinary technician in the
3 Virgin Island, or in applying for or procuring an annual registration;

4 (7) impersonated another person registered as a veterinary technician
5 or allowing any person to use his certificate of qualification or registration;

6 (8) aided and abetted the practice of veterinary medicine by a person
7 not licensed by the Board;

8 (9) committed gross negligence in the performance of duties, tasks or
9 functions assigned to him by a licensed veterinarian;

10 (10) manifested incapacity or incompetence to perform as a veterinary
11 technician; or

12 (11) engaged in conduct unbecoming a person registered as a veterinary
13 technician or detrimental to the best interests of the public.

14 (b) A person whose certificate of qualification was suspended or revoked may
15 be recertified or reinstated at any time upon written application to the Board showing
16 cause to justify recertification or reinstatement.

17 **§ 189. Discipline of licensees.**

18 (a) Upon receipt of a written sworn complaint, the Board may, after a fair
19 hearing and by a majority vote, revoke or suspend a license pursuant to
20 this chapter, may otherwise discipline a person licensed under this chapter,
21 or may deny a license for any of the following reasons:

22 (1) the use of fraud, misrepresentation, or deception in
23 obtaining a license.

24 (2) an adjudication of insanity or incompetence.

25 (3) the impairment of a person holding a license issued by the
26 Board, when the impairment is caused by that person's use of alcohol,

1 drugs, or controlled substances, and the impairment interferes with that
2 person's ability to practice within the scope of the license with reasonable
3 skill and safety and in a manner not harmful to the public or to animals
4 under the person's care;

5 (4) The use of advertising or solicitation which is false,
6 misleading or deceptive;

7 (5) conviction of a felony or other public offense involving
8 moral turpitude;

9 (6) incompetence, gross negligence, or other malpractice in the
10 practice of veterinary medicine;

11 (7) having professional association with or knowingly
12 employing any person practicing veterinary medicine unlawfully;

13 (8) fraud or dishonesty in the application or reporting of any
14 test for disease in animals;

15 (9) Failure to keep veterinary premises and equipment in a
16 clean and sanitary condition, violating an administrative rule of the Board
17 concerning the minimum sanitary requirements of veterinary hospitals,
18 veterinary clinics, or other practice facilities, or violating other territorial,
19 state or federal statutes, rules, or regulations concerning the disposal of
20 medical waste;

21 (10) failure to report, as required by the laws and regulations of
22 the Virgin Islands, or making false report of, any contagious or infectious
23 disease;

24 (11) dishonesty or gross negligence in the inspection of
25 foodstuffs or the issuance of health or inspection certificates;

1 (12) conviction of a criminal offense involving cruelty to
2 animals or the act of cruelty to animals;

3 (13) revocation of a license to practice veterinary medicine by
4 another state, territory or district of the United States, or foreign country
5 only if the grounds for revocation in the other jurisdiction would also
6 result in revocation of the practitioner's license in the Virgin Islands;

7 (14) unprofessional conduct as defined in regulations adopted
8 by the Board;

9 (15) conviction of a federal or territorial criminal offense
10 involving the illegal use, prescription, sale, or handling of controlled
11 substances, other drugs, or medicines;

12 (16) the illegal use, dispensing, prescription, sale, or handling of
13 controlled substances or other drugs and medicines;

14 (17) failure to comply with regulations of the United States
15 Food and Drug Administration regarding biologics, controlled substances,
16 drugs, or medicines;

17 (18) selling, dispensing, prescribing, or allowing the sale,
18 dispensing, or prescription of biologics, controlled substances, drugs, or
19 medicines without a veterinarian-client-patient relationship with respect to
20 the sale, dispensing, or prescription; or

21 (19) acts or behavior constituting fraud, dishonesty, or
22 misrepresentation in dealing with the Board or in the veterinarian-client-
23 patient relationship.

24 **§ 190. Reinstatement.**

25 On written application made to the Board showing cause justifying relicensing or
26 reinstatement, a person whose license was suspended or revoked may, at the discretion of

1 the Board, be relicensed or reinstated at any time without an examination by majority
2 vote of the Board.

3 **§ 191. Appeal.**

4 Any party aggrieved by a decision of the Board may appeal the matter to the
5 Commissioner not later than 30 days after notification of the Board's decision. The
6 Commissioner shall act on the appeal not later than 30 days following receipt of the
7 appeal. If the aggrieved is not satisfied with the Commissioner's decision, the aggrieved
8 may file action in the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands and shall serve upon the
9 Commissioner written notice of the appeal. The court shall review the decision of the
10 Commissioner as it would the decision of any court. The decision of the reviewing court
11 is final and no further appeal may be taken.

12 **§192. Release of records.**

13 (A) A veterinarian licensed by the Board shall release or authorize the release
14 of rabies immunization records and other relevant treatment data of an animal under his
15 or her care to (i) a requesting physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner who is
16 contemplating the administration of the rabies treatment protocol to any person under his
17 or her care who has been the victim of a bite or other possible rabies exposure from such
18 animal; (ii) a requesting animal control officer or law-enforcement officer who needs to
19 identify the owner of such animal or verify the rabies vaccination history of such animal;
20 or (iii) a requesting animal control officer or an official of the Department of Health who
21 is investigating the incident.

22 (B) Any veterinarian licensed by the Board who in good faith releases or
23 authorizes the release of an animal's rabies immunization records and other relevant data
24 pursuant to this Section shall not be liable for civil damages resulting from the release of
25 such information.

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1 **§ 193. Reporting of animal cruelty.**

2 (a) Every person licensed under this chapter shall report to the Commissioner,
3 the Board, and the Virgin Islands Police Department suspected animal cruelty including
4 cases of an animal exhibiting injuries consistent with dog fighting or injuries due to the
5 administration of improper dosages of any drug or medicine.

6 (b) A person licensed under this chapter who makes a report of suspected
7 animal cruelty or who provides records or information related to a report of suspected
8 cruelty or testifies in any judicial proceeding arising from such report, records, or
9 information is immune from any civil or criminal liability or administrative penalty or
10 sanction on account of the report, records, information, or testimony, unless such person
11 acted in bad faith or with a malicious purpose.

12 **§ 193. Severability.**

13 If any part of this chapter is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, all
14 valid parts that are severable from the invalid part remain in effect.”

15 **SECTION 4. STATUS OF PERSONS PREVIOUSLY LICENSED.**

16 (a) A person holding a valid license to practice veterinary medicine in the
17 Virgin Islands on the effective date of this act is recognized as a licensed veterinarian and
18 is entitled to retain this status so long as he complies with this chapter, including annual
19 renewal of the license.

20 (b) Persons serving as members of the Board on the effective date of this act
21 may continue serving until a new Board is appointed by the Governor.

22 **SECTION 5.** This act takes effect 30 days after enactment.

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BILL SUMMARY

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Section 1 names this Act the “Virgin Islands Veterinary Practice Act of 2017”.

Section 2 repeals legislation which established the Board of Examiners for the Practice of Veterinary Medicine and the composition of that Board.

Section 3 repeals legislation which sets forth the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Examiners for the Practice of Veterinary Medicine and establishes the Virgin Islands Board of Veterinary Medicine and sets forth its responsibilities and duties:

Internal section 171 states the purpose of this legislation, which is to promote public health, safety welfare by safeguarding the people of the Virgin Islands from unqualified and incompetent practitioners of veterinary medicine.

Internal section 172 defines terms used throughout the legislation.

Internal section 173 sets forth the parameters within which a person is regarded as practicing veterinary medicine.

Internal section 174 requires that there be a veterinarian-client-patient relationship before a person may practice veterinary medicine.

Internal section 175 sets forth exemptions to this chapter.

Internal section 176 sets forth the descriptive terms that a veterinary practice (“practice”) must include in its name in order to be recognized by the public as such; and requires that the name of the practice reflects the level of service being provided.

Internal section 177 establishes the Virgin Islands board of Veterinary Medicine, states how much members will comprise the board and requires that they be appointed by the Governor for three-year terms. It, also, states that four members will be veterinarians licensed in the Virgin Islands and how much of these members will be from each district; mandates that two members be from non-profit animal care organizations and how much of these members will be from each district; and requires that one member be at least 21

1 years of age, representing the community. Finally, it requires that all non-veterinarian
2 members must have resided in the Virgin Islands six months before appointment

3 Internal section 178 provides how often the board must meet; that the meetings
4 shall be opened to the public with certain enumerated exceptions; that a majority
5 constitutes a quorum, with the exception that five members is necessary for suspension or
6 revocation of a license.

7 Internal section 179 states the **general** powers of the Board.

8 Internal section 180 lists additional powers of the Board in addition to those in
9 section 179, which allows it to set minimum standards, perform inspections, prohibit the
10 operation of any veterinary practice prior to a hearing if it determines that continued
11 operation of the practice prior to hearing may endanger the public and suspend the
12 veterinarian's license, allowing for due process.

13 Internal section 181 mandates that anyone who desires to practice veterinary
14 medicine or practice as a veterinary technician in the Virgin Islands must be licensed by
15 the Board.

16 Internal section 182 requires that a person who desires a license to practice
17 veterinary medicine in the Virgin Islands must submit a written application to the Board,
18 and sets forth the qualifications that must be met before a license is issued.

19 Internal section 183 specifies that the board must conduct examinations twice a
20 year and give 60 days notice of the exam. It also mandates that the applicant for an exam
21 submit an application at least 30 days before the examination. There are also exemptions
22 wherein someone may not have to take the examination.

23 Internal section 184 states provisions within which someone may be granted a
24 temporary permit.

1 Internal section 185 sets the time of expiration of a license and the process for
2 renewal of the license. This section, also, allows a process wherein a licensed
3 veterinarian may place himself in an inactive status.

4 Internal section 186 provides that the Board shall adopt regulations that provide
5 for continuing legal education and that upon passage of this act requires a veterinarian
6 and a veterinary technician to complete a certain amount of continuing education hours.

7 Internal section 187 sets forth the standards for the practice of a licenses
8 veterinary technician.

9 Internal section 188 set forth the circumstances under which a veterinary
10 technician's license may be suspended.

11 Internal section 189 lists impermissible acts that will subject a person to
12 disciplinary action by the Board.

13 Internal section 190 specifies how a person may have their license reinstated.

14 Internal section 191 describes the process for appeal from an adverse Board's
15 decision.

16 Internal section 192 provides those circumstances under which a licensed
17 veterinarian will be required to release rabies immunization records and other related data
18 of an animal under his care and that veterinarian will be immune from liability if release
19 of the documents were in good faith.

20 Internal section 193 imposes a duty upon those persons licensed under this
21 chapter to report suspected cases of animal cruelty and they will be immune from liability
22 if release of the documents were in good faith.

23 Internal section 194 dictates that each section of this chapter is severable from
24 each other, such that if any part of the chapter is held invalid the other sections of the act
25 are not affected and remain in full force and effect.

1 Section 4 allows that any veterinarian who is licensed on the effective date of this
2 act will be recognized as a licensed veterinarian and will retain this status as long as he
3 complies with the provisions of the chapter, including annual renewal of the license. This
4 section also allows that any persons who are serving as members of the currently existing
5 Board of Examiners on the effective date of this act, shall continue to serve until the
6 members of the Virgin Islands Board of Veterinary Medicine is appointed by the
7 Governor.

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9 **BR17-0245/February1, 2018/**

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