



S.C. ushers in 'open access'

By Jessica Tremayne

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COLUMBIA, S.C. — The South Carolina veterinary practice act was signed by Gov. Mark Sanford, making veterinary disciplinary hearings open to the public.

The passage ends a 30-year effort to have the state's veterinary practice act revised.

The board must provide written acknowledgement of every initial complaint and notify the complainant in

writing of the status of the investigation. While the board is entitled to deliberate in an executive session (ES), no final action may be taken during ES.

"The biggest difference between what we were talking about earlier this

year is that there was an ability for accused veterinarians to talk to the board without going through the hearing process," says Dr. Steven Shrum, immediate past president South Carolina Veterinary Medical Association (SCAV). "It was decided that it is OK to determine if the complaint is a legal issue without going directly to a hearing."

The state's human medical board made complaints open to everyone last year, Shrum says. Now veterinarians are following suit.

"With veterinarians wanting to be considered medical doctor equivalents, we determined we had to follow the same rules," Shrum adds.

Advocators to open access of public hearings believed the board and accused veterinarian went into a back room and made a decision, Shrum explains, without evidence a genuine hearing even took place.

The practice act also spells out what procedures can be performed by an equine dentist versus DVM.

"Pain relief and anesthesia must be done by a veterinarian," Shrum says. "A veterinarian will be responsible for the other professionals actions if he or she has referred a client to them."

The new practice act:

- Gives clear definitions to what an emergency clinic is and regulations on mobile vaccination clinics.

- Defines what practice of veterinary medicine means.

- Defines the powers and duties of the board.

- Discusses the definition, and duties of a veterinary technician.

"I am very happy this has passed; the practice act has a lot of important elements that will help the profession and pet owners," Shrum says.

Sen. Larry Grooms and Marcia Rosenberg, a pet owner whose cat almost died after a botched spay surgery, lobbied for the hearings to be public to protect pet owners, say they are happy with the outcome of their efforts.

"After a several-year struggle, I am gratified that South Carolina has joined the community of states where veterinary disciplinary hearings are open to the public," Rosenberg says. "The public will finally have the ability to learn more details about the few veterinarians who have serious charges filed against them." ■