

Attitudes, opinions, and experiences of veterinary practitioners regarding animal maltreatment; A survey of southwestern Ontario and the Atlantic provinces

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As animal health and welfare professionals, veterinarians have the ability to be leaders in the detection and prevention of animal neglect, abuse, and cruelty. Current guidelines and protocols for how cases of animal maltreatment are identified and responded to are ill-defined and usually up to the discretion of the practitioner. Previous qualitative interview research aided in the development of the first veterinary practitioner survey about animal maltreatment conducted in Canada. The survey was distributed to a random sample of small-practitioners in southwestern Ontario (N=247) and the Atlantic region (N=53). The intent of the survey was to measure the veterinarian's attitudes and opinions about handling cases of animal maltreatment as well as the perceived prevalence of such cases in the clinic. Survey results were analyzed using SPSS software and are presented in the form of descriptive statistics. Results indicate that most veterinarians will at some point in their career be faced with patients that have been intentionally or unintentionally maltreated. Results also indicate that a discrepancy exists between the role and responsibility that veterinarians believe they possess regarding animal maltreatment and the amount of training they receive that focuses on that role. The researchers conclude that a need exists for more college-level training and direction about how to deal with cases of animal maltreatment seen in the clinic.