

15.8.2023

Dear Coroner's court of Victoria

Re: Recommendations for [REDACTED] death case: COR 2021 004832

The Coroner's recommendations have been implemented as of May 2023. Please see updated policies and procedures, in particular section 8. Section 8 must be signed off by every staff member. All policies and procedures are reviewed yearly and section 8 requires annual staff sign off.

1. Castlemaine Veterinary Clinic ensures that escalation processes are in place regarding deviations from expected practice around the use, storage and monitoring of pentobarbitone as outlined in section 8 of Policies and Procedures.
2. Castlemaine Veterinary Clinic ensures that all staff are educated around escalation processes if they identify deviations from expected practice around the use, storage and monitoring of pentobarbitone as outlined in section 8 of Policies and Procedures.

8 PHARMECEUTICAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

8.1 STORAGE OF PHARMACEUTICALS

All S8 pharmaceuticals (methadone, buprenorphine, butorphanol, ketamine, morphine, fentanyl injection and patches, alprazolam and codeine) are to be always stored in the drug safe. Specific S4 pharmaceuticals including pentobarbital, tramadol and diazepam are to be stored in the drug safe.

In the case of a home animal euthanasia all pentobarbital must be stored safely in a locked box in transit to client homes. If left in the car unattended, the box and the car must be locked. Only enough pentobarbital required for the euthanasia must be carried in the lock box. At the end of the home visit all remaining pentobarbital must be returned to the drug safe immediately upon returning to the clinic.

All other schedule drugs are to be stored in the locked pharmaceutical cupboard.

8.2 ACCESS TO THE DRUG SAFE AND CUPBOARD

Veterinarians are to be issued with their own drug safe key, which is to be kept on their person at all times. This key is never to be left unattended or left at the clinic overnight. Only a veterinarian may possess a key to the drug safe. Only a veterinarian may access the drug safe. The drug safe must be kept locked at all times when not in use. Only veterinarians can have access to S8 lock box code.

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Veterinarians are to be issued with their own drug cupboard key. The drug cupboard is accessible to veterinarians and veterinary nurses under veterinary supervision. It is to be locked overnight.

8.3 HANDLING AND RECORDING PHARMACEUTICALS

Veterinarians only have exclusive access to the pharmaceuticals stored in the drug safe. Non veterinarians are not authorised to access the drug safe, or handle drugs stored in the safe.

All S8 drugs received from a supplier must be signed into the drug register by a veterinarian.

S8 drugs must be accounted for and recorded in clinic software and in an authorised S8 auditing software package.

All S8 drugs requiring disposal (out of date or returned) must be disposed of safely and signed off by two veterinarians, or one veterinarian and one senior member of staff.

Safe handling methods must be employed when handling drugs. That is, use a pill counter device, wearing gloves or washing hands immediately after handling.

All immune and gland suppressing drugs must be handled safely. Gloves must be worn when handling immuran, azothioprin, cyclosporine (Neoral, optimmune, atopica), carbimazol, felimazol, methinazol and trilostane. These drugs are only sold in sealed packets, and therefore should never require handling.

When handling anaesthetic liquids (isoflurane) a mask must be worn.

When receiving anaesthetic liquids from the supplier, you must leave all bottles in the box while transporting to the drug cupboard. If a bottle is smashed, all staff must evacuate the area.

8.4 EMPLOYEE EDUCATION REGARDING DRUGS

Pentobarbital must only be used by a veterinarian for humane animal euthanasia or, in some circumstances, for animal patient seizure control. Humane euthanasia may be performed in clinic or at the home of a client who has requested home euthanasia for their animal.

All employees must understand the appropriate use of pentobarbital. Appropriate use is only for humane animal euthanasia, either in clinic or at the home of a client when requested for home animal euthanasia, or for animal patient seizure control in some circumstances.

All employees must report to management any misuse of pentobarbital. Misuse includes use of pentobarbitone for any reason other than humane euthanasia and seizure control. Misuse also includes veterinarians or other staff taking pentobarbital off clinic premises to store and use at home.

All employees must report to management any staff personal use of drugs of addiction (eg. opiates, benzodiazepines, ketamine) or any staff request to use these drugs.

All employees must report to management the misuse of any in clinic pharmaceutical.

If a staff member does not feel comfortable reporting pharmaceutical misuse to management, they must report the misuse to another senior member of staff who can escalate the matter.

All new employees must be inducted with emphasis on policies and procedures surrounding access, use, recording and storage of S8 drugs and S4 drugs, particularly drugs of addiction and drugs for euthanasia. All employees must be educated about what is misuse of pentobarbital and how to escalate its misuse.

8.5 ONGOING MANAGEMENT OF DRUGS OF ADDICTION AND EUTHANASIA DRUGS

Policies and procedures to be regularly updated once yearly in line with industry standards and relevant legislative guidelines.

8.6 EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND SIGNATURE

Employee Name

Signed

Date

Witness Name

Signed

Date



15-8-2023

Yvette Berkeley
Director
Castlemaine Veterinary clinic