



Board of Veterinary Examiners Special Meeting Minutes

Alaska Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing

Tuesday, April 1st, 2025, 2PM AKST via Zoom

These minutes were approved at the April 23rd, 2025 meeting of the board

Members Present: Ciara Vollaro, DVM; Sarah Johnson, DVM; Robert Gerlach, VMD, Chair; Denise Albert, DVM.

Members Absent: Hal Geiger, PhD.

Staff Present: Keri Mell, Occupational Licensing Examiner; Rachel Billet, Program Coordinator I; Reid Bowman, Program Coordinator II.

Call to Order

Attendance

Members Present: Ciara Vollaro, DVM; Sarah Johnson, DVM; Robert Gerlach, VMD, Chair; Denise Albert, DVM.

Members Absent: Hal Geiger, PhD.

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM by Chair Dr. Gerlach and a quorum was established; he then read the board's mission statement onto the record. When asked if any board members had any conflicts of interest to declare, Dr. Albert stated that as the original reviewing board member for the case being discussed she would need to be recused and said that she did assist in rewriting the motion that will be discussed, but only after confirming through staff that she was allowed.

Review and Approve Agenda

Motion:

RESOLVED to APPROVE the agenda as written.

Motion moved by Dr. Vollaro and motion seconded by Dr. Albert. The motion passed unanimously.

Correction to 2-14-25 Motion to Deny for R.R.

Dr. Gerlach introduced the topic to the board, stating it was noticed that the boards motion from 2/14/2025 did not address all the issues with Dr. Rammell's application which were discussed on the record. This is not intended to revisit or invite new discussion of the application but to clear the administrative record to accurately reflect the boards intent at that meeting. Due to the approved declared conflict at the 2/14 meeting Dr. Albert is recused from this vote.

Motion:

RESOLVED to APPROVE rescinding the previous motion from February 14, 2025, and adopt the following motion to deny the veterinary license application for Dr. Rex Rammell based on failure to meet the qualifications for license required in *Alaska Veterinary Statute 08.98.120(a)*, and *Alaska Veterinary Regulations 12 AAC 68.048(a)(1)*, *12 AAC 68.048(a)(6)*, and *12 AAC 68.048(a)(8)*.

Motion moved by Dr. Gerlach and motion seconded by Dr. Vollaro. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote. Dr. Vollaro yes. Dr. Johnson yes. Dr. Gerlach yes. Dr. Albert abstains.

Discuss HB 70

The board discussed House Bill 70 and agreed on several key points:

- In its present form, the bill lacks proper guidelines for training and oversight of EMS professionals working on Operational K9's (OPK9's)
- In its present form, the bill lacks proper guidelines for evaluating quality of animal care, evaluating competency of the EMS providers, and continuing education requirements. There should be board involvement in this the same way they are for veterinarians and veterinary technicians.
- The letter from PET Emergency holds considerable weight as these are the primary veterinarians dealing with and affected by these emergency situations and their recommendations should be considered by the board should they take a position today.
- Medical decisions for humans are not the same decisions that would be made for an animal or any other species, and advisory groups must include those who are dealing with these scenarios, such as emergency veterinarians.
- There is debate over the necessity of the bill, especially since the board recently rewrote their veterinary-client-patient-relationship regulations to specifically allow care in an emergency, but the board does recognize that OPK9's are invaluable, and the best service and care should be available to them, but not without proper oversight. Though there have only been 2 instances where these services were required in the last 10 or so years, that's not to say that something shouldn't be in place should something happen.
- There is oversight for the treatment of humans by an MD, so the same should be the case for animals. Veterinary supervision is essential.

The board had several questions for Mr. Webb, who was present for board discussion and response.

- Who will be accountable for decisions regarding care? Mr. Webb responded that it will be the Alaska Office of EMS, and that they have quarterly quality assurance meetings.
- Whose narcotics are used and how are they accounted for? Mr. Webb responded that he spoke to someone in DEA regional office in Seattle. EMS drugs will be used, accounted for, and wasted the same as for human patients. EMS providers do not have individual DEA registration numbers; they operate under their EMS services EMS medical directors license. When animals are dropped off there will be an electronic patient care report to go to the receiving veterinarian. Board members were surprised by this, as they cannot write prescriptions for humans, but Mr. Webb confirmed that EMS professionals will have authority to write the same for animals as they do humans.
- Is there an effort by EMS to include the people at the only emergency clinic in the state in an advisory capacity? Or just those out of state? Mr. Webb responded that if the bill gets to the design phase they will be involved in the process. Not just those existing in other states.
- Will the board be involved in investigations for how a case was handled by EMS professionals? Mr. Webb said EMS is responsible for this typically, but the design phase will include whether the BOVE should be consulted. He also added that amendment was made by AKVMA through him which addresses a concern about legal liabilities, as it was clear something needed to be written in protecting the veterinarians receiving animals from EMS. The amendment will change EMS statutes to add this protection.
- It is in statute that you cannot charge for veterinary services provided by a non-veterinarian. Will there be charges for these services? Mr. Webb responded that this may be a question more for ambulance billing, as fees will likely only be at the transport level.

Mr. Webb clarified a few more items for the board. He stated that as the legislative process goes on, the original bill is always going to change. From the House Health and Social Services Committee, 8 amendments were proposed yesterday, March 31st, 2025, and most passed. He stated that the regulatory authority for EMS will be involved and help establish training and such. Gaining approval through the legislative process doesn't mean that EMS will engage in these new processes the next day - it can be several years in the making, and includes this first phase, the Legislation, and following that would include the design and implementation phases. If bill passes, they will sit down with EMS, veterinary licensees, especially those familiar with operational K9s, and emergency veterinarians to assure maximum collaboration. This is a long process; the bill may make its way through the house but will likely take 2 full sessions. Dr. Gerlach mentioned that the primary concern is the care and protection of animals, and to him it seems like this bill was created without consulting veterinary professionals. As a practitioner in the state, he didn't know this was in the works until it came out and feels as though there should have been better outreach. Mr. Webb stated that he talked to former chair when she

was on, and he did make changes based on her recommendations, including removing a lot of changes from veterinary statutes to stop others from taking advantage, putting most of the onus under EMS statutes now. They need the legislative authority to start the design process and talk more to those in opposition and determine more guardrails. It will involve a lot of people once they can sit down and work the nuts and bolts. He also wanted to make it very clear to the board that he and his team are staunchly against an amendment that might be proposed tomorrow which would allow EMS professionals to respond to emergencies at private residences and provide services to private animals. He stated they do not have the capacity nor the desire to do so, and this was never the intent of the bill.

Board members brought up a past issue with the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, telling Mr. Webb that the veterinary community in Alaska spent 8 years creating an exemption from a bill that was created for human medicine without consulting veterinarians, and it caused tremendous issues statewide and took a lot of advocacy and work to get it changed. More involvement from veterinary community from the start could have saved a lot of trepidation as they are naturally very cautious now. Mr. Webb sympathized that it took the EMS 2 years to escape the narcotic issue too, and he has established a good working relationship with Dr. Dick and AKVMA and other veterinary professionals in the state, who all want to make this bill fit for everybody.

Ms. Billiet asked the board whether they were ready to make an official statement on the bill. The resounding feeling from members was that the bill is moving too quickly, and they have too many concerns with its current form to support it, and not making a statement implies support.

Motion:

RESOLVED to APPROVE opposing House Bill 70 in its current form.

Motion moved by Dr. Albert and motion seconded by Dr. Vollaro. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote. Dr. Vollaro yes. Dr. Johnson yes. Dr. Gerlach yes. Dr. Albert yes.

Dr. Gerlach to write the letter since a subcommittee to recommend action has to be publicly noticed. The final letter will be voted on in Onboard.

Adjourn

Motion:

RESOLVED to APPROVE adjourning the April 1st, 2025, meeting of the Board of Veterinary Examiners.

Motion moved by Dr. Albert and motion seconded by Dr. Vollaro. The motion passed unanimously. The board went off the record at 3:15 pm.