



**WHEN WE TAKE OUR PETS TO THE VETERINARIAN**, we trust they'll receive a level of care that is safe, compassionate and evidence-based, just as we'd expect for a family member. But what exactly is the "standard of care" in veterinary medicine, and how do you know if your pet is receiving it?

The veterinary standard of care is a set of professional and legal guidelines that help to ensure quality treatment and can be used to evaluate whether a veterinarian's diagnosis and treatment regarding a client's pet was appropriate. The AAHA (American Animal Hospital Association) plays a big role in defining these standards. It offers official guidelines for accreditation that veterinary clinics use as benchmarks to define and maintain quality care. These standards include:

- *Maintaining clean, safe facilities.*
- *Employing trained staff within legal roles.*
- *Keeping complete medical records.*
- *Providing diagnostic and treatment options.*
- *Seeking informed consent before procedures.*
- *Referring to specialists when needed.*
- *Following accepted protocols for surgery, anesthesia and pain management.*

**HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOUR PET IS GETTING PROPER CARE?** Since pets can't speak for themselves, it's up to their owners to determine the quality of care they're receiving. Look for:

**Good Communication:** Diagnoses and options are explained clearly, questions are answered and written instructions provided.

**Safe Practices:** Clinic is sanitary and organized, anesthesia is closely monitored.

**Pain Management:** Treatment always includes consideration of pain relief, especially for surgery or injuries.

**Preventive Care:** Emphasis on wellness exams that include blood and urine testing, vaccines, parasite control and dental health.

In addition, pet owners should try to stay informed, ask a lot of questions, and seek second opinions when it seems appropriate. By following these guidelines, you can help to ensure that your pet is getting the high-quality care they deserve.

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*With our combined years of standard and advanced clinical expertise and research, the team at VETERINARY LITIGATION CONSULTANTS can provide you with expert analysis of your pet's medical records to determine if your vet provided the required standard of care in diagnosis and treatment or if negligence was involved.*