

Introduction

From 1 December 2025 the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (s 23H) will require that a person in charge of an adult dog must not allow the dog to become pregnant if the dog has had the maximum number of deliveries. Specifically, the maximum number of deliveries for an adult dog is three different deliveries by caesarean delivery or five different deliveries by any method of delivery if the dog has had no more than three deliveries by caesarean delivery. A dog must not have any further deliveries, by any method, after the dog has a third caesarean delivery.

The person in charge of an adult dog that has had two deliveries by caesarean delivery must not allow the dog to become pregnant without the written approval of a veterinarian. Under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (s 23H) a veterinarian must not give approval unless reasonably satisfied the pregnancy will not cause a significant risk to the health of the adult dog.

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to assist veterinarians when considering a request from the person in charge of an adult dog to provide written approval for a further pregnancy in a dog that has had two deliveries by caesarean delivery.

Policy

1. Veterinarians must not provide written approval for an adult dog to become pregnant when it has had two previous deliveries by caesarean delivery if they are not reasonably satisfied the pregnancy will not cause significant risk to the health of the dog.
2. Veterinarians must ensure they comply with veterinary practice legislation, including the Veterinary Practitioners Code of Professional Conduct (Code) when considering a request to provide written approval for a further pregnancy in a dog that has had two deliveries by caesarean delivery.

Application of the Code

1. A veterinarian must at all times consider the welfare of animals when practising veterinary science (Code (cl 2)) and this requires a veterinarian to consider the impact of a further pregnancy causing a significant risk not just to the health of the dog but to the welfare of the dog. Such consideration requires the use of a recognised framework to assess any risk to welfare such as the Five Domains (nutrition, environment, health, behaviour, and resulting mental state).
2. The Code (cl 4) requires that veterinarians must carry out professional procedures in accordance with current standards and must base professional decisions on evidence-based science or well recognised current knowledge and practice or both. When considering whether a further pregnancy will pose a significant risk to the health of the dog, the veterinarian should carefully consider:
 - a. The effect of signalment on the likelihood of a further caesarean delivery and the anaesthetic risk for the dog as per the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) physical status classification.
 - b. The availability, accuracy and reliability of the history for the dog and its impact including maternal age, maternal parity, previous litter size, previous reproductive or systemic disease, and previous abdominal surgical procedures (including surgical artificial insemination).
 - c. The results of a routine physical examination together with a reproduction focused examination and any further testing as indicated such as imaging and pathology tests.
3. A veterinarian must utilise the skills of colleagues by consultation or referral if appropriate (Code (cl 5)) when considering a request for written approval for a further pregnancy.
4. A veterinarian must, where it is practicable to do so, obtain the informed consent of the person responsible for the care of an animal before providing veterinary services to the animal (Code (cl 7)). The breeder should be informed that a caesarean delivery is highly likely after two previous caesarean deliveries. The signalment and history noted above will inform the discussion surrounding risks to the dog and potential offspring.
5. A veterinarian must maintain a record of any written approval for a further pregnancy in accordance with the Code (cl 15).
6. Any written approval for a further pregnancy must be based on the individual veterinarian's personal professional knowledge or expertise and include such detail as is necessary to justify this decision such that the approval is complete and accurate (Code (cl 17)).
7. A veterinarian must ensure they are able to access, or if not request information from any previous treating veterinarian, in relation to any surgical operation for the correction of an inheritable defect, or medical treatment for an inheritable disease, prior to considering whether to provide written approval for a further pregnancy. Even if the primary purpose for providing such veterinary services for a breeding dog was to relieve or prevent pain or discomfort for the animal, written approval for a further pregnancy would be in breach of the Code (cl 18).

Monitoring

1. The Companion Animal Register will be updated to ensure any delivery by caesarean delivery is able to be recorded and available to veterinarians.
2. The Hospital Inspector will consult with or collect records from veterinarians at premises in order to monitor compliance with relevant legislation.
3. Compliance with relevant legislation may also be monitored through investigations of formal complaints to the Board.
4. The Board will consult with the profession and veterinary and other regulatory bodies as required regarding this guideline.

Conflict of Interest

Members of the Board must comply with the Code of Conduct for Board Members in relation to decisions regarding this guideline.

Review

This guideline shall be reviewed annually or as required to ensure that it remains aligned with current standards of practice and compliant with relevant legislation.