

VETERINARY PREMISES STANDARDS

Consultation Paper

OFFICIAL

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Further information about the project

Further information can be found on:

VSBSA's Website: https://vsb.sa.gov.au/

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Abbreviations

ASAV AVHS	Australian Small Animal Veterinarians Group Accredited Veterinary Hospital Scheme
AVA	Australian Veterinary Association
PIRSA	Department of Primary Industries and Regions
SA	South Australia
VSBSA	Veterinary Surgeons Board of South Australia as defined in the *Veterinary Practice Act 2003*
VP Act	South Australia's *Veterinary Practice Act 2003*
VP Regulations	South Australia's *Veterinary Practice Regulations 2017*
VPS	Veterinary Premises Standards
VS Act	South Australia's *Veterinary Services Act 2023*
VSRBSA	Veterinary Services Regulatory Board of South Australia as defined in the *Veterinary Services Act 2023*

Overview

Significant changes are underway for veterinary premises in South Australia under the *Veterinary Services Act 2023*.

For the first time, the Veterinary Surgeons Board of South Australia (the Board) will be responsible for regulating veterinary premises across the state. Under the Act, veterinarians will not be permitted to provide veterinary services at any premises that are not registered or that do not meet the Veterinary Premises Standards (VPS).

Those premises outlined in the VPS must apply for registration. The Board will review these applications and, if approved, list the premises on the Veterinary Premises Register, which will be publicly available on the Board's website.

This consultation seeks feedback on the proposed VPS, which set out the standards veterinary premises must meet to be eligible for registration.

Background

The *Veterinary Services Bill 2023* passed through the Parliament of South Australia on 30 November 2023. The Act was assented to on 7 December 2023 and is now referred to as the *Veterinary Services Act 2023.*

The crucial next step to bring the Act to commencement is the development of the Regulations to expand on certain provisions of the Act, which is underway.

Among elements raised for inclusion was the provision of veterinary premise registration in the Act. It was recognised that the registration of all veterinary premises and the introduction of minimum standards will ensure that premises that provide veterinary services are fit for purpose and can provide adequate care.

The Board has been working in consultation with PIRSA and a VPS Working Group, comprising representatives from the veterinary profession, the Australian Veterinary Association. (AVA), and the University of Adelaide, to prepare these standards.

Why This Consultation?

The Veterinary Surgeons Board of South Australia is consulting with the South Australian veterinary profession, the public and other key stakeholders to ensure the Veterinary Premises Standards are practical, understood and best practice, in preparation for the commencement of the Act.

We are conducting this consultation through the SA Government's YourSAy channel to all stakeholders. Your feedback and consideration of the standards are essential for the regulation of veterinary premises to protect the public interest and animal health, safety and welfare

You can read the full draft of the Veterinary Premises Standards here

We urge you to review the standards and familiarise yourself with the proposed requirements ahead of what we intend to be a reasonable and thoughtful transition process.

Below, we outline the specific areas we are seeking your feedback on before the standards are finalised and introduced in 2026. Once your feedback is considered and the VPS finalised, we will communicate information regarding the fee structure for registration of premises.

How to Have Your Say

We want to hear your views on the Veterinary Premises Standards. Your feedback will help shape a system that is relevant, consistent, and trusted.

How to Provide Feedback:

- **YourSAy**
- Email written feedback to: VPS@vsb.sa.gov.au

Consultation closes: 31 October 2025

Consultation Questions

The Board seeks your feedback on the following:

1. Are the categories of veterinary premises sufficient?
2. Are the application requirements clear and reasonable?
3. Do the prescribed standards reflect expectations of the public and current industry standards?
4. What practical issues could arise if the responsible person at each premises is not a registered South Australian veterinarian based at the premises?
5. Is the proposed 3–6-month application lead time for a new premises sufficient?
6. Are the conditions of approval for registration practical and proportionate?
7. Are the inspection triggers and random audit approach appropriate?
8. Are the transitional arrangements fair for existing premises?
9. Do you have any suggestions to improve clarity of the VPS?
10. What if a premises cannot meet the standards?

Introduction

The *Veterinary Services Act 2023* introduces requirements for the registration and regulation of veterinary premises in South Australia.

The VSBSA (the Board) is seeking feedback from veterinary professionals, practice owners, industry representatives including the prescribed peak body, the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), and the public on the proposed standards, processes, and conditions for the registration of veterinary premises.

Your input will help ensure these requirements are practical, transparent, and support consistent premises standards across South Australia.

Question 1: Is there a category/type of premises that has not been captured in the Veterinary Premises Standards as outlined below?

Premises that are required to be registered under the Act are categorised as follows:

- **Veterinary consulting / examination rooms (CR)**
  Used for general veterinary services (no major surgery or emergency care).
  Minor surgery permitted (but not body cavity, orthopaedic, or general anaesthetic procedures).
  Includes small animal house calls. Self-inspection checklist: Every 3 years

- **Veterinary surgery / clinic (VC)**
  Provides a full range of veterinary services, including major surgery.
  Includes small animal house calls. Self-inspection checklist: Every 3 years

- **Veterinary mobile clinic (MC)**
  A vehicle or trailer that operates as a veterinary clinic and can move between locations. Self-inspection checklist**:** Every 3 years

- **Veterinary hospital (VH)**
  Provides the highest level of service, including major surgery, emergency care, and advanced diagnostics.
  Staff must be available for emergencies and monitoring of hospital patients. Self-inspection checklist: Every 3 years (or per *ASAV AVHS accreditation requirements - see note below).

- **Occasional premises (OP)**
  Premises used part-time or irregularly for veterinary services (not full-time or weekly). Self-inspection checklist: Every 3 years

Note: Exemptions in the Act - other standards or guidelines will apply for these categories:

- if veterinary services are provided at premises by telephone or other means of electronic communication without the relevant animal present at the premises;

- if veterinary services are provided at premises owned or occupied by the owner, or person in control of the relevant animal with the permission of that person;
- if veterinary services are provided in an emergency, or if it is impractical or dangerous to move the relevant animal;
- if veterinary services are provided while teaching any science or research or experimentation pursuant to a licence under Part 4 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1985.*

** The VSRBSA will accept hospital accreditation under the ASAV AVHS (Australian Small Animal Veterinarians Group Accredited Veterinary Hospital Scheme). If a hospital premises is not ASAV AVHS accredited, it will need to apply for VPS registration.*

As part of the application process for registration, veterinary premises will be required to conduct self-assessments every three years. If there is any alteration to the premises, the Board is required to be notified within 3 months of the change.

Question 2: Is the timeline for self-assessments (every 3 years) and notification of any changes to premises to the VSRBSA (within 3 months) adequate to ensure premises are suitably regulated by the Board.

For the first time, the Board will be responsible for addressing complaints received about veterinary premises that do not meet the VPS.

Question 3: Do the prescribed standards therefore reflect expectations of the public and current industry standards?

Question 4: Based on the draft VPS, what practical issues could arise if the responsible person at each premises is not a registered South Australian veterinarian based at the premises?

Section 41 of the Act provides that there must be a *responsible person* in respect of each registered premises. The responsible person in respect of registered premises:

> *(a) in the case of premises **owned or occupied** by an individual, that person; or*
> *(b) in the case of a premises **owned or occupied** by an entity, the individual from time to time, nominated by the entity in accordance with any requirement set out in the regulations as the responsible person in respect of the premises.*

The responsible person will be required to ensure the conditions of any veterinary premises registration are adhered to, as any contravention in respect of the premises is an offence against the responsible person with a maximum penalty of $20,000 or imprisonment for six months.

Question 5. Is the proposed 3-6-month application lead time for a new premises sufficient?

An application for the initial registration of premises should preferably be made at least **3 months** before it is intended to commence to provide veterinary services at the premises. For premises that are being constructed to be used for the provision of veterinary services, an even longer period **(preferably 6 months**) should be considered. Proposed transitional provisions have also been included in the draft VPS.

Failure to make an application within these timeframes may result in insufficient time for the Board to consider the application and to register the premises by the time that the applicant wishes to commence their practice at the relevant premises, especially if an applicant must rectify any deficiencies that are identified as part of the registration process. (There will be a facility to obtain provisional registration, but this will depend on the circumstances.)

Question 6. Are the conditions of approval for registration practical and proportionate?

Section 42(5) of the Act provides that the Board impose conditions on premises' registration. The Board has determined that the following conditions will apply in relation to the registration of any premises:

(a) that any veterinary services provided at the premises must be provided by a veterinarian;
(b) that any business name used in respect of the premises, including a business name registered with Consumer and Business Affairs, must not use words such as "hospital," "centre," "emergency" or "specialist" unless the premises meets the required prescribed standards for a veterinary hospital/centre/specialist;
(c) that the names and qualifications (as recorded in the relevant register under the Act) of each veterinarian who works at the premises must be kept on display (premises website is suitable if kept up to date), other than for a veterinarian who is working on a temporary basis for 1 month or less;
(d) that the responsible person in respect of the premises must inform the Board within 3 months of any change occurring in the information required to be included in the veterinary premises register;
(e) that the responsible person in respect of the premises must notify the Board before work is commenced to undertake material renovations or alterations of the premises;
(f) that the responsible person in respect of the premises must inform the Board within 14 business days if the premises cease to comply with any of the standards that apply with respect to the premises under Schedule 1 and/or 2 (outlined in the draft VPS);

(g) that the responsible person in respect of the premises must inform the Board about a proposed sale or transfer of the premises within –
    (i) if the responsible person is an owner of the premises – 10 business days after an agreement to sell or transfer the premises has been entered into; or
    (ii) in any other case – 10 business days after the responsible person becomes aware of an agreement to sell or transfer the premises;
(h) that the responsible person in respect of the premises must inform the Board within 5 business days if any business carried on at the premises is placed into voluntary administration or receivership or, in the case of a business carried on by a body corporate, into liquidation;
(i) [*other conditions determined by the Board for the purposes of these standards*].

Under section 42(6) of the Act, the Board may, at any time, on its own initiative by written notice to a responsible person in respect of registered premises or on application by a responsible person in respect of registered premises, vary or revoke a condition imposed by the Board on the registration. The variation of a condition of registration may include the imposition of an additional condition of registration.

Question 7. Are the inspection triggers and random audit approach appropriate?

Inspectors appointed by the Board will inspect premises which have not been previously registered as a premises before the Board finalises its consideration of the relevant application and therefore before the practice may commence to provide veterinary services to the public at those premises.
An inspection may also be required if:

(a) there has been a transfer of the ownership of registered premises, or a transfer of a business consisting of, or including, the provision of veterinary services at registered premises; or
(b) registered premises have been the subject of material renovations or alterations; or
(c) an application for reinstatement of premises on the veterinary premises register has been made to the Board; or
(d) the Board has received a complaint that relates to the state or standard of registered premises; or
(e) the Board considers that an inspection should be undertaken on any other reasonable ground.

In addition, to ensure premises are complying with the standards, the Board will undertake random audits of selected premises each year within a 3-year term of registration.

Question 8. ***Are the transitional arrangements fair for existing premises?***

The Board strongly encourages owners of existing veterinary premises to review the standards with the aim of updating their premises to such extent as is reasonably necessary and within a reasonable period after the commencement of the Act.

In addition, in the case of existing veterinary premises:

(a) the Board will request the person registered as a veterinary services provider in respect of the premises to provide information about the premises according to a schedule determined by the Board for the purposes of this provision; and
(b) the person to whom the request is given will be asked to provide the information within a period determined by the Board; and
(c) the Executive Officer will, if or when satisfied with the information provided to the Board, may grant provisional registration of the relevant premises under a delegation made by the Board; and
(d) the provisional registration may be granted for a period of up to 3 years (as determined by the Executive Officer) to enable the premises to meet all requirements for registration under the Act; and
(e) it will be a requirement that all premises must be registered by the first anniversary of the commencement of the Act, including based on provisional registration; and
(f) a person will be in breach of the Act if there is a failure to provide the information and other requirements under this scheme so that registration of existing premises is not achieved by the first anniversary of the commencement of the Act and they provide veterinary services at those premises without the premises being registered.

Question 9. ***Do you have any suggestions to improve clarity of the VPS?***

We welcome your considered insights and suggestions that may help make the VPS more effective, efficient and understood by the veterinary premises it will impact.

Question 10: ***What if a premises cannot meet the standards?***

The Board will assess and could put conditions on approval for registration. There will be a transition period to allow a premises to meet the VPS.

Next Steps

Feedback will be reviewed and considered, and the outcome of the consultation process will be communicated to the profession and other stakeholders, along with commencement dates of the impending new standards.

The Board will ensure there is guidance and tools to support implementation and a suitable period for transition.

The *Veterinary Practice Act 2003* continues to remain in effect until the *Veterinary Services Act 2023* commences.