

Advertising - What is Permitted?

Members often ask the College to preview advertisements to ensure that they are in compliance with the **Holding Out** regulations, and we are happy to do so.

In some cases, the member has gone to a large amount of effort, perhaps even retaining a professional advertising agency, to create an advertisement which will attract new clients, while still conforming to the regulations. It is unfortunate when, due to a lack of understanding of the regulations on the advertiser's part, the response from the College results in an advertisement that looks like it has gone through a paper shredder.

Remember that the regulations prohibit terms that are non-verifiable or comparative. So if your advertising contains factual information that is verifiable and not comparative, you are free to use it.

Examples

Following are some suggested terms that members can use in their advertising without fear of contravening the regulations:

"range of services" is permissible. Terms such as "wide" or "full" are non-verifiable and are not permitted.

"call for more information" - this simple statement can encourage potential clients to contact your clinic. When the member of the public initiates the first contact, without being solicited or steered, then a veterinarian can provide them with the same information that they would provide to a client, including prices, specific equipment or protocols.

"special interest in" - is permissible for use by any veterinarian to describe a particular area of their practice that the member wants to promote to the public. This may include certification in different procedures, or a particular area of medicine.

However, only members with the appropriate board certification can use "specialist" and related terms.

"emergencies day or night", "24 hour emergency service", "24 hour emergency services", "emergencies", "emergency service", "24 hour hospital" should only be used if there is a veterinarian on site 24 hours a day.

"emergency service available", "(on call) emergency service", "after hours (on call) emergency service", "emergency service by appointment", "veterinarian on call 24 hours per day" are suitable to indicate that emergencies can be serviced, but there is not a veterinarian on site at all times. The term *"member of the veterinary emergency clinic"* is also acceptable for use.

"private parking available" may be of particular importance to clients of urban practitioners. However, terms such as "convenient" or "free" may not be attached to such a statement.

You may advertise services and procedures which make reference to equipment by way of the name of the procedure, for example: ultrasonography, laryngoscopy, laser surgery, dental x-rays, arthroscopic surgery, and/or endoscopy.

You may also advertise products available without mentioning the brand name, such as prescription diets and pet supplies.

Prices, fees and discounts cannot be advertised, but you can advertise methods of payment available, including pet insurance.

While the **"Holding Out"** regulations are restrictive, they are not intended to abolish all veterinary advertising. The College is happy to consider any member advertising proposals which can be demonstrated to comply with the regulations.