Introduction: It is the standard operating procedure of the NCSU Veterinary Health Complex (VHC) to support the veterinarian-client relationship, which is the foundation for the delivery of medical service at the VHC. However, there may be times when it is necessary for the VHC clinician to terminate the veterinarian-client relationship in the best interest of the VHC and or for the client and their pet. The following defines the veterinarian-client relationship and delineates the procedures for terminating this relationship.

Procedures: The definition of the veterinarian-client relationship as well as the procedures for terminating it are as follows:

I. The veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) is the basis for interaction among veterinarians, their clients, and their patients. A VCPR exists when all of the following conditions have been met.

   • The veterinarian has assumed responsibility for making clinical judgements regarding the health of the animal(s) and the need for medical treatment, and the client has agreed to follow the veterinarian’s instructions.

   • The veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal(s) to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition of the animal(s). This means that the veterinarian has recently seen and is personally acquainted with the keeping and care of the animal(s) by virtue of an examination of the animal(s), or by medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animal(s) are kept.

   • The veterinarian is readily available, or has arranged for emergency coverage, for follow-up evaluation in the event of adverse reactions or the failure of the treatment regimen.

   • When a VCPR exists, veterinarians must maintain medical records.

   • Dispensing or prescribing a prescription product requires a VCPR

   • Veterinarians should honor a client’s request for a prescription in lieu of dispensing.
Without a valid VCPR, veterinarians’ merchandising or use of veterinary prescription drugs or the extra-label use of any pharmaceutical is unethical and is illegal under federal law.

II. VHC clinicians may terminate a VCPR under certain conditions, and they have an ethical obligation to use courtesy and tact in doing so.

- If there is no ongoing medical condition, veterinarians may terminate a VCPR by notifying the client that they no longer wish to serve that patient and client.

- If there is an ongoing medical or surgical condition, the patient should be referred to another veterinarian for diagnosis, care, and treatment. The former attending veterinarian should continue to provide care, as needed, during the transition.

- When terminating the veterinarian-client relationship, the senior faculty member should initiate this process and consult with the Hospital Administrator prior to terminating this relationship. The clinician should utilize the standard letter approved by the hospital board. A copy of this letter should go in the patient's medical record.

III. Clients may terminate the VCPR at any time.