Use of Telemedicine

The California Veterinary Medical Board (VMB) released a statement on April 8, 2020 regarding the use of telemedicine.

The Veterinary Medicine Practice Act permits the use of telemedicine if veterinarians have a valid Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR) established for the condition being treated. Therefore, if a veterinarian has physically examined an animal patient within the last year for a given condition, telemedicine may be utilized for management of that condition. Read the law here.

Although there are provisions in the law that allow veterinarians to provide services and medications to the public during declared states of emergency without a VCPR (see section on “Providing Medications to Clients or the Public”), this limited exemption does not permit the use of telemedicine to establish a VCPR.

Specifically, the limited exemption allows veterinarians to, “Render necessary and prompt care and treatment to an animal patient without establishing a veterinarian-client-patient relationship if conditions are such that one cannot be established in a timely manner.”

This limited exemption specifically states that the VCPR requirement may be bypassed only if conditions are such that it cannot be established in a timely manner. In the case of the current stay-at-home order, veterinary practices are listed as essential critical infrastructure, which means that they may remain open. Therefore, it is possible for clients to bring animals in for care.