

**March 2007**

**“Animals under our Care”**

**BVA Specialist Advice**

British Small Animals Veterinary Association (BSAVA)

BSAVA believes that in order to be ‘under my care’ the patient must have been seen recently by the veterinary surgeon. A full examination and clinical assessment of the animal must be performed. Ideally the animal’s weight should be measured (or if this is not practical, estimated) and recorded by the veterinary surgeon. It is acknowledged that; “recent enough” must be a matter for the professional judgement of the veterinary surgeon in the individual case but BSAVA suggests the following guidelines:

- In the case of prophylactic antiparasiticide agents, the time interval between reassessments should be no greater than 12 months
- In the case of repeat prescriptions for maintenance of a stabilised condition, typically the time interval would be of the order of 3 months and ordinarily should not be greater than 6 months.
- During the early management of a condition, the time interval between reassessments will be necessitated by the condition but should not be greater than 3 months.

The situation may arise where all the animals within the household would need treatment; e.g. in the case of a multi-animal household with a flea infestation or dermatophytosis. In these circumstances it is preferable that all animals are examined prior to dispensing. Where this may be impractical (for instance in the case of semi-feral cats) or judged to be unnecessary (e.g. where in contact animals are reportedly unaffected) then it may be reasonable to dispense medicines without having examined the animals; such animals would still be regarded as ‘under your care’.

Another potentially difficult area is the wildlife sanctuary where it is impractical to examine each animal treated but where, provided that it is judged that the owners and staff are competent, trained and likely to act responsibly, it is reasonable for the sanctuary to be provided with stocks of, say, analgesics, parasiticide agents and a restricted range of antimicrobial agents. In such circumstances, it is reasonable to allow the sanctuary to provide stocks of medicines provided that quarterly veterinary visits are made and that full and detailed records of the usage of medicines are kept by a responsible person.

Whenever medicine are dispensed to animals that are deemed to be 'under your care' but not examined, then justification for the decision to dispense without having examined each animal must be carefully and clearly recorded in the clinical notes.