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Poisons Regulations 2018

Requirements for vets when carrying S8s in their vehicles

The *Poisons Act 1971* authorises veterinary surgeons to possess narcotic substances (S8s).

Regulation 29 of the *Poisons Regulations 2018* provides that a person who is authorised by the *Poisons Act* (i.e. a veterinary surgeon) to possess S8s for the purposes of the person's profession must keep them stored separately in an approved S8 safe (in most cases, a safe at the veterinary practice premises).

However, R29 (4) recognises that in certain instances, a veterinary surgeon may need to carry S8s away from their premises. A veterinary surgeon may, for emergency purposes, keep S8s in a bag in a vehicle (or room) that is securely locked when the veterinary surgeon is not also in the vehicle or room.

The Chief Pharmacist DHHS has advised that R29 (4) may be interpreted to allow a veterinary surgeon to carry S8s in his/her 'kitbag' when attending animals away from the surgeries- i.e. for home or farm visits where it is impracticable for the animal to be brought to the surgery, or in an emergency situation. The understanding is that the kitbag would be carried by the veterinary surgeon when attending to the animals, or else left locked in the car for a short period only, preferably out of sight. If the veterinary surgeon does not return to their surgery that day, then the bag should be securely stored in their home pending the return of the S8s to the surgery safe.

The Chief Pharmacist advises that the intention is that the storage of the S8s in the vehicle is only meant to be temporary; i.e. for the home/farm visit and the S8s would normally be stored securely in the practice S8 safe.

MOBILE CLINICS

If a veterinary surgeon does not operate out of a practice premises, but rather operates as a 'mobile clinic' then the provisions of R29 (4) would not allow the ongoing routine storage of the S8s in the veterinary surgeon's vehicle by simply locking the vehicle.

Best practice dictates that if routinely storing substantial quantities of S8s and other scheduled substance in a vehicle, they must be secured in such a way to ensure, in the interests of public health and safety, that access is restricted. That is, the mobile clinic vehicle would need to have a lockable box that is affixed securely to the car.

Further, even if there is a secure lockable box attached to the vehicle, S8s and other scheduled substances should not be left in the vehicle overnight or unattended for lengthy periods, given that the vehicle itself could be stolen. The S8s and other substances **must** be stored overnight in a compliant home safe or arrangements made for proper storage elsewhere, for example, in the S8 safe at another veterinary practice.

The Chief Pharmacist also noted that in any event, it may not be good professional practice to store routinely any scheduled substance in a vehicle, due to heat damage as well as the risk of diversion.

It is recommended that if a veterinary surgeon operates a mobile clinic only and does NOT have a secure lockable box attached to their vehicle for the storage of scheduled substances/PARS during day time use of the vehicle, then they should check with Pharmaceutical Services Branch DHHS as to the appropriate secure storage for S8 substances to ensure that the *Poisons Act* requirements are met.

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