

Veterinary Medical Records FAQ

What information has to be on veterinary medical records?

The major elements of medical records should include:

- owner information
- animal identification
- chief complaint
- physical exam
- treatment
- vaccination history
- history
- prognosis
- diagnosis or tentative diagnosis
- chronological order of medical and surgical events
- various reports (laboratory, radiology, cardiology, etc.)
- professional billing

How long do I have to keep veterinary records?

Veterinary patient records must be retained for three years since the date the animal was last seen. New York State law defines veterinary records as "all information concerning or related to the examination or treatment of the animal kept by the veterinarian in the course of his or her practice."

The law requires veterinarians to provide animal owners with copies of treatment records upon written request of the client. Veterinarians are permitted to charge a reasonable fee for the copying of such records. Records must be provided within a reasonable time frame.

If the client requests X-rays, veterinarians are encouraged to transfer them to a referring veterinarian, if possible. It is strongly suggested that veterinarians retain original X-rays as part of the client record; however, a copy of the X-ray must be provided to the client at a reasonable cost to the client within a reasonable time period. Failure to provide records as outlined above is defined as unprofessional conduct.

Controlled substance records must be retained for five years since the date you last saw the animal.

The NYS Education Law requires veterinarians to provide a copy of the patient records to clients who request them.