

## **ANIMAL MASSAGE**

Graduates of programs that give certificates in animal massage have asked the Oregon Veterinary Medical Examining Board what they may and may not do in Oregon. Below are the Board's positions on these questions. Please know that the Board cannot give individualized legal advice.

### **What can I do and not do with animal massage certificate?**

In Oregon, unless you are licensed as a veterinarian, or you fit into one of the exceptions to licensure in [ORS 686.040](#), you cannot practice or represent that you practice veterinary medicine. [ORS 686.030](#) defines the practice of veterinary medicine, which includes diagnosing and treating animal medical problems. A person who unlawfully practices veterinary medicine can be fined up to \$5,000 (see [ORS 686.020](#) and [ORS 686.992](#)). A person who is not licensed as veterinarian and is not subject to an exception to licensure can be fined for up to \$5,000 for providing animal massage to treat medical problems.

People who would **not** be practicing veterinary medicine include:

- Someone offering animal massage only for relaxation of a healthy animal;
- Someone offering massage as part of animal grooming.

However, someone offering or providing such services may not do so with the intent of treating animal medical problems. Someone not treating medical problems through massage likely does not need a license from the Board.

### **What if I have a license in human massage therapy from Oregon State Board of Massage Therapists?**

Licensed human health-care practitioners acting on a referral from a veterinarian do not have to be licensed by the Board:

A practitioner of allied health methods may practice that method on animals without violating ORS 686.020 (1)(a), as long as the practice is in conformance with laws and rules governing the practitioner's practice and the practice is upon referral from a licensed veterinarian for treatment or therapy specified by the veterinarian.

Under [ORS 686.040\(4\)](#), a licensed massage therapist, as long as this statute's requirements are met, would not be practicing veterinary medicine without a license if referred by a veterinarian and providing massage only as a treatment to the animal.

### **What if I am a licensed veterinarian referring to other health care practitioners?**

Referring veterinarians are expected to ensure the referral is appropriate: to someone licensed in their field and competent to practice massage on animals. Below, we have listed information on allied health methods to which veterinarians often refer animals for specialized care. The list is not comprehensive, and veterinarians should do their own research into licensure and competence before making a referral.

**Massage:** Veterinary referral should be to a person licensed with the [Oregon State Board of Massage Therapists](#) and competent to provide massage as a treatment or therapy to animals.

**Chiropractic:** Referral should be to someone licensed with the [Oregon Board of Chiropractic Examiners](#) and competent to provide the care. [ORS 684.025\(3\)](#), which governs chiropractic doctors, states that chiropractic doctors are not prohibited “from accepting a referral from a practitioner licensed under ORS chapter 686. The care rendered as a result of the referral must be in writing and in accordance with ORS 686.040(4) and only as prescribed and diagnosed by a licensee under ORS chapter 686. The applicable standard of care is established under ORS chapter 686.”

**Physical therapy:** Referral should be to someone licensed by the [Oregon Board of Physical Therapy](#) and competent to provide the care. According to [OAR 848-040-0117](#): “A physical therapist may provide physical therapy treatment to an animal under a referral from a veterinarian licensed under ORS Chapter 686. The referral must be in writing and specify the treatment or therapy to be provided pursuant to 686.040(4). The standard of care and documentation for physical therapy care to an animal shall be as provided for veterinarians under ORS Chapter 686.”