



## BCAS POLICY

Policy name:

### CARE OF PATIENTS' ANIMALS AND GUIDE DOGS

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Area: Patients – General

Policy holder: Vice President,  
Corporate Policy and Planning

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## Purpose

Paramedics frequently provide emergency health services to patients who own animals or guide dogs. Paramedics can comfort patients by assuring them that arrangements for the care of animals have been made, since paramedics may transport the only person responsible for the care of an animal. Therefore, paramedics must ensure that animals are not subject to neglect and that proper arrangements for an animal's care have been made.

For patients assisted by a guide dog, this policy protects paramedics and patients while respecting the legal right to have a guide dog accompany the patient.

## Definitions

In this policy:

<b>animal</b>	"Animal" means a domesticated animal and includes a pet, livestock, and a guide dog.
<b>guide dog</b>	"Guide dog" means a certified guide dog used by a disabled person and to which the <a href="#">Guide Animal Act</a> applies. While any animal may be certified as a guide animal, as of this policy's effective date only dogs are certified to act as guide animals in British Columbia.

## Policy

After consulting with the patient, or where deemed appropriate, paramedics must ensure that basic arrangements for an animal's care are made, regardless of whether the animal is a pet, livestock, or a guide dog.

For patients with guide dogs, paramedics must allow a guide dog to accompany a patient to hospital if a patient makes that request or if it is clear from the patient's conduct that the dog is to accompany the patient. The patient has this right under the *Guide Animal Act*. If a guide dog accompanies a patient to hospital, paramedics must secure the guide dog in an appropriate manner that minimizes movement.

Under no circumstances may paramedics transport any animal other than a guide dog.

### A. CARE OF PATIENTS' ANIMALS

- (1) In consultation with the patient, if appropriate, paramedics must decide if arrangements for the care of a patient's animal are necessary.
- (2) If it is determined that arrangements are necessary, paramedics and dispatchers must make reasonable efforts to arrange for an animal's care, other than for a guide dog. Efforts should include one or more of the following:
  - (a) asking the patient or any other appropriate third party if they are able to make arrangements for the animal's care;
  - (b) requesting police assistance in making arrangements; and
  - (c) contacting the SPCA's emergency number at 604-879-7343 (Lower Mainland), the [nearest SPCA branch](#), or any local boarding kennel or veterinarian.
- (3) When practical, paramedics should follow-up to ensure that arrangements for the animal's care have been made and must record the details of any arrangement.
- (4) The Commission will not pay for any costs related to an animal's care.

### B. GUIDE DOGS

- (1) A patient with a disability accompanied by a guide dog has the same rights as a patient not accompanied by a guide dog. Paramedics must permit a guide dog to accompany a patient in an ambulance.
- (2) To prevent injury to patients, paramedics, and guide dogs during transportation, a guide dog must
  - (a) remain on the ambulance floor, and
  - (b) be secured by its leash to one or both of the handles near the side door at the front of the patient compartment. The dog must be able to lie down.

- (3) When a patient is unable to have a guide dog accompany him or her, paramedics must
  - (a) ask the patient or any other appropriate third party if they are able to take care of the guide dog, or
  - (b) contact the [British Columbia Guide Dog Services](#) at 1-877-940-4504 (24 hours a day) to make arrangements for the guide dog.

### **C. REPORTING CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

- (1) Paramedics who believe that an animal is in distress must immediately report the matter to the SPCA or complete the SPCA's [online incident report form](#).
- (2) An animal is in distress if it is
  - (a) deprived of adequate food, water, shelter, ventilation, space, care or veterinary treatment, or
  - (b) injured, sick, in pain or suffering, or is abused or neglected.