



Maryland State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners FY24 Disciplinary Report

Prepared by
Nathaniel Boan
2024 Report
Final Version



Introduction

The Maryland State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (“the Board” or “SBVME”) protects animal and public health through the enforcement of the Veterinary Practice Act and related regulations. Toward this end, the Board licenses veterinarians, registered veterinary technicians (RVTs), veterinary hospitals and animal control facilities. The Board also inspects veterinary hospitals to ensure they meet sanitation standards. A large component of the Board’s work includes investigating consumer complaints, initiating its own investigations, and determining whether disciplinary action will be taken against any of its licenses as required by Agriculture Article, §2-301, et seq., Annotated Code of Maryland.

House Bill 549 - *State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners - Sunset Extension and Program Evaluation* passed the Maryland General Assembly during the 2020 Legislative Session. The law requires the Board to report annually to the Governor and General Assembly on the disciplinary actions it has taken the previous fiscal year. This is the fifth report due under the law and covers FY 2024 (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024).

The Board

Board members are appointed by the Governor to five-year terms. The seven-member Board includes five licensed veterinarians who have been in practice for at least five years and two members who represent consumers. Two of the veterinarians must be predominantly large animal practitioners. The Board meets approximately once a month.

Board members in FY 2024 were:

- Dr. Elizabeth Callahan, President, (Large Animal Practitioner; Veterinary Medical Center, Easton);
- Dr. Christine Calvert, Vice-President (VCA Calvert Veterinary Center, Pasadena);
- Ms. Lynne Chaput (Non-Veterinarian Member, Severna Park);
- Dr. Heidi Schmechel (PET ER of Salisbury);
- Ms. Patty Quimby (Non-Veterinarian Member, Easton);
- Dr. Peter Radue (Damascus Equine, Damascus); and
- Dr. James Reed (Annapolis Animal Hospital, Annapolis).

In May 2024, the existing Vice President, Dr. Christine Calvert, replaced Dr. Elizabeth Callahan as the new President of the Board, who completed her second 5- year term; and Dr. Justin Sobota (South Mountain Equine, LLC, Middletown) replaced Dr. Callahan as the 2nd Large Animal Practitioner.

During FY 2024, the Board licensed a total of 276 new veterinarians and renewed 3,179 veterinarian licenses (up from 3,072 last year). Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) licenses are valid for three years. A total of 77 RVTs were registered for the first time in FY 2024 and 216 of them renewed their triennial registration during the year. Currently, there are 835 RVTs statewide. In addition, 608 veterinary hospitals and 30 animal control facilities were licensed during FY 2024.

About Complaint Investigations

Any consumer may submit a complaint against any licensee through the Board’s website. The staff reads each complaint to ensure the Board has jurisdiction over the issue at hand. For instance, the Board has no jurisdiction over financial disputes between clients and veterinarians, actions taken outside of the State of Maryland, nor does it have any authority over rescue groups, commercial kennels, or humane organizations.

Once received, complaints are given a docket number and assigned to an investigator who will obtain all relevant medical records, including any available images, such as radiographs, ultrasound, MRIs, etc., and interview those involved. Some complaints may be dismissed without an investigation if they are a duplicate submission, or the Board does not have jurisdiction over the acts presented within the allegations. A final case file is prepared and presented to the Board during a non-public meeting for review, discussion, and final determination. From time to time, the Board will pay to send a complaint to an out-of-state expert for review and input.

After reviewing a complaint investigation file, the Board has several options for how to proceed:

- The Board may dismiss a complaint outright, and no further action is required.
- The Board may take informal actions. These are confidential, non-public actions that are not available to the public, including the complainant, but are part of their professional record. These include:
 - A Letter of Information/Warning
 - A Letter of Advice, and
 - A Letter of Admonishment
- The Board may take formal actions. These are public orders available for public review. Public orders are posted on the Board’s website and reported to the American Association of Veterinary State Boards, which notifies other states or jurisdictions where the licensee is licensed, if any. These public actions include:
 - Consent Agreements
 - Civil Penalty Final Orders
 - Orders of Censure
 - Probation Suspension
 - License Surrenders
 - Revocation

Unless the Board issues a formal public disciplinary action, details of how a complaint is resolved are not available to the public, including the complainant; however, the Board does notify complainants when an investigation is complete and provides a limited summary of the findings.

Code of Maryland Regulations 15.14.02 contains a complete description of the Board’s complaint procedures and possible actions.

Disciplinary Actions – FY 2024

The Board has one full-time investigator, one contractual investigator (30 hours/week) who was hired on April 1, 2020, and one full-time administrative specialist dedicated to handling complaint investigations.

The Board received 111 complaints in FY 2024, which gave rise to 132 investigations. In some cases, a single complaint may involve multiple veterinarians or hospitals. The Board and its staff reviewed and closed out 127 complaint investigations in FY 2024. On average, the Board reviewed almost eleven complaint investigations per month.

The Board closed those 127 complaint investigations with 110 non-dismissal-only actions. The number of actions does not match the number of complaints because several complaints involve more than one licensee, multiple actions may be taken on each complaint, and some dockets may be closed in a different fiscal year than they were received.

The charts below summarize the types of Board actions taken by fiscal year:

Statistics	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24
Complaints Received during FY 24	89	88	128	131	111
Complaint investigations closed per year	82	105	140	131	127
Number of Board Actions	101	138	161	136	110

Non-Public Actions	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24
Number of Dismissals	23	59	72	63	48
Number of Letters of Advice	26	24	17	8	39
Number of Letters of Admonishment	14	23	13	23	25
Number of Letters of Information or Warning	7	12	15	20	21

Public Board Actions	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24
Number of Consent Agreements	11	12	19	13	17
Number of Civil Penalty Final Orders	19	3	22	9	12
Number of Censures	1	2	1	0	0
Number of Surrenders	0	1	1	0	0
Number of Permanent Suspensions	0	2	1	0	0

Fines

The Board may assess civil penalties against a licensee as part of a Consent Agreement or as a final order. During FY24, the Board issued a total of \$41,150 in fines. Revenue from fines goes to the General Fund, not to the Board.

Referred Cases

During FY24, a total of 41 cases were referred to the Attorney General's Office for final resolution. Not all referred complaints conclude with public orders. Some final resolutions are not completed in the same fiscal year they were referred to the AG's office. Some referred cases may have received formal and informal action.

Referred Cases	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24
Total Referrals to the AG's Office	55	45	30	39	41
Total Public (Formal) Actions Completed	31	20	41	23	29
Total Referrals resolved with Non-Public Action	8	6	5	12	19
Total Referrals Pending at Year End	16	19	13	9	11

Cases open at At Year End (June 30, 2024)

Year End Statistics	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24
Open Complaints at Year End	92	78	62	72	85
Active Investigation	65	46	39	56	69
Referred to AG's Office	16	19	13	9	11
Pending Final Board Action	11	13	10	6	5
Open Complaints more than a year old	11	10	4	9	10

A note about Investigation Metrics

Complaint investigations are considered “closed” when the Investigator’s Report goes to the Board for a decision. It will take at least another month if it is dismissed and it may take several more months before the complaint is closed if it is referred to the Attorney General’s Office for charges.

In 2020, the Board adopted new metrics to track progress. These new metrics recognize that some complaint investigations are much more complicated than others and must be evaluated differently. Below is a breakdown of those new metrics and the two-year statistics.

- **Green level complaints** are Board-initiated complaints that do not have another identified complainant. These are largely, but not exclusively, the result of inspection findings reported by inspectors. Our goal is to complete an investigation for 90 percent of green complaints within 3 months.
- **Yellow level complaints** involve obtaining medical records and/or other evidence from one or two veterinarians at one or two veterinary practices. Our goal is to complete investigations for 90 percent of yellow complaints within 12 months.
- **Red level complaints** involve one or more of the following: A Board-certified specialist or specialty practice; interviewing three or more veterinarians as part of an investigation; obtaining medical records and/or other evidence from three or more facilities; an outside expert review. Our goal is to complete investigations for 90 percent of red level cases within 24 months.

Investigation Times	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24
Total Green Cases Closed	28	8	34	42	24
Total Green Closed on Time	20	7	33	42	24
% of Green Closed w/in 90 days	71%	88%	97%	100%	100%
Total Yellow Cases Closed	29	79	88	88	95
Total Yellow Cases Closed on Time	18	60	85	87	92
% of Yellow Cases closed w/in 12 months.	62%	76%	95%	99%	97%
Total Red Cases Closed	36	18	21	17	24
Total Red Cases Closed on Time	25	18	21	17	24
% of Red Cases Closed w/in 24 months.	69%	100%	100%	100%	100%

-end-