

**STATE OF MARYLAND  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BEFORE THE STATE BOARD OF VETERINARY MEDICAL EXAMINERS**

IN THE MATTER OF:

\*

SUZANNE ROBBINS, D.V.M.  
LICENSE NO. 4502

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DOCKET NO. 20-38

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**CONSENT AGREEMENT AND ORDER**

This Consent Agreement and Order (“Consent Agreement”), dated this 22nd day of June 2021, is between the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (“SBVME” or “Board”) and Suzanne Robbins, D.V.M. (“Dr. Robbins”), License No. 4502. This Consent Agreement resolves the charges filed by the SBVME on January 22, 2021, in Docket No. 20-38, alleging that Dr. Robbins violated the Veterinary Practice Act, Agriculture Article, §§ 2-301 – 2-316, Annotated Code of Maryland, and related Code of Maryland Regulations (“COMAR”) 15.14.01 – 15.14.17 set forth herein.

On May 17, 2021, Dr. Robbins notified Board counsel of her decision to waive her right to a hearing on the charges. Subsequently, having the benefit of legal counsel, Dr. Robbins agreed to the terms and conditions reflected in this Consent Agreement. By signing this Consent Agreement, Dr. Robbins agrees to waive her right to a hearing on the charges in Docket No. 20-38 and further agrees to the terms and conditions of this Consent Agreement.

Under Maryland law, the SBVME is the licensing authority responsible for regulating the practice of veterinary medicine in this State, which includes filing disciplinary actions against veterinarians charged with violating the provisions of the Veterinary Practice Act and related COMAR regulations adopted pursuant to this law. As part of its authority, the SBVME "may refuse, suspend, or revoke any application or license, and censure or place on probation any licensee ... if the veterinarian ... [f]ails to comply with Board rules and regulations after receiving a license." Md. Code Ann., Agric. Art., §2-310(8). The Board may also impose a civil penalty of not more than \$5,000 for a first offense, or \$10,000 for a second or

subsequent offense, in lieu of or in addition to suspending or revoking a veterinarian's license, respectively. Md. Code Ann., Agric. Art., § 2-310.1 In setting the amount of a civil penalty, the Board shall consider the severity of the violation, the good faith of the violator, and any history of prior violations, as well as the Board's regulatory civil penalty standards. Md. Code Ann., State Gov't Art. § 10-1001(b); COMAR 15.14.11 (Civil Penalty Standards for Veterinarians).

### **FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

Suzanne Robbins, D.V.M., License Number 4502, by entering into and signing this Consent Agreement, having had the opportunity to seek advice of counsel, agrees to the provisions of this Consent Agreement, acknowledging that the SBVME has sufficient evidence to find, as fact, and to conclude as a matter of law that Dr. Robbins violated COMAR 15.14.01.07 (Professional Judgment and Practice) and COMAR 15.14.01.10A (Record Keeping) as set forth herein:

1. Dr. Robbins is a veterinarian licensed to practice in the State of Maryland, where she has been licensed since 1995. Dr. Robbins was, at the time of the incidents described herein, the owner and responsible veterinarian at Animal Medical Center of Burtonsville ("Hospital" or "AMCB")(License No. 15-160), located at 15543 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, MD 20866.
2. This case involves care provided to Sadie, a 9-year-old spayed terrier mix dog owned by Jerilyn Thorne ("Owner" or "Ms. Thorne").
3. On October 31, 2019, Sadie presented to AMCB for a dental prophylaxis and teeth extractions to be performed by Dr. Robbins. Pre-operative bloodwork had been performed, which included a complete blood count ("CBC") and a Chem 10.
4. The pre-operative bloodwork showed azotemia (increased kidney values) with a Creatinine of 3.3 mg/dl (normal ranges are from 0.5 to 1.8 mg/dl) and a BUN of 54 mg/dl (normal ranges are from 2-27 mg/dl). However, the medical record does not contain any interpretation of Sadie's bloodwork by Dr. Robbins prior to the dental procedure or evidence of any communications with Sadie's owner about the abnormalities in the bloodwork.

5. In preparation for the dental prophylaxis, Sadie received penicillin (2.5 mls), Torbugesic (0.30 mls), ketamine (0.70 mls), and Valium (0.70 mls) for induction. Sadie was maintained under anesthesia with isoflurane.
6. During the surgery, Dr. Robbins extracted three incisors. Postoperatively, Dr. Robbins informed Ms. Thorne that Sadie had an unremarkable recovery.
7. On November 11, 2019, Ms. Thorne returned to AMCB with Sadie because Sadie was not eating. Dr. Robbins recommended that Ms. Thorne feed Sadie a variety of soft foods and requested that Ms. Thorne bring Sadie back to AMCB for a follow-up evaluation.
8. Later that day, Ms. Thorne called AMCB because Sadie had vomited six times and the vomit contained yellow bile. Ms. Thorne elected to bring Sadie into AMCB that evening.
9. The evening of November 11, 2019, Dr. Robbins performed a physical examination, noting that Sadie's gums looked normal and the extraction sites were nearly healed. Sadie was slightly tense on abdominal palpation, but there were no other significant findings according to the medical record.
10. Dr. Robbins treated Sadie for gastritis and administered Cerenia subcutaneously ("SQ") and Buprenex. Dr. Robbins prescribed Cerenia to be administered at home.
11. On November 12, 2019, Ms. Thorne called AMCB to report that Sadie was no longer vomiting, but she appeared lethargic and had no interest in eating. Dr. Robbins recommended that Sadie return to AMCB for a recheck exam and diagnostics.
12. On November 13, 2019, Sadie returned to AMCB as recommended. Ms. Thorne informed Dr. Robbins that Sadie was not as lethargic as the day prior and that Sadie had eaten a small amount of soft food that morning.
13. Dr. Robbins recommended abdominal radiographs and bloodwork for Sadie. Sadie's abdominal radiographs showed a full stomach, gas in the small intestines, and formed stool in the colon. Sadie's CBC, chemistry, T4, and proBNP (measurement of cardiac health) were submitted to Idexx Diagnostics. Dr. Robbins administered 200 mls. of sodium chloride SQ to Sadie.

14. The following day, on November 14, 2019, Dr. Robbins called Ms. Thorne to inform her that Sadie's bloodwork showed significant elevation in kidney values. Additionally, Sadie's proBNP was elevated at 5261 (normal range is 0-900). Sadie's CBC and T4 were normal. Dr. Robbins told Ms. Thorne that Sadie needed aggressive fluid therapy for treatment of azotemia. Dr. Robbins recommended a cardiology consult to assess Sadie's cardiac health before administering fluids and referred Sadie to Chesapeake Veterinary Cardiology Associates, Columbia ("CVCA") (License No. 13-061) for a consult.

15. On November 15, 2019, Sadie presented to CVCA for an echocardiogram with a staff veterinarian. Sadie's echocardiogram showed no evidence of cardiac disease. The CVCA veterinarian diagnosed Sadie with systemic hypertension (blood pressure 200-220 mm Hg.) secondary to kidney disease. Further, the veterinarian determined that the severity of Sadie's elevated proBNP was due to her azotemia.

16. The CVCA veterinarian prescribed amlodipine to Sadie and recommended hospitalization at an emergency hospital, Pet+ER, for diuresis of kidney failure.

17. Following Sadie's consultation with CVCA, Ms. Thorne took Sadie to Pet+ER for hospitalization and evaluation of her kidney disease. The Pet+ER veterinarian performed an initial physical exam and discussed Sadie's treatment plan for kidney disease, which including hospitalization with intravenous fluids ("IVFs"), blood pressure monitoring, and recheck bloodwork every 24 hours. Ms. Thorne consented to the proposed treatment plan.

18. On November 16, 2019, another attending veterinarian at Pet+ER rechecked Sadie's kidney values. This veterinarian called Ms. Thorne and told her that Sadie's kidney values showed some improvement. Sadie's treatment plan was updated to continue her IVFs, although the fluid amount was later reduced due to concern about overhydrating Sadie.

19. The following day, November 17, 2019, at 7:30 a.m., the Pet+ER veterinarian found that Sadie appeared to have a pot-bellied abdomen. An abdominal focused assessment with sonography for trauma scan (a FAST scan) was performed, which showed a significant amount of free fluid in Sadie's abdomen.

20. The veterinarian called Ms. Thorne to inform her that the free fluid in Sadie's abdomen was likely due to "third spacing IVF's" (too much fluid in interstitial space). An ultrasound and dialysis were

recommended. Ms. Thorne declined further hospitalization and elected to euthanize Sadie on November 17, 2019.

21. Ms. Thorne later filed a complaint with the Board arising from the care Dr. Robbins provided to Sadie.

22. The Board opened a case and investigated the complaint. Its investigation included review of the medical records and laboratory reports. Following its review, the Board determined that Dr. Robbins provided substandard care to Sadie and had deficiencies in her record keeping.

23. COMAR 15.14.01.07A (Professional Judgment and Practice) provides that: “[a] veterinarian, when caring for and treating a patient, shall conform to those minimum standards of care and treatment which are customary among veterinarians in this State.” Dr. Robbins failed to satisfy the applicable standard in her care and treatment of Sadie in several ways.

24. First, Dr. Robbins failed to conduct a thorough physical examination before performing the dental surgery. The standard of care requires a thorough physical examination not more than 12 hours before administration of anesthesia.

25. Second, Dr. Robbins failed to assess and communicate with the Owner about Sadie’s pre-operative blood work. That blood work showed elevated levels of Creatinine and BUN, which should have lead a reasonable veterinarian to diagnose renal disease. Although it was not reflected in AMCB’s medical record, in a response to the Board, Dr. Robbins stated that she was aware that Sadie’s kidney values were elevated prior to surgery. According to Ms. Thorne, Dr. Robbins never notified her of this abnormality prior to Sadie being anesthetized. A reasonable veterinarian, acting in accordance with the standard of care, would have reviewed the bloodwork, interpreted it correctly to recognize likely renal disease, and discussed these findings with the Owner prior to performing surgery. There is nothing in the medical record suggesting that Dr. Robbins did any of these things.

26. In addition, because she did not review or properly interpret the blood work to recognize renal disease, Dr. Robbins’ surgical decisions were inappropriate for a patient with renal disease. During the

dental surgery, Dr. Robbins used ketamine for anesthesia, which is not indicated for a dog in renal failure, and failed to provide fluids.

27. Dr. Robbins's record keeping also was deficient. COMAR 15.14.01.10A (Record Keeping) requires, for a companion animal, that a veterinarian prepare a legibly written record that accurately and thoroughly reflects the treatment provided, including the progress and disposition of the case. COMAR 15.14.01.10A(10) requires that a veterinarian include an anesthesia log in the medical record if surgery is performed. Dr. Robbins failed to satisfy that standard, because the record she prepared contains no anesthesia log for the dental surgery.

Taking the facts and circumstances into consideration, including the nature of the violation(s), the veterinarian's lack of disciplinary history, her acceptance of responsibility and good faith cooperation in resolving this matter, the Board concluded that the most reasonable and appropriate resolution includes the sanctions set forth below.

### **ORDER**

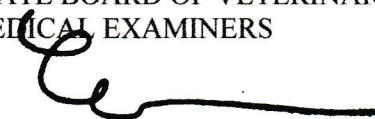
Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is this 22nd day of June, 2021, by the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, ORDERED that:

- (a) For violating COMAR 15.14.01.07A (Professional Judgment) in her care and treatment of Sadie, a 9-year-old spayed terrier mix dog owned by Jerilyn Thorne, by failing to perform a thorough physical examination before the dental surgery, Dr. Robbins is assessed a civil penalty of \$600;
- (b) For violating COMAR 15.14.01.07A (Professional Judgment) in her care and treatment of Sadie by failing to review, properly assess, address, and communicate with Ms. Thorne about the results of Sadie's bloodwork which indicated Sadie was suffering from renal disease, Dr. Robbins is assessed a civil penalty of \$2,500;
- (c) For violating COMAR 15.14.01.10A (Record Keeping) by failing to include an anesthesia log in medical record, Dr. Robbins is assessed a civil penalty of \$300;

- (d) Dr. Robbins shall pay the total civil penalty (\$3,400) within three months from the date of this Consent Order by check payable to the Maryland Department of Agriculture (“MDA”) with the notation “SBVME – 20-38” sent to the MDA at 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401; and
- (e) As an additional requirement of this Consent Agreement, Dr. Robbins shall complete 6 hours of continuing education (“CE”), pre-approved by the Board, in anesthetic maintenance and/or anesthetic drugs. The CE shall be completed and verification of completion provided to the Board within three (3) months from the date of this Order. Verification should be sent by email to Vanessa Orlando, Executive Director, at [vanessa.orlando@maryland.gov](mailto:vanessa.orlando@maryland.gov). Proof from the CE provider shall include the veterinarian’s name, the number of hours of CE completed, the topics covered, and the date(s) the CE was given. This CE will not count toward the 18 credit hours required annually for re-registration of the veterinary license. To verify completion of the annual CE requirements and the CE required by this Consent Agreement, the Board may audit CE records for relevant years.

WITNESS the hand of the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, State of Maryland, this  
22nd day of June, 2021.

STATE BOARD OF VETERINARY  
MEDICAL EXAMINERS



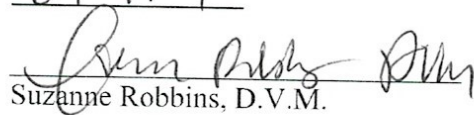
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Elizabeth Callahan, D.V.M.  
President  
State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners  
Maryland Department of Agriculture

CONSENT

I, Suzanne Robbins, D.V.M., acknowledge that I have had an opportunity to consult with counsel before entering into this Consent Agreement. By this Consent, I hereby acknowledge the legal authority and jurisdiction of the Board over this matter to issue and enforce this Consent Agreement. In order to resolve this matter, I agree to accept and submit to the foregoing Consent Agreement, consisting of 8 pages. I sign this Consent Agreement without reservation as my voluntary act and deed after having had an opportunity to consult with counsel, and I acknowledge that I fully understand and comprehend the language, meaning, and terms of this Consent Agreement.

Date:

6/14/21  
  
Suzanne Robbins, D.V.M.