Medical Treatment Information and Terms and Conditions

Dr Darko Vet Hospital

Please read these terms before agreeing to examination, diagnostic investigations, medical treatment or hospitalisation for your animal. They explain the proposed care process, clinical risks, owner responsibilities and potential charges. They apply to outpatient and inpatient care for animals accepted by the hospital.

These terms accompany the individual treatment plan and estimate. They do not provide blanket consent for all tests or treatments. Surgery, anaesthesia, invasive procedures and euthanasia require the relevant specific discussion and consent.

1 Authority and medical information

You must be the owner or a person authorised by the owner to arrange care. Identify who may approve treatment, receive information and collect the animal, and who will be responsible for payment. Provide reliable telephone numbers and remain contactable during treatment.

Give an accurate history, including symptoms and their duration, previous diagnoses and treatment, current medicines and supplements, allergies, adverse reactions, possible pregnancy, vaccination history and infectious exposure. Provide relevant previous records and disclose aggression or handling difficulties. Notify us promptly of changes in health.

2 Examination and diagnostic investigations

The veterinarian may recommend blood tests, urinalysis, imaging, sampling, cytology, histopathology or other investigations. The purpose, relevant risks, expected charges and reasonable alternatives will be explained. Some procedures require restraint, sedation or anaesthesia. Follow any preparation instructions provided specifically for your animal; do not fast the animal or change medication unless instructed.

No examination or test can detect every disease. Results may be normal, inconclusive or unexpected despite underlying illness. Additional or repeat investigations may be necessary. Declining recommended testing will be recorded and may limit diagnosis, treatment choices and prognosis.

Ask when results are expected and how they will be communicated. External laboratories and specialist interpretation may affect turnaround times. Contact the hospital if results have not arrived within the advised period; no message does not mean a normal result. Report deterioration while waiting.

3 Medical treatment and clinical risks

The veterinarian will explain the suspected or confirmed diagnosis, recommended treatment, material risks, likely benefits, alternatives and prognosis. Treatment may need to begin before a final diagnosis is available, following discussion of the reasons and uncertainty.

Medicines and medical procedures may cause adverse effects or complications, including allergic reactions, gastrointestinal signs, bleeding, infection or changes in organ function. Serious deterioration or death may occur from the underlying disease or treatment complications despite appropriate care. Previously undetected disease may increase risk.

A cure, particular response, recovery time or survival cannot be guaranteed. Chronic disease may require ongoing treatment and repeated monitoring. Only risks relevant to the patient and proposed care will be included in the individual discussion. Accepting clinical risks does not waive the right to appropriate professional care.

4 Sedation and invasive procedures

Sedation, anaesthesia, catheter placement, biopsies and other invasive procedures may be recommended to investigate or treat the condition. The veterinarian will explain their particular risks and obtain the necessary consent. Sedation and anaesthesia may cause breathing or cardiovascular complications, delayed recovery, organ injury or death. Appropriate assessment and monitoring reduce risk but cannot eliminate it.

5 Treatment decisions and changes

The individual plan must identify the agreed care, estimated charges, spending limits and any advance emergency authority. Material changes will be discussed and additionally authorised where practicable. These terms do not permit unlimited treatment or expenditure. Record any instructions concerning resuscitation or emergency stabilisation separately.

You may ask questions, decline recommended treatment, request a second opinion or discuss referral. The veterinarian will explain foreseeable consequences and record your decision. Where discharge against veterinary advice is requested, the risks and continuing-care options will be explained. Financial constraints should be raised early so that appropriate options can be discussed.

6 Hospitalisation and monitoring

Before admission, the hospital will explain the available nursing care, monitoring hours, overnight arrangements and any periods without staff on site. Hospitalisation does not itself mean continuous observation or intensive care. Referral or transfer will be discussed when the animal requires care beyond the hospital's facilities or staffing.

Isolation, infection-control measures or additional handling precautions may be required; related charges will be explained. Visiting and collection must follow agreed arrangements. We will provide discharge information and emergency contact details. Do not delay urgent veterinary attention while seeking approval or awaiting a routine message.

7 Medicines and care at home

Give medicines exactly as prescribed and follow feeding, activity, hygiene, monitoring and follow-up instructions. Do not alter doses, discontinue treatment, use additional products or share medicines with other animals without veterinary advice. Report suspected adverse effects, missed doses or difficulty administering treatment promptly. Repeat prescriptions may require examination or monitoring tests.

Protect wounds, biopsy sites, catheters, dressings and sutures against licking, chewing, scratching and removal. Where prescribed, obtain a properly fitted Elizabethan collar before discharge and purchase one if a suitable existing collar is not approved. Keep it fitted as directed, including overnight; use alternatives only with veterinary approval.

Tell the hospital before treatment if you cannot provide the required supervision or home care. Attend scheduled reviews. Seek prompt advice for deterioration, persistent vomiting, increasing pain, wound problems or failure to improve as expected. Breathing difficulty, collapse or uncontrolled bleeding requires immediate veterinary attention.

8 Receiving treatment and discharge instructions

Before leaving, confirm that you have received and can read the treatment instructions. If instructions sent by email or WhatsApp have not arrived, or you lack the device, internet access or technical ability to read them, you must request a printed copy. The hospital will provide it and explain unclear instructions. If instructions later become unavailable, contact us promptly for a replacement.

9 Estimates and payment

A written estimate describes anticipated charges and is not a fixed quotation unless expressly stated. Confirm whether consultations, investigations, external laboratory services, medicines, hospitalisation, protective devices and follow-up care are included. Any deposit, interim payment requirement and spending limit must be agreed before commitment.

Unless another arrangement is agreed in writing, payment is due when services or products are supplied, with any outstanding balance payable at discharge or collection. Payment plans require written approval. Insurance reimbursement remains your responsibility unless direct settlement is agreed. Ask promptly about any invoice query.

Unexpected findings, disease progression, further investigations, additional medicines or longer hospitalisation may increase costs. Proposed additional care and charges will be explained and authorised where practicable, subject to separately agreed emergency authority. Follow-up consultations and repeat prescriptions are included only where expressly stated.

10 Complications and additional treatment costs

Additional treatment for complications, inadequate response or recurrence is chargeable unless expressly included in the estimate, even when the owner has followed all instructions. This includes reasonable costs of further consultations, investigations, medication, hospitalisation or procedures, subject to the safeguards below.

The owner is responsible for reasonable additional costs attributable to failure to follow care instructions, including self-trauma, removal of sutures or dressings, incorrect medication administration or failure to use prescribed protection. The veterinarian will assess the complication and likely cause; a complication alone does not prove owner negligence.

Proposed treatment and charges will be explained and authorised as applicable. This clause does not make the owner responsible for costs attributable to deficient veterinary care or exclude the hospital’s professional duties or the owner’s statutory rights.

11 Treatment at another veterinary practice

You may obtain a second opinion or treatment elsewhere. Unless Dr Darko Vet Hospital agrees in writing to contribute to specified costs, you are responsible for the other practice’s fees. Referral, transfer of records or discussion between veterinarians does not itself constitute an agreement to pay those fees.

Where practicable, contact us before arranging non-emergency corrective treatment so that we can assess the concern and discuss options. Never delay urgent care for our approval. Choosing another veterinarian does not waive any legal entitlement to reimbursement, compensation or other remedies, including for loss caused by deficient care.

12 Records and communication

Relevant clinical records and personal information will be handled confidentially and in accordance with applicable professional and legal requirements. Information may be shared appropriately for treatment, laboratory services, billing or regulatory obligations. Requests for records or transfer to another veterinarian require appropriate identity and authority checks. Marketing and public use of identifiable images require separate consideration and applicable permission.

Keep contact details current. Email and WhatsApp support routine communication but are not guaranteed emergency channels. If a message is missing, unclear or inaccessible, contact the hospital. General online information does not replace examination or individual veterinary advice.

13 Complaints and responsible communication

Raise concerns promptly with the treating veterinarian or hospital management. If unresolved, submit a written complaint describing the patient, relevant dates, concerns and requested outcome. Allow a reasonable opportunity for investigation and response and cooperate with relevant information requests. The hospital will acknowledge the complaint, review the records and respond, with updates if further investigation is necessary.

The parties may agree to mediation. This process is encouraged but does not restrict urgent care, legal advice or complaints to the South African Veterinary Council or another competent authority. It does not suspend legal time limits or prevent lawful complaints, truthful accounts or honestly held opinions.

Do not knowingly publish or circulate false factual allegations, fabricate evidence or engage in unlawful threats or harassment. This includes malicious allegations known to be false on social media, in online reviews or in WhatsApp groups. A review is not prohibited merely because it is negative or critical. The hospital reserves its rights to seek appropriate lawful remedies for unlawful conduct.

14 Owner acknowledgement

South African law applies. Nothing in these terms excludes non-excludable consumer rights, professional duties or liability for gross negligence. You may request clarification before agreeing to care.

By signing, I confirm that I am the owner or a person authorised by the owner; I have read these terms or had them explained in a language I understand; and I have had an opportunity to ask questions. I understand my care and financial responsibilities. The individual treatment plan, risks, estimate and limits of authority must be discussed and recorded separately; this signature is not consent to unspecified procedures.