

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

SCOTT GOUNARIS, DVM
LICENSE NO. 2561

DOCKET NO. 23-124

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CONSENT AGREEMENT AND ORDER

This Consent Agreement and Order ("Consent Agreement"), dated this 25th day of June 2024, is between the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners ("SBVME" or "Board") and Scott Gounaris, DVM ("Dr. Gounaris"), License No. 2561. This Consent Agreement resolves a case arising from a complaint filed with the SBVME on June 19, 2023, which was assigned Docket No. 23-124, alleging that Dr. Gounaris did not satisfy the Veterinary Practice Act, Md. Code Ann., Agric. §§ 2-301 – 2-316 ("the Veterinary Practice Act") and related Code of Maryland Regulations ("COMAR") 15.14.01 – 15.14.17, as set forth herein.

On May 29, 2024, Dr. Gounaris, having been advised in writing regarding his due process rights, including his right to retain legal counsel, agreed to resolve this case under the terms and conditions reflected in this Consent Agreement. By signing this Consent Agreement, Dr. Gounaris agrees to waive his right to formal proceedings in this case, including the issuance of charges and a hearing. He 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 under 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. § 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. Agric. § 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, any history of prior violations, and the Board's civil penalty standards. Md. Code Ann., State Gov't. § 10-1001(b); COMAR 15.14.11 (Civil Penalty Standards for Veterinarians).

FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

By entering and signing this Consent Agreement after having had the opportunity to seek the advice of legal counsel, Scott Gounaris, DVM, License Number 2561, 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. Gounaris did not satisfy COMAR 15.14.01.10 (Record Keeping) as described below:

1. Dr. Gounaris has been a veterinarian licensed to practice in Maryland since 1982.
2. At the time of the events described herein, Dr. Gounaris was the owner and responsible veterinarian at Pleasantville Animal Hospital of Fallston ("PAH" or "Hospital"), (License No. 12-026), located at 2128 Fallston Road, Fallston, MD 21047.
3. Dr. Gounaris has had one prior disciplinary case with the Board involving events in 1998. In Docket No. 98-006, the Board issued a consent agreement finding that Dr. Gounaris violated its professional judgment and record-keeping regulations.
4. This case involves care and treatment provided to Norman, a male Goldendoodle who was two months old when his treatment with Dr. Gounaris began. Initially, Norman was a rescue owned by the Atlantic Rottweiler Rescue ("ARR"). On January 27, 2023, ARR took Norman to PAH for an examination with Dr. Gounaris.
5. According to PAH's medical records, Norman had a congenital malformed penis and prepuce, resulting in him being a hermaphrodite. Dr. Gounaris recommended surgery to correct the abnormal urethral structures and remove the excess exposed mucosal tissue around Norman's prepuce.

6. On February 17, 2023, Dr. Gounaris performed surgery on Norman in which he removed the deformed open/raw preputial skin and sutured the area closed. Dr. Gounaris' records do not reflect that he performed a complete physical examination before the surgery; however, immediately before beginning surgery, he reviewed data from a medical assessment sheet that included Norman's temperature, pulse, respiration, attitude, capillary refill time, weight, and time of last meal. During the procedure, Dr. Gounaris confirmed that Norman was urinating from a urethral orifice located an inch below his anus. Norman was discharged from PAH later that day.
7. On March 4, 2023, Dr. Gounaris saw Norman for a follow-up visit. During this visit, Norman had slight mucoid and purulent discharge coming from the incision area. Dr. Gounaris prescribed Augmentin (an antibiotic).
8. On March 8, 2023, Dr. Gounaris saw Norman for a recheck and recommended wound debridement. Later that evening, Jennifer Schady-Brozene ("Ms. Schady-Brozene" or "Owner") adopted Norman.
9. On March 9, 2023, Norman presented to PAH for surgical revision on the previous site. After Norman was sedated and placed under anesthesia, Dr. Gounaris debrided and sutured closed the open surgical area where Norman's penis was initially located. Again, Dr. Gounaris' records do not reflect that he performed a complete physical examination before this procedure, but as he did on February 27, 2023, he reviewed a medical assessment sheet immediately prior to surgery.
10. On March 17, 2023, Ms. Schady-Brozene called PAH because Norman's incision was oozing. After Ms. Schady-Brozene sent Dr. Gounaris a picture, he prescribed Keflex for Norman.
11. On March 27, 2023, Ms. Schady-Brozene took Norman to PAH for a follow-up. Dr. Gounaris removed two sutures from the cranial end of Norman's incision; however, the "incision line opened" during the removal. Concerned that Norman's incision was infected, Dr. Gounaris cleaned the area and placed an additional suture. Dr. Gounaris refilled Norman's Keflex prescription and recommended another wound debridement surgery later that week.

12. On March 30, 2023, Dr. Gounaris performed Norman's second wound debridement surgery, in which he removed excess tissue and closed the preputial area with two layers of sutures.
13. According to Ms. Schady-Brozene, on April 28, 2023, Norman's penis looked inflamed. Because it was a long drive to PAH and Norman had issues with car sickness, Ms. Schady-Brozene elected to make an appointment at Warm & Fuzzy Veterinary Center ("WFVC") (License No. 03-00264), which was closer to her house.
14. On May 10, 2023, Ms. Schady-Brozene took Norman to WFVC to inquire about neutering him. Suzanne Rittler, DVM ("Dr. Rittler") (License No. 4602) examined Norman and expressed concerns about neuter surgery because of the proximity of his urethral opening to his anus. Dr. Rittler recommended that Ms. Schady-Brozene consult a specialist at Chesapeake Veterinary Surgical Specialists ("CVSS") (License No. 03-00608).
15. On May 11, 2023, Ms. Schady-Brozene took Norman to PAH for an exam. Dr. Gounaris noticed a "small bubble of dark fluid at the area of the former prepuce" and a thick yellow-green discharge from the caudal area. He recommended watching these areas of concern and possibly removing them once Norman was neutered.
16. On June 12, 2023, Dr. Gounaris neutered Norman and removed the "last of the vestigial congenital abnormalities of his penis and prepuce." Norman had an uneventful recovery and was discharged later that day.
17. The following day, June 13, 2023, Dr. Gounaris saw Norman because Ms. Schady-Brozene was concerned that he was licking at the incision and would need a bigger e-collar or a sedative. Ms. Schady-Brozene told Dr. Gounaris that Norman "may have licked the area once or twice." Dr. Gounaris noted mild bruising around Norman's preputial area, but it appeared normal otherwise. Norman was given a larger e-collar and discharged from PAH.
18. On June 15, 2023, Norman presented to PAH with concerns about not urinating and a decreased appetite. Dr. Gounaris examined Norman and noted that his bladder was empty, but his surgical area

looked more inflamed. He recommended observing Norman throughout the day, and Ms. Schady-Brozene agreed.

19. According to Dr. Gounaris, Norman ate well during the day, and his bladder filled normally. Later that day, Norman was sent home, and Ms. Schady-Brozene reported that Norman urinated when he got home.

20. On or about June 16, 2023, Dr. Gounaris saw Norman for diarrhea and vomiting. Dr. Gounaris noted that Norman's surgical incision looked more inflamed during this visit, especially near the caudal end of the scrotal area. Dr. Gounaris suspected that Norman had been licking at his incision because his e-collar had fallen off in the exam room. He administered a Cerenia injection and prescribed Sulfazine to treat colitis diarrhea. Norman's carprofen and hydrocodone prescriptions were refilled. Dr. Gounaris also prescribed cephalexin (an antibiotic) to address a possible infection.

21. On June 17, 2023, Ms. Schady-Brozene elected to seek other veterinary care for Norman due to the inflammation around the level of the neuter incision and severe inflammation in the perineal area. Another veterinarian determined that Norman appeared to have a ruptured necrotic/abscessed scrotum that was draining hemorrhagic to purulent necrotic material and recommended surgical debridement and management.

22. Subsequently, Norman was hospitalized and underwent bilateral scrotal ablation surgery. The surgery went well, and Norman was discharged on June 21, 2023.

23. On June 19, 2023, Ms. Schady-Brozene filed a complaint with the SBVME alleging that Dr. Gounaris provided substandard care in his treatment of Norman.

24. The Board opened a case and investigated.

25. After its review, the Board identified deficiencies in the medical records Dr. Gounaris prepared.

26. COMAR 15.14.01.10A(9) (Record Keeping) requires, for a companion pet 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(7) requires that the record include documentation of the animal's condition, as evidenced through a physical examination not

more than twelve hours before administering anesthesia, injectable sedative, or injectable tranquilizing agent.

27. Dr. Gounaris's records reflecting Norman's treatment lack detail, making it difficult to understand the progress and disposition of the case. For example, the records describing the surgical procedures performed by Dr. Gounaris to correct the malformed tissue and revise the surgical wounds lack detail about precisely what he did during each procedure, including a description and the location of the tissue removed and what sutures were used to close the incisions. The lack of detail makes it difficult for a reviewer to understand the progress and disposition of the case.

28. In addition, on several occasions, including the surgeries performed on February 17, 2023, and March 9, 2023, Dr. Gounaris did not document that he completed physical examinations within twelve hours prior to surgery, as required by the Board's record-keeping regulations. As noted above, Dr. Gounaris did review a medical assessment sheet reflecting the patient's vital signs, including temperature, pulse, and respiration, immediately prior to each surgery.

Taking the facts and circumstances into consideration, including the nature of the violation(s); the veterinarian's disciplinary history, which includes a record-keeping violation; and his 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 ORDERED by the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners that:

- (a) For not satisfying COMAR 15.14.01.10A (Record Keeping) in his treatment of Norman, a young Goldendoodle owned by Jennifer Schady-Brozene, by failing to document physical examinations before surgery and for preparing surgical records lacking in detail, making it difficult to understand the progress and disposition of the case, Dr. Gounaris is assessed a civil penalty of \$600 (second offense);

- (b) Dr. Gounaris shall pay the civil penalty (\$600) within sixty (60) days from the date of this Consent Agreement by check payable to the Maryland Department of Agriculture ("MDA") with the notation "SBVME – 23-124" sent to the MDA at 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Room 102, Annapolis, MD 21401 – Attn: Nathaniel Boan; and
- (c) This Consent Agreement is a public order.

WITNESS the hand of the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, State of Maryland, this 25th day of June, 2024.

STATE BOARD OF VETERINARY
MEDICAL EXAMINERS



Patty Crankshaw-Quimby
Vice-President
State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners
Maryland Department of Agriculture

CONSENT

I, Scott Gounaris, DVM, 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 to issue and enforce this Consent Agreement. To resolve this matter, I agree to accept and submit to the foregoing Consent Agreement, consisting of eight (8) pages, including this Consent. I sign this Consent Agreement without reservation as my voluntary act and deed after having had an opportunity to consult with counsel. I fully understand and comprehend this Consent Agreement's language, meaning, and terms.

Date:

June 18, 2024



Scott Gounaris, DVM