

Overview of Law

“Buoy’s Law” or N.Y. Education Law § 6715 (hereafter “BL”) is the law concerning information to be provided by veterinarians to patient owners when prescribing or dispensing a drug to certain pets. BL enumerates that a veterinarian must advise patient owners of the (a) name and description of the drug; (b) directions for use (and any actions to be taken with a missed dose); (c) how to store the drug (if available); (d) any common reasonably anticipated adverse effects; and (e) manufacturer precautions and warnings (if available).

Veterinarians are generally previously provided information with risks and possible side effects of medications by the pharmaceutical manufacturers and BL requires that veterinarians pass along the information to the pet owners.

BL only applies to: (a) dogs, cats, and rabbits (b) the initial prescription of the medication not on additional refills; and (c) medications prescribed or dispensed for use outside of the office..

A similar statute exists in California and is named “Lizzie’s Law” (2018) which also requires veterinarians to provide sufficient information to make informed decisions when medications are prescribed for their pets.

Background of Buoy

Buoy, a three-year-old labrador retriever went to a veterinarian to undergo surgery on his paw (effectively the equivalent of an ACL surgery in a human). Post-surgery, Buoy was prescribed pain medicine (carprofen). The medicine caused loss of appetite and vomiting. When Buoy was taken back to the veterinarian, they were able to diagnosis Buoy’s kidney failure which occurred as a result of the pain medication that he was prescribed. ¹

Buoy’s owner, Mary Kate Tischler, was unaware of the potential side effects of this medicine which had caused Buoy’s untimely death and sued the Veterinary Medical Center of Long Island. The case was eventually settled and the family was reimbursed for the Dialysis treatment that was given to Buoy. The Tischler’s were not satisfied with the conclusion of their settlement and wanted to ensure this tragedy could not happen again to others. Thus, the family, with the help of (then) State Sen. Phil Boyle, was able to propose the law in 2014 and it eventually became law in December 2022 (with an original effective date of June 2023, which was pushed back to June 2024) .

Supporters of BL argue that if parents are able to make informed decisions for medications relating to their children, pet owners should be able to make those same decisions for their pets.²

Language of Statute (N.Y. Educ. Law. § 6715 (McKinney)

¹ <https://liherald.com/seaford/stories/buoys-law-signed-by-governor-will-take-effect-this-year,157946>

² <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/S3959>

“1. Each time a veterinarian initially prescribes or dispenses a drug to a dog, cat, or rabbit for use outside the office, the veterinarian shall provide to the owner of such animal, or his or her agent, the following information: **(a)** the name and description of the drug; **(b)** directions for use, including, if applicable, any actions to be taken in the event of a missed dose; **(c)** if available, manufacturer instructions for proper storage; **(d)** any common reasonably anticipated adverse effects associated with the use of such drug; and **(e)** if available, manufacturer precautions and relevant warnings.

2. The provisions of paragraphs (d) and (e) of subdivision one of this section shall only apply when the manufacturer has made available information for the specific animal species to which such drug is prescribed or dispensed pursuant to subdivision one of this section.

3. The information to be provided pursuant to subdivision one of this section shall be provided in writing or orally and the method of disclosure shall be noted in the patient medical record.”

Application of Law

Following the implementation of BL, different software providers took the opportunity to provide services through which veterinary practices can comply with BL. The software providers are able to find the requisite information for the drugs prescribed by veterinarians through their databases and provide an easy means to convey the information to the patient owners in compliance with BL.

A company called “Plumb’s” (hereinafter “Plumb’s”) is one of these providers. Plumb’s is an online service that can provide medical practices with updated information about the side effects and potential risks of different drugs, information regarding multiple drug interactions, potential side effects, and even provide guidance when it comes to which drugs to prescribe. In compliance with BL, Plumb’s will provide veterinarians with printable pdf handouts that provide all requisite information: (1) regarding the description and name of the drug, (2) any common reasonably anticipated adverse effects associated with the use of such drug, (3) proper storage for the drug, and (4) manufacturer precautions and warnings. Plumb’s also goes a step further and has consultants available to make sure the information is in a format that is easily understood by the average pet owner³.

An additional service called “Client Ed by LifeLearn Animal Health” (hereinafter “CE”) is another solution to help comply with BL. It is similar to Plumb’s in that it has its own database with over 2,100 pet health handouts available online, covering a wide range of pets and medications. CE also has over 290 medication handouts covering the most commonly used medications to help veterinarians comply with BL. Furthermore, CE has a system within their services that allow for veterinarians to share articles related to medications and pet health with

³ <https://plumbs.com/blog/how-plumbs-helps-veterinarians-comply-with-buoys-law/#:~:text=The%20law%20was%20named%20after,into%20effect%20in%20June%202024>

their patient owners. CE is updated regularly, as new medications come to market and CE will produce new handouts and publish them to the library for veterinary use as they become available⁴.

The “Veterinary Pharmacy Reference” (hereinafter “VPR”) is another software provider that provides services to help medical practices comply with BL. VPR is similar to the previous services in that it has printable client information sheets with the requisite information in order for patient owners to make informed decisions regarding their pets. VPR also provides a full range of services to improve the efficiency of veterinarians in their day-to-day practices such as interactive drug search, printable drug information, dosage calculator, drug interaction matrix, and many other services. VPR’s goal is to alleviate a veterinarian’s stress caused by BL compliance.

⁴ <https://www.lifelearn.com/2023/04/07/how-cliented-helps-ny-vets-comply-with-buoys-law/>