

BEFORE THE IOWA BOARD OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

IN THE MATTER OF:

JERRY COUCHMAN, D.V.M.,

RESPONDENT.

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CASE NO. 25-019

**COMBINED NOTICE OF HEARING,
STATEMENT OF CHARGES, AND
EMERGENCY ADJUDICATIVE ORDER**

COMES NOW the Iowa Board of Veterinary Medicine (Board) and issues this Combined Notice of Hearing, Statement of Charges, and Emergency Adjudicative Order against Jerry Couchman, D.V.M. (Respondent), pursuant to Iowa Code sections 17A.12(2), 17A.18(3), 17A.18A, and 272C.3(1)(e), and Iowa Administrative Code rule 811-16.5 and Uniform Rules on Agency Procedure X.31, adopted and modified on other grounds by 811 Iowa Administrative Code chapter 16.

A. TIME, PLACE, AND NATURE OF HEARING

1. Hearing: A disciplinary contested case hearing shall be held on November 4, 2025, before the Board. The hearing shall begin at 10:00 a.m. and shall be located in the Hoover State Office Building, 5th Floor, 1305 E. Walnut Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.

2. Answer: Within twenty (20) days of the date you are served this Combined Notice of Hearing, Statement of Charges, and Emergency Adjudicative Order, you may file an Answer pursuant to Uniform Rules on Agency Procedure X.11(3), adopted and modified on other grounds by 811 Iowa Administrative Code chapter 16. The Answer should specifically admit, deny, or otherwise answer all allegations contained in Sections C and D of this Combined Notice of Hearing, Statement of Charges, and Emergency Adjudicative Order.

3. Filing of Pleadings and Exhibits: Pleadings and exhibits shall be filed with the Board at the following address: DIAL Administrative Hearings Division, 6200 Park Ave Ste. 100, Des Moines, IA 50321, by email to adminhearings@dia.iowa.gov, or electronically using the Administrative Electronic Document Management System (adminhearings.iowa.gov/efile/).

4. Presiding Officer: The Board shall serve as presiding officer, but the Board hereby delegates to an Administrative Law Judge from the Department of Inspections, Appeals and Licensing the authority to make initial rulings on pre-hearing matters and requests the judge be present to assist and advise the Board at the hearing.

5. Prehearing Conference: Any party may request a prehearing conference in accordance with Uniform Rules on Agency Procedure X.16, adopted and modified on other grounds by 811 Iowa Administrative Code chapter 16, to discuss issues related to the hearing.

6. Hearing Procedures: The procedural rules governing the conduct of the hearing are found at 811 Iowa Administrative Code chapter 16. At hearing, you may appear personally or be represented by legal counsel at your own expense. You will be allowed the opportunity to respond to the charges against you, to produce evidence on your behalf, to cross-examine witnesses present at the hearing, and examine and respond to any documents introduced at the hearing. If you need to request an alternative time or date for hearing, you must comply with the requirements of Iowa Administrative Code rule 811-16.17. The hearing may be open to the public or closed to the public at your discretion.

7. Prosecution. The Office of the Attorney General is responsible for representing the public interest (the State) in this proceeding. Copies of pleadings should be provided to counsel for the State at the following address:

Samantha Wagner
Assistant Attorney General

Iowa Attorney General's Office
2nd Floor, Hoover State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Ms. Wagner can also be reached by phone at (515) 281-3395 or by e-mail at samantha.wagner@ag.iowa.gov.

8. Communications. You may not contact board members in any manner, including by phone, letter or e-mail, about this Combined Notice of Hearing, Statement of Charges, and Emergency Adjudicative Order. Board members may only receive information about the case when all parties have notice and an opportunity to participate, such as at the hearing or in pleadings you file with the Board office and serve upon all parties in the case.

B. LEGAL AUTHORITY AND JURISDICTION

9. Iowa License. Respondent was issued Iowa license 3548 on June 10, 1970. Respondent's license is currently active and will next expire on June 30, 2026.

10. Jurisdiction. The Board has jurisdiction in this matter pursuant to Iowa Code chapters 17A, 169 and 272C.

11. Legal Authority. If any of the allegations against you are founded, the Board has authority to take disciplinary action against you under Iowa Code chapters 17A, 169, and 272C, and 811 Iowa Administrative Code chapter 10. The Board has authority to issue an Emergency Adjudicative Order pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.18A and Uniform Rules on Agency Procedure X.31, adopted and modified on other grounds by 811 Iowa Administrative Code chapter 16.

12. Disciplinary Authority. The Board's disciplinary authority is located in Iowa Code sections 169.13(2) (as amended by Iowa SF 632 (2025)) and 272C.3(2)(a)-(f), an Iowa Administrative Code rule 811-10.7.

13. Default. If you fail to appear at the hearing, the Board may enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and render a decision in your absence, in accordance with Iowa Code section 17A.12(3) and Uniform Rules on Agency Procedure X.22, adopted and modified on other grounds by Iowa Administrative Code rule 811-16.22.

C. CHARGES

COUNT I

14. Respondent is charged with “knowingly aiding, assisting, procuring, or advising a person to unlawfully practice veterinary medicine,” in violation of Iowa Code section 169.13(1)(e). Iowa Code section 169.3(11)(a)(1) defines “practice of veterinary medicine” to include, among other things:

To diagnose, treat, correct, change, relieve or prevent, for a fee, any animal disease, deformity, defect, injury or other physical or mental conditions or cosmetic surgery; including the prescription or administration of any drug, medicine, biologic, apparatus, application, anesthetic, or other therapeutic or diagnostic substance or technique, for a fee; or to evaluate or correct sterility or infertility, for a fee; or to render, advise or recommend with regard to any of the above for a fee.

Iowa Code § 169.3(11)(a)(1).

COUNT II

15. Respondent is charged with “willful or repeated violation[s] of lawful rules adopted by the Board” in violation of Iowa Code section 169.13(1)(i) and Iowa Administrative Code rule 811-10.6(1)(g) in connection with violating Iowa Administrative Code rules 811-12.2, 12.2(1), 12.2(2), 12.3(1), 12.3(1)(a), 12.3(2), 12.4(1), and 12.4(2).

COUNT III

16. Respondent is charged with “[i]ndiscriminately or promiscuously prescribing, administering or dispensing any drug; or prescribing, administering or dispensing any drug for other than a lawful purpose,” in violation of Iowa Administrative Code rule 811-10.6(2)(d).

COUNT IV

17. Respondent is charged with violating Iowa’s principles of veterinary medical ethics, in violation of Iowa Administrative Code rule 811-10.6(2)(a), in connection with violating Iowa Administrative Code rules 811-10.6(3)(a)(2), 10.6(3)(b), 10.6(3)(d)(1), and 10.6(3)(d)(2).

COUNT V

18. Respondent is charged with failing to comply with a subpoena issued by the board, in violation of Iowa Administrative Code rule 811-10.6(1)(k).

D. FACTUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

19. The Board received a report from a drug distributor alleging Respondent was ordering a significant amount of xylazine, a powerful non-opioid sedative commonly mixed with fentanyl for illegal drug use, and ketamine, a dissociative anesthetic with hallucinogenic effects, which is also a controlled substance.

20. The Board reviewed Respondent’s drug purchase records from several drug distributors and determined that between January 1, 2024 and June 2025, Respondent purchased approximately 1,545 50mL bottles of xylazine (77,250mL of xylazine total) and 1,128 10mL bottles of ketamine (11,280mL of ketamine total).

Subpoena to Respondent

21. The Board issued a subpoena and served it on Respondent on or about July 7, 2025.

22. Specifically, the Board subpoenaed the following records from Respondent:

- i. Copies of your drug log book dating back to January 1, 2024;
- ii. Any and all records related to ordering, shipping, billing or prescribing xylazine and ketamine dating back to January 1, 2024;
- iii. Any and all records documenting a valid-client-patient relationship for all prescriptions of xylazine and ketamine since January 1, 2024; and
- iv. Any and all records documenting usage, telephone or treatment logs for xylazine and ketamine since January 1, 2024.

23. The subpoena also required that Respondent submit an affidavit containing the following information:

- i. Describe your policies and procedures, if any, on dispensing xylazine and ketamine;
- ii. Identify all persons to whom you have dispensed xylazine and ketamine to since January 1, 2024;
- iii. Describe your policies and procedures, if any, to establish and maintain a valid-client-patient relationships;
- iv. Describe your policies and procedures, if any, for documenting information for new clients, including if new clients have to sign any forms;
- v. Identify any and all jurisdictions you are currently licensed in;
- vi. Describe how you record prescriptions;
- vii. Describe if you have distributors direct ship any products, including but not limited to xylazine and ketamine; and
- viii. If you have distributors direct ship, describe how you document such shipments in your records.

24. On or about July 24, 2025, Respondent responded to the subpoena with a handwritten copy of his purported drug log. However, Respondent also admitted in his affidavit that he does not keep a “separate drug log book.” Instead, Respondent asserted he tracks drug purchases and prescriptions in the following manner:

- i. “I do ‘log’ and keep track of all drugs that are shipped to or received by me and all drugs that I sell and/or distribute to my clients in person. All drugs are kept track of by invoices and/or by me. Sales tickets are kept by me to all clients.”
- ii. “All records relating to Xylazine, which is the generic name for the name brand Rompun, and Ketamine dating back to January 1, 2024 are listed in customer books, with 50 entries per book. I have approximately 15-20 books in total.”

25. Respondent refused to provide the identity of his clients to the Board in his responsive affidavit, expressing a wish to obtain client consent first.

26. Further, it appears Respondent’s “drug log” is not an actual drug log, but rather a handwritten document created in response to the subpoena that contains some, but not all, of the information required by Iowa’s rules and requested in the subpoena . Per Iowa Administrative Code rule 811-12(4)(1)(b), a controlled substance log must include:

- i. Name or identification of the patient;
- ii. Client’s name and address, if not readily available from the licensed veterinarian’s records;
- iii. Name, strength and quantity of the controlled substance dispensed;
- iv. Date on which the controlled substance was dispensed;
- v. Initials of the dispensing licensed veterinarian or authorized auxiliary; and
- vi. Name of the prescribing licensed veterinarian.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 811-12(4)(1)(b).

27. Respondent’s refusal to provide documents responsive to the subpoena, including patient records and prescriptions, and Respondent’s failure to identify his clients prohibits the Board from effective oversight and evaluation by determining whether Respondent is in compliance with applicable rules governing the practice of veterinary medicine.

28. On August 11, 2025, the Board served Respondent with a supplemental subpoena, requiring he produce the names and addresses of clients listed in his drug log book, among other things.

29. While Respondent has since provided names and contact information for three clients, Respondent has refused to provide such information for all his clients. Additionally, Respondent has not provided any additional records responsive to the subpoena to the Board. Thus, Respondent has failed to comply with the subpoena.

Respondent's Use of Ketamine and Xylazine

30. During the Board's investigation, Respondent attempted to give context for the large quantities of ketamine and xylazine he purchases in his affidavit in connection with his treatment of various animals. The Board's investigation revealed Respondent's practices violated the law and rules governing the practice of veterinary medicine concerning prescribing drugs and controlled substances, proper record keeping, and constituted the knowing aid, assistance, or advising of a person to unlawfully practice veterinary medicine.

31. Respondent asserts that he uses xylazine and ketamine for surgeries on dogs. Respondent owns a kennel with approximately 70 bulldogs but also provides veterinary services to two other kennels for other clients with "another 1,100 bulldogs and other mixed breed dogs." Respondent asserts that he "personally administer[s] the drugs for these dogs and do[es] surgeries." Despite this assertion, Respondent failed to provide records corroborating his claim he performs the surgeries himself and documenting the corresponding use of xylazine and ketamine.

32. Respondent indicated he also prescribes ketamine and xylazine to clients for dog grooming. Specifically, Respondent states he has worked with his clients to "self-administer" ketamine and xylazine. Respondent mixes the "Rompun/Xylazine and Ketamine 1 cc per ten pounds,

to be administered by the client, under the skin or in muscle. I will provide them with a 250 cc bottle of the mixture, which will take care of 250 ten-pound dogs.” Respondent asserts dog grooming services may number “anywhere from 1,500-2000 per year.”

33. Respondent also indicated he prescribes ketamine and xylazine in working with horses. Respondent uses xylazine for teeth cleaning and hoofing, but the “cleaning is done by the client, and the client self-administers Rompun [xylazine] in the vein.” Respondent stated he provides 50 cc bottles of xylazine and 10 cc bottles of ketamine to clients, “who use these drugs to make it safe to perform teeth cleaning and/or castration.” Respondent further stated he neuters or castrates approximately 1,200 to 1,500 horses per year. It is unclear whether Respondent performs the castration himself in all circumstances, as his affidavit also states that the “client self-administers by giving Rompun first and waiting approximately ten minutes, then administering ketamine in the vein.”

34. After Respondent provided the identity and contact information for three of Respondent’s clients (R.M., B.G., and D.M.), Board staff interviewed them:

35. **Client R.M.** Client R.M. has horses and cattle and uses Respondent as his veterinarian. When asked if he had any written prescriptions, instructions or invoices from Respondent, R.M indicated he had no paperwork from Respondent. Client R.M. indicated he uses xylazine and ketamine for castration and xylazine only for floating teeth.¹ During the interview, Board staff asked R.M. if he used xylazine and ketamine on animals owned by other individuals. R.M. responded that people bring him horses for treatment and sometimes he travels to other farms

¹ “Floating teeth” or “equine floating teeth services” involves “the process of evening out and removing ridges from teeth and correcting other dental malocclusions (misalignment) to allow the horse to use the full grinding surface of their teeth. A veterinarian uses a tool called a float, which has an abrasive surface typically made of diamond or carbide that is hard enough to grind down the raised edges of the teeth. Think of this device as a large power tool specifically designed for dental work on large animals.” <https://www.petmd.com/horse/horse-teeth-floating> (last visited September 24, 2025).

to treat horses, charging a flat rate regardless of which drugs or amounts are used. R.M. then provided Board staff with service invoices from May 2025 through July 2025, which contained descriptions of services provided but did not include dosages or tracking information for the drugs used. R.M. also showed Board staff where he stores the xylazine and ketamine prescribed by Respondent—a small, unlocked tacklebox. Board staff observed that the xylazine and ketamine were not labeled with any prescription labeling from Respondent. At the time of the interview, the tacklebox contained one full bottle and one mostly empty bottle of xylazine and two bottles of ketamine.

36. **Client B.G.** B.G.'s father runs a ranch and Respondent provides veterinary services for their cattle. During an interview with Board staff, B.G. stated she has worked alongside Respondent performing equine dentistry and that she and Respondent know each other and each other's clients. B.G. told Board staff she purchases xylazine and ketamine from Respondent and that she has used the drugs on her animals in the past. When asked if she had any written prescriptions, instructions or invoices from Respondent, B.G. responded that she had no paperwork from Respondent. B.G. said Respondent had worked on some calls with her and showed her how to hit a vein and avoid an artery, and Respondent had also advised her to sedate lightly, not heavy. B.G. further stated that she uses the drugs on animals owned by other people for teeth services, and that she cleans stalls while on the same location for pay. When Board staff asked B.G. to clarify if she is paid for teeth services, she stated "I can float teeth legally, just the payment is a problem." B.G. did not maintain any records for the services she provided. B.G. told Board staff the xylazine and ketamine are either stored in her vehicle, or they come with her when she is not in her car, and asserted the drugs are never left unattended.

37. **Client D.M.** D.M. owns and operates a dog breeding facility. During an interview with Board staff, D.M. stated that Respondent is his veterinarian. D.M. stated that he purchases drugs from Respondent. When asked if he purchased ketamine or xylazine from Respondent, D.M. said Respondent provides a “sleeping medicine” used when shaving the dogs, but that he did not know what was in it. D.M. stated the bottle is hand labeled as “Dog Anesthesia” and has a dosage written on it. When asked if D.M. had any written prescriptions, instructions or invoices from Respondent, he responded that he had no paperwork beyond the bottles labeled “Dog Anesthesia.” D.M. stated he uses the weight of the dog and size of the dog to determine the dosage of the anesthesia mixture and relies upon advice from Respondent to administer the medication into a back muscle, administering 1cc per 10lbs. D.M. stated the drugs are not used on animals not owned by him. D.M. stated he has no records for the drugs’ use other than a log of which animals have been groomed. When asked how the drugs are stored, D.M. stated they are kept in a bottle in a locked cabinet, and that only he and another commercial dog breeder know where the key is kept. When asked if Board staff could see the bottle and storage location, D.M. indicated he would retrieve the bottle but did not want staff to accompany him to the storage location. D.M. returned with a 250ml bottle labeled “dog anesthesia 1cc/10# subu/IM.” When asked to estimate how many of these bottles D.M. typically goes through, D.M. stated they have recently decreased dog numbers, but that previously, they received approximately 2-3 250mL bottles from Respondent every 1-2 months.

E. EMERGENCY ADJUDICATIVE ORDER

FINDINGS OF FACT

38. The Board concludes that this matter has been fully investigated and the information obtained ensures the Board is proceeding on reliable information. The Board finds sufficient evidence to support each factual circumstance identified in Section D, above. The Board concludes

Respondent's conduct poses an immediate danger to the public health, safety, and welfare, and Respondent's statements indicate that his misconduct will continue without immediate intervention. Thus, the Board finds that an immediate suspension is necessary to avoid any further harm to the public.

LEGAL AUTHORITY

39. Pursuant to Uniform Rules on Agency Procedure X.31, adopted and modified on other grounds by 811 Iowa Administrative Code chapter 16 and Iowa Code section 17A.18A, to the extent necessary to prevent or avoid immediate danger to the public health, safety, or welfare, and consistent with the Constitution and other provisions of law, the Board may issue a written order in compliance with Iowa Code section 17A.18 to suspend the license in whole or in part, order the cessation of any continuing activity, order affirmative action, or take other action within the jurisdiction of the Board by emergency adjudicative order.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

40. Based on these findings of fact, the Board concludes Respondent has violated the laws cited in Counts I-V, identified in Section C, above.

POLICY REASONS

41. Respondent's continued ability to practice places his patients and the public at risk because Respondent's refusal to comply with the requirements of a subpoena impedes the Board's ability to investigate and determine whether Respondent is practicing veterinary medicine in compliance with Iowa law, including, the proper documentation and prescription of controlled substances and prescription drugs. In addition, Respondent is dispensing controlled substances and prescription drugs to persons for their use in animals where the Respondent has no valid veterinary-

client-patient-relationship, and those drugs are being used by lay persons to provide veterinary medical services, putting the public and the animals at risk.

42. Given Respondent's actions, the Board deems the Respondent as an imminent threat to public safety and should not be permitted to practice veterinary medicine during the pendency of this action.

ORDER

43. Respondent's license to practice veterinary medicine is **INDEFINITELY SUSPENDED**, effective immediately, and until further order of the Board. A hearing regarding this Emergency Adjudicative Order and the charges against Respondent is scheduled as set forth in Section A, above.

E. SETTLEMENT

44. This matter may be resolved by settlement agreement. The procedural rules governing the Board's settlement process are found at Iowa Administrative Code rule 811-10.9. If you are interested in pursuing settlement of this matter, please contact Samantha Wagner, Assistant Attorney General, by telephone at (515) 281-3395, or by email at samantha.wagner@ag.iowa.gov.

SIGNATURE PAGE

On this 2nd day of October, 2025 the Iowa Board of Veterinary Medicine found probable cause to file this Notice of Hearing and Statement of Charges against Respondent.

Iowa Board of Veterinary Medicine

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dr. Thomas Burkgen".

CHAIRPERSON

October 2, 2025

Date

Copies to:

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