



# **CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**



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## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this procedure is to define how complaints and queries are managed by the Northern Cape Provincial Veterinary Laboratory (NCPVL). Every complaint is reviewed and addressed within the context of this document which in turn is founded on the principles of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 and the requirements of ISO 17025:2017. This document is applicable to the NCPVL and all its stakeholders/customers.

## **2. Scope**

This procedure seeks to:

- Ensure that customers have access to just and fair administration.
- Encourage transparency and accountability.
- Promote reasonable and procedurally fair decision making.
- Enable customers to participate in the decision making processes.

## **3. Procedure**

### **3.1 Submission/Receiving of complaints.**

Complaints relating to NCPVL's activities must be submitted in writing to the Control Veterinary Technologist: Quality (CVT: Quality) either through:

- i.) Emails at [ncpvlquality@ncpg.gov.za](mailto:ncpvlquality@ncpg.gov.za) as indicated on the laboratory submission forms and reports.
- ii.) Internal Customer complaints form (QMF 7.9) completed by either a walk in customer or NCPVL personnel receiving the complaint via another email address (Note: Where a customer complains telephonically, personnel must request the customer to send the complaint in writing via email).

Preferably, complaints must be made within 30 calendar days after the event that lead to the complaint to ensure efficient resolutions however, complaints on events that occurred up to a maximum of 3 months (90 calendar days) will be dealt with in due diligence. Beyond this time, the NCPVL will not consider the complaint. The complainant must provide sufficient detail e.g. complainant names and contact details, reference numbers, dates, owner/sender information etc. in order for the NCPVL to determine the validity of the complaint and to ensure that a thorough investigation is conducted. If the complainant does not supply the



relevant information for the investigation of the complaint within 30 days of the complaint, the CVT: Quality will close the complaint and inform the complainant that the complaint has been closed.

Upon receiving the complaint, the CVT: Quality will assign a unique number to the complaint and register it. This unique assigned number must be used in all correspondence relating to that complaint going forward. The CVT: Quality shall immediately acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the customer and give them assurance that the complaint will be investigated. The CVT: Quality may either validate the complaint or send it to the State Veterinarian for validation and investigation based on consideration of the factors of knowledge on the subject and independency to the event in question. NB: Queries/enquires will not be registered as complaints and will be handled by the technical administration clerk in consultation with the State Veterinarian.

### **3.2 Validation of complaints**

A complaint will be considered if it is received by the NCPVL within 90days following the event that resulted in the complaint. The CVT: Quality / State Veterinarian shall determine if the complaint is valid or invalid. Where a complaint is found to be invalid, the CVT: Quality/ State Veterinarian will provide the reasons to the complainant in writing. All valid complaints will be raised as non- conformances and will be investigated as detailed in section 3.3.

### **3.3 Investigation of complaints**

NCPVL endeavors to resolve complaints within 30 working days of receipt.

#### **i.) Complaints that can be resolved immediately.**

Complaints that can be resolved immediately e.g. errors on reports, faxing/emailing of reports etc. will be investigated and resolved immediately by the relevant personnel. Communication of these immediate investigations and resolutions must be recorded on QMF 7.9. NB: Even if a complaint is resolved immediately the corresponding nonconformance will still undergo the procedure for non-conforming work in order to prevent recurrence in the future.



## **ii.) Complaints that cannot be resolved immediately.**

The CVT: Quality/ Technical Manager will investigate the issue and provide the complainant with progress on the resolution of the complaint made at least once (NB: Can be as many times as necessary depending on the progression of the resolution) during the time that the complaint is being resolved.

### **3.4 Response to the complainant**

Responses relating to the acknowledgement of the complaint, requests for further information and progress with regards to resolution of the complaints will take place as detailed in 3.1-3.3. The conclusion of the complaint (Formal notice of the end of the complaint) and all records relating to the complaint will be reviewed by the Deputy Director: Laboratory Services and Epidemiology and approved before the conclusion and closure of the complaint is communicated by the CVT: Quality to the complainant.

### **3.5 Unresolved and unsatisfactory resolutions to complaints**

If the complainant does not get a resolution from the NCPVL or is unsatisfied with the resolutions taken by the NCPVL, the complaint may be escalated to the office of the Director: Veterinary Services of Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform by email at [mletsie@ncpg.gov.za](mailto:mletsie@ncpg.gov.za) / [mletsie@yahoo.com](mailto:mletsie@yahoo.com) where it will be handled on behalf of the Head of the Department.

### **3.6 Tracking and record keeping**

The CVT: Quality is responsible for tracking and record keeping for all complaints.

## **4. Records (NCPVL Internal forms)**

- QMF 7.9 Customer complaints form.
- QMR 7.9 Complaints register.
- QMF 7.10 Non-conformance, preventive, corrective action and clearance form.