



BEFORE THE ARKANSAS BOARD OF ANIMAL HEALTH

**In the Matter of Stephenie Kessler, DVM
License No. 039084**

Complaint No. 2024-10

CONSENT ORDER

The Arkansas Board of Animal Health (Board) and Stephenie Kessler, DVM, (Licensee), in lieu of formal proceedings, enter the following Consent Order affecting the licensee's license to practice veterinary medicine in the State of Arkansas. The parties, being well and truly advised of the facts, relevant law, and their duty and rights under Arkansas law, agree as follows:

Findings of Fact

1. On August 12, 2024, the Board received a complaint from Shelley Smith against Licensee.
2. The facts alleged in the complaint are as follows:
 - a. On October 15, 2023, Ms. Smith took a stray beagle (Patient) that was struck by a car and seriously injured to After Hour Animal Hospital in North Little Rock, AR, for treatment. The Patient lost blood in transit and had labored breathing.
 - b. Licensee was working at the emergency hospital as a relief veterinarian when Ms. Smith arrived and provided treatment to the Patient.
 - c. Ms. Smith paid a deposit of \$1,200.00 to the hospital for initial assessment and requested euthanasia or a treatment plan, if the Patient was likely to live.
 - d. Ms. Smith was told she would receive a treatment plan for the Patient before any services were rendered.
 - e. Licensee performed services on the Patient without Ms. Smith's knowledge or consent, including taking six (6) to eight (8) x-rays.
 - f. After approximately two (2) hours of waiting for the examination and assessment, Licensee suggested treating the Patient in an oxygen chamber and doing bloodwork to check for heartworms. Ms. Smith reiterated that the dog was a stray, and she only wanted an assessment as to whether the dog would survive or should be humanely euthanized.

- g. Licensee requested an additional \$4,500.00 without providing an assessment as to survivability, and when Ms. Smith refused to pay the additional amount or approve the bloodwork, Licensee instructed the hospital staff to discharge the Patient.
 - h. During discussions in the hospital lobby, Licensee told Ms. Smith she had to make money to pay for her husband's medical care. Ms. Smith felt berated by Licensee during the discussion.
 - i. Prior to discharging the Patient, Licensee administered the Patient a second dose of Mannitol for the head injury, for which Ms. Smith was charged more than initially quoted. Hospital staff then the Patient to Ms. Smith's car, when she noticed he was cold and stiff. The Patient opened his mouth to take a breath and blood poured from his mouth. The Patient then passed away.
- 3. On August 12, 2024, the Board sent a letter to Licensee requesting a response to Ms. Smith's complaint.
- 4. On August 21, 2025, the Board, again, sent the complaint to the Licensee via electronic mail, along with previous letters.
- 5. On August 21, 2025, the Licensee responded by electronic mail and stated:
 - a. The Owner signed and verbally consented to stabilization and initial treatments.
 - b. The prognosis of the Patient was poor.
 - c. The Owner consented to euthanasia.
 - d. Licensee was a "relief doctor," that does not usually practice at that clinic and does not have access to records or documentation.
- 6. Licensee did not provide the Board with a copy of any authorization signed by Ms. Smith.

Conclusions of Law

- 7. The Board has authority to investigate conduct that violates the Arkansas Veterinary Medical Practice Act (Act) and Veterinary Medicine rules and to take disciplinary action against the license of a veterinarian for violation of the Act or rules. Ark. Code Ann. §§ 17-101-203 and 17-101-305; see also 17 CAR § 1-110.

8. Under Ark. Code Ann. § 17-101-305(a)(11), it is a violation of the Act and unprofessional conduct for a veterinarian to violate a rule promulgated by the Board. Licensee engaged in conduct that was likely to deceive, defraud, or harm the public in violation of 17 CAR § 1-111(12).

9. Under Ark. Code Ann. § 17-101-305(a)(15), it is a violation of the Act for a veterinarian to overtreat patients or charge for services that were not consented to by the owner of the patient or the owner's agent. Licensee provided services to the Patient without first obtaining Ms. Smith's consent for the services.

10. Licensee has the right to a hearing before the Board on these alleged violations and before the Board takes action against Licensee for any violation of law, and Licensee waives her right to a hearing and accepts informal disposition of the matter by entering a Consent Order, as provided in Ark. Code Ann. § 25-15-208(b).

Terms of Disposition

11. By signing this Consent Order, Licensee acknowledges her rights under Arkansas law, understands that the Consent Order affects her Arkansas Veterinary Medicine and Surgery License, and accepts the following conditions to maintain her license:

- a. Licensee was advised of her right to seek the advice of counsel prior to signing this Consent Order;
- b. Licensee acknowledges that she has the right under Ark. Code Ann. §§ 17-101-305, 25-15-208 and 25-15-211 to a formal hearing before any disciplinary action may be taken against her license for the misconduct alleged in the complaint, has the right under Ark. Code Ann. § 25-15-213(1) to be accompanied and advised by counsel at a hearing of this matter, and has the right under Ark. Code Ann. § 25-15-212 for judicial review of the Board's action following a hearing of this matter.
- c. Licensee waives the right to a formal hearing before the Board and judicial review of any decision by the Board;

- d. Licensee admits to the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law contained herein and waives her right to contest such Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law and any disciplinary action imposed under this consent order;
- e. Licensee consents to pay a civil penalty in the amount of \$1,514.60 for violation of Ark. Code Ann. § 17-101-305, to be paid to the Arkansas Department of Agriculture within thirty (30) days of the date the Consent Order is approved by the Board.
- f. Licensee acknowledges that any violation of the terms of this Consent Order or any law governing the practice of veterinary medicine in the State of Arkansas constitutes grounds for further disciplinary action, including revocation of her license; and
- g. Licensee will comply with all laws and regulations governing the practice of veterinary medicine in the State of Arkansas.

WHEREFORE, the **Arkansas Board of Animal Health** and Stephenie Kessler, DVM, enter this Consent Order in lieu of formal proceedings and agree to the civil penalty of \$1,514.60 to be paid by Dr. Kessler under the terms set forth herein.

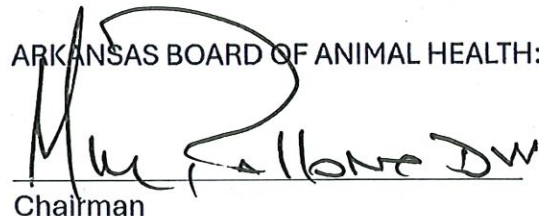
IT IS SO AGREED AND ORDERED, this 23rd day of December, 2025.

LICENSEE:



Stephenie Kessler, DVM

ARKANSAS BOARD OF ANIMAL HEALTH:



Chairman

Date: 2025 12/23/2025

Date: 4-21-26

1/2/2026 12:25:37 PM
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TOTAL \$1,514.60
Check \$1,514.60
Item count: 1
Trans: 231220
Terminal: 050017009-001001

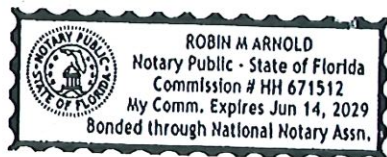
AT STATE OF FLORIDA

STATE OF ARKANSAS)

COUNTY OF ESCAMBIA)

On this the 23RD day of DECEMBER, 2025, before me
_____, a Notary Public, appeared the within named Stephenie
Kessler, DVM, to me personally well known (or satisfactorily proven to be such person),
who executed the foregoing Consent Order for the consideration, uses and purposes
therein mentioned and set forth.

In witness whereof I hereunto set my hand and official seal.



Robin M. Arnold
Notary Public ROBIN M. ARNOLD
My Board expires: JUNE 14 2029

File: 1/2/2026

V:5.0.17.9

Trans: 231220

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2026-01-02 12:25:37

Term: 001001

Number entry: 104

PLU#:1007

FINES

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TOTAL

1514.60

Check

1514.60

Item count: 1