



Criminal accountability for veterinary malpractice in Jordan a public-protection framework for unlawful practice, professional misconduct, animal harm, and veterinary public-health offences

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Abstract

This previous analysis is but one component of a wider research effort examining veterinary malpractice from the perspective of criminal law, as opposed to civil law. In any case, the key starting point continues to be the notion that Jordan needs to give more consideration to ensuring that the interests of the general public are protected in cases where veterinary malpractice poses significant dangers. This could involve issues such as deceptive treatment practices, improper handling of animals, the abuse of veterinary drugs, false documentation or certification, as well as the failure to meet disease control obligations. For purposes of analyzing these matters in detail, a doctrinal-legal methodology is employed. The implications of this approach mean that the criminal act itself and the various components associated with it like causation, evidence, and context of occurrence will all be examined. The research introduces an effective model of criminal responsibility based on such factors as legality, proportionality, expert testimony, electronic documentation, transparency, and protection against over-criminalization of professional malpractice. In conclusion, the legislation in Jordan related to veterinary practice needs to have a separate criminal law provision specifying offenses, evidence requirements, prosecutorial duties, public welfare considerations, and just treatment of veterinarians acting in good faith.

Keywords: Veterinary malpractice, criminal law, Jordan, animal welfare, public prosecution, veterinary offenses, unlawful practice, professional misconduct, veterinary medicines, public health

Introduction

The modern veterinary legislation is gradually gaining recognition as a part of governance that helps protect animal welfare, public health, and safety. For example, according to the World Organisation for Animal Health, the legislative support of effective animal care and the welfare of society are among the priorities of the institution (World Organisation for Animal Health, 2024a) ^[21]. In Jordan, the publication of laws and amendments to them by the country's Ministry of Justice is essential as the documents need to be readily accessible to the investigators, prosecutors, and courts (Jordan Ministry of Justice, 2026) ^[10]. In the case of Jordan's animal-welfare regulations, it becomes evident that the practices of veterinarians are associated not only with inspections, reliable animal treatment, and the enforcement of the welfare policies, but also with other issues (Jordan Times, 2022).

In general, today veterinary care goes well beyond the provision of treatment to the pets in a clinical setting. It overlaps with such important public areas as food security, zoonoses prevention, animal welfare, consumer safety, pharmaceutical regulation, and integrity of the professional market. Thus, some aspects of the problem should be considered under the prism of criminal law when it comes to intentional actions, recklessness, concealment of information, deception, violation of ethical standards and licensing requirements, and significant risks to the lives and health of both animals and the public. However, the goal is not to criminally prosecute every veterinary error; rather, it is to evaluate whether there is any point in doing so based on the type and context of the problem. Moreover, such an approach is vital for the field of veterinary medicine because harmful acts may become a part of highly technical procedures that are difficult to comprehend for the owner of the animal. Decisions about diagnosis, treatment options,

surgery, medication, vaccination, notification of the authorities regarding diseases, and euthanasia require professional knowledge. Without a proper framework, it will be impossible either to punish a dangerous person or to avoid unjust prosecutions.

To solve this problem, the paper proposes a criminal-law framework for dealing with the issue of veterinary malpractice in Jordan. The study will focus on the public interests associated with veterinary services and not on compensation or other private issues; rather, it will analyze the issues of responsibility, prosecution, and necessary safeguards. The document will consider the most important types of threats that may emerge in veterinary practice such as unauthorized activity, fraud, grossly negligent treatment, abuse of the animal, drug abuse, false reporting, neglecting duties related to zoonosis control, and hindrance of an investigation. The paper will provide a clear and practical framework of reforms needed to improve the current situation.

First of all, the topic is highly topical due to the fact that veterinary care is requested by private clients, farms, breeders, and people working with animals and producing their products. One-time deception or reckless action will cause damage to the owner, but systematic behavior may harm animal populations and consumers. Thus, in such a case, criminal law can serve as a means to protect both animals and citizens while deterring dangerous and deceptive acts, assisting in the enforcement of the legislation, and punishing violations of professional norms.

However, at the same time, it is important to make sure that no veterinarian is unfairly accused of crime just because of some bad luck. The practice of veterinary medicine cannot be equated to exact sciences like mathematics because of its probabilistic nature, unpredictability of animal reaction, and necessity to act quickly during emergencies. Instead of

expanding the criminalization process, the goal is to identify those aspects of the problem that make punishment reasonable.

Reframing Veterinary Malpractice as a Criminal-Law Issue

Jordanian medical liability scholarship suggests that professional error becomes complicated legally in situations where statutory duties, complaint procedures, and fault criteria are ambiguous (Alabdallat & Alsalhi, 2025) [1]. Although taking action within criminal law to address cases of malpractice could result in positive changes in service quality, it could also create pressure on practitioners as long as the thresholds used in it are well-defined and appropriately enforced (Gharaibeh, 2022) [8].

When discussing the criminal law approach to veterinary malpractice, it is worth considering the cases in which the practitioner conducts him-/herself in such a way as to commit a wrongdoing against society as a whole. Being unable to take criminal action after an unsatisfactory surgical procedure, a wrong diagnosis, or ineffective treatment does not mean that there is no need for one. Indeed, being unable to deliver high-quality veterinary services does not necessarily mean negligence and malpractice because there always are uncertainties, lack of complete information, difference among animal types, emergencies, and treatment risks inherent in it. However, one can be charged with criminal conduct only if it is proved that it has been committed intentionally, involves deception, is exceptionally unethical, or puts animals' lives and public health at serious risk.

The consideration of the situation from the criminal-law perspective reveals the privileged position of veterinarians in society. They have access to special knowledge, equipment, drugs, patients' records, and possibilities to explain to the owner the current state of the animal, possible

risks associated with the procedure, and the recommended treatment methods. This list includes activities different from typical disputes between practitioners since they may cause damage and pose a threat to public health and animal welfare.

However, a reasonable model for punishing such professionals should not imply criminalizing legitimate professional conduct, the adverse results of which were unintentional. Thus, in order to avoid unreasonable and unfair actions against practitioners, it should include clearly defined legal elements, strong evidence provided by experts, and adequate reaction to the wrongdoing based on its severity.

A good example of a carefully constructed legal model in the considered case is the model that helps protect the profession from misconducts. Indeed, when rules are clearly formulated, it is easier for ethical veterinarians to understand the boundaries of acceptable practices. Namely, they will know what kinds of conduct to avoid, what records to keep, what obligations to fulfill, and how far their assistants are allowed to go.

Main Criminal-Law Risks in Veterinary Practice

Comparisons have been made between regulatory frameworks in veterinary science, and it has been found that the aspects of licensing, medicines, welfare duties, and enforcement are all interconnected elements of the manner in which veterinary science is governed (Suryawanshi *et al.*, 2024) [17]. The criminal law issues related to veterinary science could be classified under several different headings. This classification would depend not only on the ultimate result or injury suffered by the animal, but on whether the status of the person providing veterinary services was legal, their ethical behavior, the degree to which the profession was practiced in a deviant manner, the prescription of medicines, accurate recording, and public health.

Risk category	Typical conduct	Criminal-law concern	Key evidence
Unlawful practice	Treating animals, performing surgery, issuing certificates, or dispensing medication without authorization.	Protection of professional licensing, public trust, and animal safety.	Licensing status, clinic records, witness statements, prescriptions, advertisements.
Fraudulent service	False diagnosis, charging for fictitious procedures, misrepresenting qualifications, or selling unnecessary treatment.	Deception, financial exploitation, and abuse of professional trust.	Invoices, communications, expert review, treatment notes, owner testimony.
Grossly unsafe treatment	Serious departure from basic veterinary standards, unsafe surgery, unsuitable medication, or ignoring clear emergency signs.	Reckless or grossly negligent creation of serious risk.	Expert reports, clinical timeline, animal condition, procedure records, photographs.
Animal cruelty or inhumane handling	Intentional abuse, unjustified suffering, improper euthanasia, or neglect while under professional control.	Punishment of intentional or reckless harm to animals.	Video, clinic logs, witness evidence, expert welfare assessment.
Drug and biological-product misuse	Improper antibiotics, vaccines, sedatives, controlled products, expired materials, or unsafe storage.	Protection of animals, consumers, and public health.	Stock logs, batch numbers, prescriptions, laboratory results, storage records.
Record falsification and concealment	Changing files, deleting notes, issuing false certificates, or hiding complications.	Integrity of evidence and obstruction of accountability.	Digital audit trails, original records, copies, staff statements, timestamps.
Disease-control breach	Failure to report suspected contagious disease, unsafe disposal, or ignoring quarantine duties.	Risk to public health, agriculture, and animal populations.	Notification records, laboratory tests, inspection notes, outbreak timeline.

1. Unlawful Veterinary Practice

In analyzing the concept of professional malpractice, it appears that criminal culpability requires something other than bad results. Criminal liability necessitates proof that the

person involved has acted in ways that go beyond what is legally permissible (Beni Satria, 2024) [2].

One area where criminal liability is easily justified is unlawful practice. In this regard, it should be noted that the

crime does not depend on whether the procedure conducted by the unqualified person has a positive effect or a negative one. On the contrary, it is determined by the illegal practice of being a professional. By declaring oneself a veterinarian, conducting clinical procedures, issuing health documents for animals, and prescribing treatment, one puts lives of animals at risk and leads the owner to believe he/she is consulting a legitimate professional.

The criminal remedy for the unlawful practice should encompass both direct and indirect actions. Thus, the former includes conducting a surgical procedure, identifying the disease, prescribes medications, or operating without having a professional reason. Meanwhile, indirect actions include the use of another person's license, allowing unlicensed people to work with restricted procedures, advertising the professional services that are actually not available, or using professional stamps and certificates. Furthermore, such criminal remedy should cover clinic-related actions where the management encourages such behavior from its employees.

2. Fraud, Deception, and Abuse of Owner Trust

A good example of the use of certificates, trade routes, and credentials to facilitate the illegal trade of cats and dogs in the EU is provided by the European Commission (2023) [4]. The necessity of trusting information about an animal's health status is especially important in the field of veterinary medicine since the animal itself cannot communicate about the existing symptoms, refuse to undergo a certain procedure, or object to any other veterinarian recommendations. It follows that veterinarians are particularly prone to fraud, which may involve lying about the animal's health problems, suggesting unnecessary procedures for personal profit, billing the clients for services that have not actually been provided, selling fake medications, vaccines, or other veterinary products, and claiming that tests or shots have been given when they have not actually happened.

It is necessary to clearly differentiate between fraudulent actions and mistakes made during diagnosis. In some situations, it is possible to diagnose a disease in an animal that has never existed, and this action in itself cannot be treated as a crime. As such, the investigation of fraud cases should revolve around the veterinarian's knowledge about the problem, verbal statements, veterinary documentation, financial records, and the consistency between recommended and delivered treatments.

3. Gross Negligence, Recklessness, and Serious Animal Harm

The comparative analysis regarding penal liability for malpractice indicates that penalties must be administered whenever extreme fault, high riskiness, or below-standard professionalism can be established (Fekry *et al.*, 2023) [5]. Out of all the different types of malpractice, the hardest to manage is the one in which an animal receives an unsafe treatment because of gross negligence or carelessness as opposed to intentional behavior. In such cases, criminal procedures must be initiated if the minimum professional standards were violated in a manner causing real harm or posing a threat to the life of the patient.

For example, conducting surgical procedures on an animal without proper preparation, failing to notice signs of shock or poisoning, giving an overdose without ensuring the

accuracy of its weight or species, conducting the procedure while leaving an animal under anesthesia unattended, or conducting a procedure while being aware that necessary security measures cannot be taken into account.

The point of criminalization is very crucial since making the threshold too low can lead to overcriminalization of malpractice, while setting it too high can let the worst cases of malpractice go unnoticed. In the proposed model, the evidence provided by experts ought to show that the conduct was not just subpar but so unsafe that it rendered the conduct inconsistent with the bare minimum responsibilities of a professional practitioner. It should be determined considering factors such as the urgency of the case, available resources, animal's status, accepted emergency practices in the field, and safer alternatives.

While recklessness is worse than carelessness, it is important to distinguish between the two. Being reckless implies knowledge of great danger associated with an action, despite which the practitioner still continues the activity and takes no appropriate action. Thus, for example, administering medication that one recognizes is wrong for a particular species will be regarded differently from a practitioner's reasonable mistake of the same nature. Gross negligence might apply in cases when the individual does not consciously intend harm but fails to observe some minimum standards.

4. Animal Cruelty and Inhumane Professional Conduct

Examples of cases related to cruelty to animals indicate the need to differentiate between appropriate professional conduct of veterinarians and their misconduct resulting in criminal charges.

In veterinary practice, there is both an ethical and legal obligation to minimize suffering. It might be necessary to restrain, sedate, isolate, or even euthanize an animal; however, these measures should be undertaken for professional purposes and in a humane way. The issue arises within criminal law when the practitioner acts with an intention to cause harm to the animal, when he or she inflicts excessive suffering or euthanasia, conducts painful procedures unnecessarily, or causes unnecessary suffering.

The problem is aggravated by the fact that certain measures taken by veterinarians might look abusive for a person without specialized knowledge, despite being clinically justified. This means that it should be the experts rather than ordinary people who make judgments regarding welfare criteria, professional justification of the procedure, availability of alternative methods, and mental state of the practitioner. If criminal behavior can be identified, criminal law should definitely act, regardless of any professional status.

5. Misuse of Veterinary Medicines and Biological Products

In addition, poor quality and fraudulent veterinary medicines can be harmful for animals, impede agriculture operations, endanger food supply, promote antimicrobial resistance, and raise other One Health concerns (Vidhamaly *et al.*, 2022) [20]. Post-market surveillance of veterinary medications serves as an indication that strict drug quality controls need to be conducted, correct and complete package labeling needs to be provided, and continuous monitoring needs to take place on existing medicines

circulating on the market (Fimbo *et al.*, 2022) [6]. The growing trend of purchasing veterinary medicines on the Internet or informally creates additional challenges for enforcing regulations because the sale of veterinary medicines may take place through e-commerce sites, social media accounts, and self-medication practices by consumers (Pons-Hernandez *et al.*, 2023) [14].

Unlike common commercial products, veterinary drugs involve antibiotics, tranquilizers, vaccines, antiparasitic medications, hormones, and a number of other biological agents, which may pose certain risks for animal health, food safety, antimicrobial resistance, and public health concerns. Thus, it is crucial that the criminal law provides sufficient tools to penalize deliberate or negligent violation of rules regarding veterinary medicine use in instances of prescribing prohibited medications, dispensing of veterinary drugs without conducting examination, neglecting withdrawal period for meat/milk-bearing animals, incorrect storage of vaccines, as well as using expired or counterfeit products.

Effective control of this issue involves a collaboration of multiple agencies, such as veterinary control organizations, pharmacies' supervisory bodies, agricultural authorities, and public health agencies. Enforcement evidence will be presented by means of purchase receipt, storage documents, batch numbers, prescription records, laboratory tests, as well as records from clinics' inventory system. Digitalization of veterinary medicine inventories will provide valuable traceability as it will show when the medication was purchased, how it was stored, and whether it was administered.

Improperly used veterinary drugs may cause a long-lasting impact on an animal's well-being, including development of antibiotic resistance, decrease of vaccine efficacy, as well as provoking fear and even death in case of inappropriate administration of tranquilizers. Therefore, despite the fact that the criminal law cannot replace specialized regulation of veterinary medicine misuse, it must intervene in cases of deliberate, negligent or repeated misuse, especially when it involves forging documents or profiteering.

6. False Records, Certificates, and Obstruction of Investigation

An analysis of research into the European illegal puppy trade shows that crimes against animals could involve the use of commercial organized networks, misleading documents, and transportation of animals across borders, thus making routine enforcement rather difficult. The aforementioned challenges are outlined by Maher and Wyatt (2021) [11]. At the core of veterinarians' legal liability are the essential documentation records such as clinical records, vaccines, animal movements, laboratory results, and treatment charges. If any such records were manipulated, there will be negative impacts extending beyond the animal. Falsifying records undermines disease control measures, disrupts import/export controls, endangers food-chain safety, and obstructs judicial proceedings. As such, criminal law reform should ensure that intentional falsification of records, backdating, record deletion, misleading certifications, and record concealment are considered as independent grounds for accountability.

The modern veterinary practice involves the use of electronic file keeping, messengers, pictures, laboratory software applications, and cloud storage systems. While

these innovations have made new evidence collection possible, there are new threats associated with the manipulation of records. Any future legislation regulating veterinary professionals should include rules requiring minimal obligations on record preservation, including reliable audit trails and procedures for evidence preservation in case of complaints filed. It also needs to protect medical practitioners from unfounded accusations by requiring that the evidence was legally obtained, stored and interpreted only by authorized personnel.

Falsifying records could reveal more about the incident than a mere misconduct. An honest veterinary practitioner would report the occurrence to authorities immediately and preserve all relevant documentation. On the contrary, a practitioner manipulating the evidence in the form of records, instructing the staff to delete messages and manipulate the drug records or issue an inaccurate certificate will most likely do so because of the knowledge of the wrong doing. Therefore, the protection of veterinary records should be one of the crucial aspects of the criminal law reforms.

7. Public-Health and Disease-Control Offences

The Bio-Crime approach underscores the importance of cooperation between veterinary public health specialists, judicial authorities, police officers, and customs staff whenever animal trafficking, zoonosis, or other biological threats are involved (Zucca *et al.*, 2020) [23]. Under these conditions, it is highly important to consider the responsibility of veterinarians under criminal law in cases where their misconduct affects public health. For example, a veterinarian might be faced with contagious disease cases in animals, zoonotic risks to people, hazards in products from animals, and incidents that necessitate reporting to authorities. If the failure to report, cover up the disease, dispose of contaminated material unsafely, or provide fake health certificates occurs, the damage will affect more than one farm but also consumers and communities. Thus, the protected interest will be wider than only animal welfare but also public safety and health.

In relation to offenses concerning disease control, care should be taken in drafting them. It would not be appropriate to penalize a veterinarian simply because of difficulty in diagnosing a disease but rather because of his or her failure to notice symptoms, ignore reporting requirements, conceal suspicion of infection, or assist the owner to evade control measures. The seriousness of the situation should be an additional impetus to prompt and detailed reporting, recording, and multilateral cooperation.

In addition, the criminal-law system should include provisions against non-compliance with inspection, obstruction of sampling, improper use of quarantine documentation, and failure to ensure the security of contaminated objects. These violations appear relatively trivial; however, they might seriously impede the public health response. In addition, veterinarians are usually responsible for detecting problems and should be encouraged by rules on criminal law.

Methodological Approach

Literature devoted to veterinary-expert issues recognizes the legitimacy and necessity of adopting a doctrinal and analytical approach to research since technical legal disputes presuppose analysis of professional standards, obligations of

the expert, and legal character of the veterinary expertise (Dzikowski, 2023) [3]. The emergence of veterinary forensics is explained by the fact that crimes involving animals need to be substantiated by scientific documentation, interpretation, and legally recognized proof (Parry & Stoll, 2020) [13]. The minimum requirements for the clinical veterinary forensic exam include live animal examination, documentation, proper evidence preservation, report writing, and testimony by professionals as integral parts of crimes against animals investigation (Touroo *et al.*, 2020) [18].

This research employs the analytical and doctrinal approach along with the reformist one. Thus, the analysis will cover the matter under consideration within the framework of the theory of criminal law rather than civil liability theory. The method will emphasize the structure of offenses, prohibited actions, mental element, the relevance of proof provided by an expert, criteria of prosecution, and guarantees necessary for avoiding unreasonable prosecution of a veterinarian due to the lack of professional competence.

The research will focus on four key problems. First, what types of veterinary misconduct may be subject to criminal prosecution? Second, which criteria should be satisfied for imposing criminal sanctions on veterinarians, managers of clinics, and people lacking necessary qualifications? Third,

which evidence should be collected for distinguishing between misconduct and the clinical dilemma? Fourth, what legislative and institutional changes are needed to make criminal responsibility reasonable and proportionate?

The study will be conducted in the form of a legal-policy paper that seeks to consider the topic of criminal responsibility in terms of public policy aimed at ensuring public interest, promoting ethical principles, and protecting animal welfare. Such an approach seems to be suitable for studying veterinary malpractice since the problem at stake relates to moral, rather than economic aspect of the situation.

Elements of Criminal Responsibility in Veterinary Malpractice

For the establishment of a consistent criminal law scheme, the presence of well-articulated legal elements is necessary. The reason why legal elements play such an important role lies in their significance when it comes to informing various parties involved in the process of the necessary facts to be proved during every particular case. In doing so, the elements allow achieving an accurate and objective understanding of the truth of the case at hand. Additionally, the elements make it less likely that criminal actions would be used to react to every negative treatment outcome.

Element	Meaning in veterinary cases	Questions for investigation	Safeguard against overreach
Legal duty	The accused had a professional, licensing, reporting, handling, or recordkeeping duty.	Was the person authorized? What role did the person assume? What duties applied?	Do not impose duties that were not reasonably connected to the role.
Prohibited conduct	An act or omission such as illegal treatment, false certification, unsafe procedure, or concealment.	What exactly was done or not done? Was it restricted, dishonest, or unsafe?	Define the conduct precisely.
Mental element	Intent, knowledge, recklessness, or gross negligence depending on the offence.	Did the accused know the risk? Was deception deliberate? Was the departure extreme?	Do not treat honest error as intentional wrongdoing.
Causation or serious risk	The conduct caused harm or created a legally significant danger.	Did the conduct contribute to death, suffering, disease spread, or public-health risk?	Consider pre-existing illness and unavoidable treatment risks.
Evidence	Proof drawn from experts, records, witnesses, digital files, and laboratory findings.	Is the evidence reliable, complete, and legally obtained?	Require expert review before technical allegations are prosecuted.
Public interest	The case is serious enough for public prosecution.	Does the case involve danger, dishonesty, repeated conduct, or institutional failure?	Avoid using prosecution for minor disputes or uncertain outcomes.

1. Legal Duty and Professional Position

The criminal liability rests on the presence of the clearly-defined duty. In the context of a veterinarian practice, the duty might stem from a number of conditions: it might concern the licensing of a practitioner, the assumption of the treatment process, the running of a veterinary clinic, controlling the drugs used in the treatment process, holding certain papers, reporting diseases, etc. In case, if an individual has assumed the treatment voluntarily, then he or she cannot refuse to shoulder responsibility for safety issues. The same concerns the owners of veterinary clinics organizing veterinary treatment processes: they should not allow any harmful systems to operate within the clinic. It is very important to establish the type of duty that should be performed.

2. Prohibited Conduct

Is the prescribed medication improper? Has any record been falsified? Has the reporting obligation regarding a particular disease been disregarded? Was any animal intentionally injured or maltreated? Precision is required due to a significant impact that a criminal charge might have on the

respondent's reputation, liberty, professional standing, and relationship with the community. Prohibited conduct might relate both to an action and an omission. An action can include the administration of a harmful substance, issuance of a false certificate, conducting an unapproved procedure, or providing false explanations. Omission examples include failure to monitor anesthesia, failure to report a potentially diseased animal, failure to keep accurate records, and failure to separate diseased animals when the duty to act exists.

3. Mental Element: Intent, Knowledge, Recklessness, and Gross Negligence

Mental element is an integral part of any criminal offense. Intentional conduct may be represented by intentional maltreatment of an animal, knowledge of the falseness of a certificate, intentional deceit, and intentional concealing of records. Knowledge can be found if the professional knew about an expiring drug, about an unqualified person, and falseness of a certificate and proceeded nevertheless. Recklessness arises when an individual is aware of the existence of a serious risk, which he or she chooses to ignore. Gross negligence can be said about an exceptionally

serious departure from the minimum standards of professional practice. It is important to maintain the distinction between these categories. A criminal-law approach needs to differentiate negative consequences, honest mistake, negligence, recklessness, and intent. Otherwise, the resulting legal regime will be either inadequate for handling dangerous conduct or excessively harsh towards professionals who had to make reasonable decisions in difficult conditions. An expert opinion will always be needed to assess the correctness of dosages, surgical interventions, anesthetic practice, diagnoses, and disease control practice.

4. Causation, Harm, and Serious Risk

In veterinary cases causation can become complicated because animals may be sick, injured, under stress, or exposed to potential risks prior to the treatment. In a criminal-law analysis it will be necessary to determine whether the alleged conduct played a significant role in causing harm or in creating a risk that the statute was designed to address. One will need to provide a detailed description of the state of affairs, of decisions made, of drugs and procedures employed, of monitoring that took place, and of ultimate consequences. In some cases, proof of harm will be necessary – death, illness, disease transmission, or contamination of animal products, for example. In other situations, the offense could be based on proof of a serious risk in disease control practices, false certification, or improper drug usage. For example, the falsity of a vaccination certificate may create a serious risk even if no animal is ill. Criminal statutes should specify which offenses must prove actual harm and which are meant to prohibit the creation of a serious risk.

5. Evidence and Expert Proof

Postmortem studies of suspected dog and cat abuse show how findings in forensic research, reports issued by animal protection agencies, and expert pathology may help transform allegations of animal maltreatment into relevant evidence (Rebollada-Merino *et al.*, 2020) [15]. Modern literature on veterinary-forensic pathology highlights the significance of necropsy findings, toxicological examinations, injury interpretations, and reconstruction of events in criminal investigations related to animal cruelty and medical malpractice (Gilbert *et al.*, 2026) [9]. Evidence-led approach should be followed in veterinary criminal-law cases. The best evidence may include patient treatment records, drug administration log, imaging and lab tests, invoices, clinical photos, and expert opinions. Digital evidence should be acquired promptly because digital messages and files can quickly disappear. Emotional reaction to the animal's suffering and owner's rage are natural but cannot substitute for evidence of criminal conduct. When an expert opinion is involved, a proper explanation will be needed for the court. The expert should clarify the relevant professional standard, the range of choices, significance of departure from the norm, effects of the conduct, and its avoidability.

Discussion: Building a Criminal-Law Model for Jordan

Some scientific studies show that poor reporting systems as well as low capability among practitioners in identifying counterfeit animal medicines might obstruct implementation if such issues are not tackled by reinforcing documentation and communication procedures (Mekasha *et al.*, 2024) [12].

In using the criminal law against veterinary malpractice cases in Jordan, there are two key principles which should guide such practice. First, it is vital to safeguard the interests of the general public through taking strong measures in any form of illegal conduct. This involves acts of fraud, intentional harm, misusing dangerous medicines, forgery, and disregard of disease control measures. The second principle concerns professional fairness since, like all medical practice, veterinary practice necessarily entails uncertainties, lack of information, emergencies, and risks. Any good system of criminal law must deter criminal activity without rendering the entire practice of medicine a crime itself.

What makes enforcement of existing regulations challenging now is that the issue of veterinary wrongdoing can arise within multiple regulatory regimes simultaneously. Thus, depending on the specific circumstances, a case could involve professional discipline, consumer protection, animal welfare, pharmaceutical control, food safety, and public health. Where the regulatory frameworks concerned are poorly coordinated, enforcement will inevitably become inconsistent. A violation that deserves prosecution might be treated simply as a matter of professional misconduct, and vice versa. Establishing an independent body and adopting relevant legislation would bring greater certainty as to which categories of misconduct qualify for criminal prosecution and what kind of evidence needs to be presented in each of these categories.

The other key consideration is that of involving experts into the process properly. Malpractice lawsuits within the field of veterinary medicine are extremely specialized legal actions, and it might be difficult for non-medical prosecutors and judges to determine if a particular dose of drugs is dangerous enough, if the procedure was conducted in accordance with the accepted norms and professional guidelines, if the infection could have been reasonably predicted and expected, and whether or not there are grounds to believe that an animal's death was caused by some of the treatments. At this point, it makes sense to invite the panel of experts at the earliest possible stage. However, this panel should not become a decision-maker, but just provide their expert analysis of the case and interpret the information available from various sources.

Furthermore, the use of digital documentation seems to be indispensable when dealing with the issue of veterinary malpractice. Everything, including the treatment, diagnosis, medical and laboratory records, consent form and logs of the use of different drugs, medical imaging, correspondence between all interested parties, etc., should be recorded and maintained digitally. This will be advantageous to both the owner of the animal and the pet itself, and to the physician. Indeed, if all the data is kept correctly, a veterinarian will be able to prove what disease the patient had, what kind of dangers this condition posed, what treatment was offered and why the current outcome took place.

Still, it is important to understand that criminal penalties are extremely harsh and that the enforcement system should follow the rule of proportionality. If one is faced with the issue of relatively insignificant medical errors and omissions, it is better to opt for an education program and proper administrative control mechanisms. However, if a case deals with continuous fraud, deliberate acts of malpractice, unauthorized and illegal practices, neglecting some diseases and so on, more severe measures should be taken.

Conclusion

Jordan's first step should be to create a stringent criminal law regime that focuses on severe violations. Jordan needs a legal system that does not consider the lack of provision of treatments as sufficient grounds for initiating criminal charges against someone. The proposed criminal regime should be designed to punish only the violations that are serious in nature and obvious to everyone.

Similar to what was done in relation to the Veterinary Legislation Support Programme, measures need to be put in place to ensure that veterinarians are not criminally charged unnecessarily. Criminal charges should only follow upon confirmation that there exists a specific offense, solid evidence, expert opinion, and in the general public interest. At no time should the failure to provide care to animals be a ground to pursue criminal actions.

There needs to be an establishment of mandatory veterinary record keeping in all cases. Treatment records, consent form records, prescription records, laboratory results records, and certificate records need to be required of all parties involved in such services. More control needs to be exercised over veterinary medicines through measures such as stringent prescription rules, veterinary medicines control, expiry date monitoring, anti-fake medicine measures, and batch registration of medicines. Reference can be made to the UAE 2025 Federal Decree-Law No. 8 of 2025 on Veterinary Medical Products in establishing the statutory control of veterinary pharmaceutical products and establishments (United Arab Emirates Government, 2025) [19].

There need to be penalties that commensurate the offense committed. Relatively minor cases may be subject to fines, warnings, training programs, confiscations, and even limitations on their right to engage in the profession. However, imprisonment needs to follow only if the offense is of a serious nature such as deliberate harm, fraud, organized illicit practice, hiding diseases, or threat to public health.

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