

**TABLE 1.1**  
Types of veterinary referral collaborations

Type of referral	Description of referral	Fee charged?
<b>General collaborative conversation</b>	Phone, video meeting, or written (e.g., email, text) conversations between two veterinary professionals intended to facilitate collaboration and exchange of general, non-specific information between veterinary professionals at different practices. General collaborative conversations do not address specific patients or cases unless the conversation serves as preamble to initiating a hands-on patient referral with the specialist.	✗
<b>Professional-to-professional consultation</b>	Phone, video meeting, or written (e.g., email, text) conversations between two veterinary professionals, whereby the general practitioner seeks advice from the veterinary specialist about a patient or case. Consultations enable virtual collaborative care for a patient under the VCPR of the consultee. The veterinary professionals may decide during the consultation that a hands-on referral is the best option for the patient and client.	✓ Note: Some professional-to-professional consultations may not be fee-based (e.g., consultations with clinical specialists at pharmaceutical companies regarding diagnostic tests or products).
<b>Hands-on referral</b>	A hands-on referral is a joint decision between the PCT and the SCT for a patient requiring help with a specific condition. Upon accepting the referral, the SCT establishes a VCPR and assumes the role of directing veterinarian for the patient for a particular health concern. At the end of the referral timeline and process, the PCT resumes the role of directing veterinarian.	✓

PCT, primary care team; SCT, specialty care team; VCPR, veterinary-client-patient relationship

**The 2025 AAHA Referral Guidelines are available at [aaha.org/referral](https://aaha.org/referral).**

These guidelines were prepared by a Task Force of experts convened by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and were subjected to a formal peer-review process. This document is intended as a guideline only, not an AAHA standard of care. These guidelines and recommendations should not be construed as dictating an exclusive protocol, course of treatment, or procedure. Variations in practice may be warranted based on the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to each individual practice setting. ©2025 AAHA.

