

vetregister

The newsletter of the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Queensland.

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What's new

Compulsory recording of Continuing Veterinary Education (page 3)
– Guidelines enclosed.

Introduction of ban on tail docking of dogs
27 October 2003 – See enclosure.

Notice of Board Election

Notice is hereby given that the triennial election of two members of the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Queensland is to be held on 19 February 2004.

Nominations of registered veterinary surgeons genuinely interested in election to the Veterinary Surgeons Board for a three year term are invited.

Closing date for nominations is noon on Monday 15 December 2003. Nomination forms are available from the Board office.

If at the close of nominations there are more than two candidates nominated, a ballot paper will be issued to each registrant in mid-January.

Board members' commitments include but are not limited to, attendance at day time meetings in Brisbane at 6-7 weekly intervals with prior study of agenda papers, regular telephone and email communications between meetings, special assignments including undertaking inspections of premises intended for use as veterinary premises and conducting interviews as required, and representing the Board on various committees of the profession, industry and government and at seminars, meetings, forums etc.

Please note that legislative amendments (2001) reduced the number of elective members on the Board from three to two. The Minister will nominate one other veterinary surgeon member after the election results are known. This will ensure that an essential balance of large and small animal practitioners is maintained.

2004 Registration Renewal

Renewal of your Queensland registration as a veterinary surgeon (and veterinary specialist if applicable) must be finalised by 31 January 2004.

Failure to renew by the due date may result in immediate removal of your name from the Register with a resulting inability to legally practise, or purchase scheduled drugs and poisons. Logically, professional Indemnity insurance would not apply to a person who was not registered at the time of a disputed procedure.

Registration renewal notices will be posted to all registrants in the first week of **December**. Payment may be made by credit card, cheque or money order either by return post, facsimile or in person. On line and BPay payment options are not available due to the requirement for essential eligibility information to be entered on the returnable renewal notice and change of particulars form and because of cost effective processing issues.

Up to Date Postal Address

It is essential that the Board office has your current postal address recorded. Unless you otherwise advise in the meantime, your registration renewal notice will be forwarded to the same address as used for this newsletter.

No payment extensions can be granted in cases where receipt of renewal notices is delayed due to an unnotified change of address.

Receipts

Payment receipts will be forwarded only in cases where the appropriate box has been ticked on the renewal form.

A certificate confirming registration status can be obtained by contacting the Board office at any time throughout the year.

Option to Purchase Copy of Roll

This option will no longer be included on renewal notices.

The Register of Veterinary Surgeons can now be searched on the Board website – www.vsb.qld.gov.au

The Roll of Veterinary Surgeons effective 31 December 2003 will be gazetted and printed in February 2004 and registrants wishing to purchase a copy should submit a request to the Board office (telephone, fax, email or post).

Change of Board Chairperson

After eleven years in the position, **Dr Russell Rogers BVSc MVSc** has resigned from his position as Board Chairperson. He will continue his employment in the Department of Primary Industries as Principal Veterinary Officer, Laboratory Development.

Dr Rogers represented the Board diligently and conscientiously during his term of office. During the 2001 National Competition Review of the Queensland Veterinary Surgeons Act he argued strongly for the retention of an offence clause prohibiting practice by non-veterinarians and retention of regulatory control over the standard of veterinary premises.

On a national level Dr Rogers proved to be a strong advocate for the Queensland Board on the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council. His representation of Queensland in the deliberations on a number of contentious issues which have had the potential to have adverse effects on the delivery of veterinary services to the community, and on the profession, has been strong and unyielding and sensible outcomes have resulted.

Dr Ian Douglas BVSc MSc MACVSc was appointed to the position of Board Chairperson from 1 October 2003. As required of the Board chair position, Dr Douglas is a senior veterinary officer of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries.

Dr Douglas graduated with honours from the University of Queensland in 1975, gained his Bachelor of Economics in 1983, a post-graduate degree of Master of Science at James Cook University in 1985 and was admitted by examination in veterinary epidemiology as a Member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists in 1996.

Dr Douglas has extensive experience in the legislative area related to endemic and emergency disease management, and with the profession through his continuous involvement with the AVA throughout his career culminating in his Presidency of the Queensland Division in 1999/2000.



Consumer Representation on Board

Provision was made in the 2001 amendments to the Veterinary Surgeons Act for the expansion of the Board membership from five to six to include a non-veterinarian representing the interests of consumers.

Mrs Glenda Whitmore was nominated as a suitable candidate for the Board position and was subsequently appointed for a three year term from April 2003.

Mrs Whitmore was identified as a person with the qualities that would best serve consumer interests and provide the Board with responsible service. She is self-employed in the companion animal industry, has a balanced and rational approach to the responsibilities of both animal owners and veterinary providers and is herself a small animal owner. Her background includes a position with an animal welfare society and representation on state and local government animal welfare review groups and she has had general nursing and attendant experience in a veterinary practice.

Continuing Veterinary Education (CVE) Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

A new provision of the recently introduced Queensland Veterinary Surgeons Regulation 2002 (Section 26) is that veterinarians must now keep a formal record of all continuing education they undertake. The record must be kept in an approved form and for three (3) years from the day the continuing education is undertaken.

Guidelines for the recording of CVE/CPD by all veterinarians in Australia and New Zealand were adopted at the 2003 meeting of the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council and will be introduced uniformly in all registration jurisdictions. The recording system has been operating in Victoria and New Zealand for several years. The replacement of the previously expired Queensland regulations gave the Queensland Board the opportunity to include the requirement for keeping CVE/CPD records in legislation. Other jurisdictions will follow suit as the legislative opportunity arises.

CVE/CPD units recorded while practising in one jurisdiction will be transportable to any other Australasian jurisdiction where the veterinarian practises.

Please note that for the immediate future the undertaking of CVE/CPD is not a prerequisite for annual renewal of registration as a veterinarian. Similarly it is not a prerequisite for those veterinarians re-entering the profession after a lengthy absence, although the Board will be seeking a review of that situation as soon as the opportunity arises.

The Need for CVE/CPD

CVE/CPD is the personal obligation of all responsible veterinarians and should be seen as the continuous progression of capability and competence. Undertaking CVE/CPD helps the individual to keep up to date with the continual changes and developments in knowledge, skills and operating environments.

Individuals are expected to review their CVE/CPD needs regularly, and plan ahead so that they can make the most of development opportunities as they arise. Many veterinarians choose to attend external courses to keep themselves up to date, but participating in more informal networks and in-house training is also of great value. The opportunities offered by working on new projects, or through involvement in research should also be recognised as adding to professional development.

CVE/CPD is an important asset not only in maintaining competence but also in assisting veterinarians who are re-entering the workforce after a period of absence or are changing disciplines within the profession. It is particularly essential for maintaining speciality competence.

Keeping a CVE/CPD record can help individuals focus attention on their own learning needs, and can help to provide reassurance to the animal owning public that their practitioner of choice takes seriously the need to maintain professional competence.

General Requirements

The essence of the recording requirements is simplicity and individual responsibility.

The combined veterinary boards do not at present accredit any CVE/CPD courses, conferences or journals. The recording guidelines are based on time spent and require CVE/CPD to be recorded progressively in units and maintained in a dedicated easily readable format for a period of not less than three (3) years.

In any complaint enquiry where the Board must assess the professional competence of a veterinarian, the veterinarian concerned will be required to produce his/her record of CVE/CPD

undertaken. The person will be expected to address any view held by the Board that the failure to maintain the required level of CVE/CPD was a contributing factor to the outcome of the case in question.

CVE/CPD that is relevant and of benefit to any aspect of the veterinarian's professional life may be considered as appropriate and recordable under the guidelines.

The Board reserves the right in future years to incorporate a CVE/CPD unit tally section on the yearly registration form for the veterinarian to record the number of points accrued in the previous year. This would be an evaluation device for the Board to determine the level of compliance.

Review

The recording guidelines are very much a working document subject to review by the combined boards on an annual basis. The various forms of CVE/CPD and the units allocated will be subject to continuous review to ensure they are comprehensive and equitable. To this end the Board will always welcome constructive comments or suggestions that members of the profession wish to raise as to how the recording system can be improved.

Information Access

The guidelines and sample record format are enclosed with this newsletter and can be accessed on the Board website: www.vsb.qld.gov.au

Comments/suggestions/queries can be forwarded to the Board's official address or by email to: vsbqld@dpi.qld.gov.au.

Approval of Veterinary Premises

The statutory requirements for approval of veterinary premises have been well documented.

Board approval must be sought if any person is seeking to:

- conduct veterinary practice from premises not previously approved as veterinary premises;
- relocate approved veterinary practice premises;
- designate as veterinary premises, premises where veterinary services have previously

been delivered under the name of a veterinary surgeon;

- upgrade approved veterinary premises to a higher level of practice ie consulting rooms to surgery/clinic or surgery/clinic to hospital/centre.

The guidelines that apply to the approval of veterinary premises and the sale of veterinary premises can be accessed on the Board website.

Uniformity of Standards

Criticism is often directed by practitioners towards older dated practices where it is perceived by them that the premises utilised do not meet the current minimum standards that are imposed on newly established practices.

The Board does not have the resources to inspect all veterinary premises approved prior to the legislative changes of 2001. Nor does it have the statutory authority to revoke any approvals granted before the 2001 amendments unless a condition of approval has been breached.

However initiatives introduced by the Board to address the standards of older practices when there is a change of ownership are proving to be successful. A document of Board approval of the premises in the name of the purchaser of a practice will not be issued unless the purchaser assures the Board that the minimum standards are met.

Purchasers therefore have a vested interest in either ensuring the vendor brings the premises up to standard before sale, or negotiating a price which will allow the upgrade of the premises after sale. In some cases, sale contracts have had this condition included.

The Board can inspect premises randomly or as a result of concerns expressed by clients or employees. Premises for which a submission for re-approval has been sought may also be inspected. A number of such inspections have been conducted during 2003 with resulting upgrades in the standards being made.

The ultimate long-term goal which will be achieved through the combination of government regulation and self regulation is that all premises will ultimately meet the post 2001 minimum standards.

More – www.vsb.qld.gov.au (veterinary Premises).

Signage at Premises

Practitioners are reminded of the following regulatory requirement for signage at veterinary premises.

Regulation 24

Veterinary surgeon to display a sign:

1. A veterinary surgeon must display a sign including the following information at veterinary premises where the veterinary surgeon practises veterinary science-
 - (a) the veterinary surgeon's name;
 - (b) whether the veterinary surgeon is a veterinary surgeon or veterinary specialist;
 - (c) the veterinary surgeon's qualifications as recorded in-
 - (i) the Register of Veterinary Surgeons; or
 - (ii) if the veterinary surgeon is a veterinary specialist– the Register of Veterinary Specialists.
2. However, a veterinary surgeon is not required to comply with subsection (1) for premises where the veterinary surgeon practises veterinary science in a temporary capacity, or in locum tenens, for not more than 30 days.

The Board has determined that the sign must be displayed prominently at the premises entry in conjunction with details of the days and hours of attendance and the telephone number or details for gaining out-of-hours veterinary attention.

Continuing Board approval for use of veterinary premises is dependant on the display of the required signage.

Performance of Acts of Veterinary Science

The Board website (Guidelines – Policy General) addresses in detail what constitutes an act of veterinary science. It lists some common procedures that are not deemed to be veterinary science, and husbandry procedures that are acts of veterinary science but have an exemption attached enabling non-veterinarians to perform them.

The Board's approach to prosecution of non-veterinarians performing acts of veterinary science for a fee or reward was documented in the Vet Register newsletter of December 2001 which can also be viewed on the website (Newsletters).

Basically, prosecutions by the Board will proceed if it is the public interest to do so, or if a complaint from a consumer of the service has been lodged, or if an animal's welfare has been adversely affected and the provisions of the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 do not apply, all of which are incumbent on the required standard of evidence being available. An example of a case where it was in the public interest to proceed was the prosecution in 2002 of a person holding himself out to be a veterinarian while performing small animal vaccinations, illegally obtaining S4 drugs and performing a castration which resulted in the death of a dog.

Past experience has demonstrated that prosecutions pursued for reasons other than those aforementioned are unproductive and of no deterrent value as no convictions or fines have been recorded. It is simply not an option to mount a prosecution in the public court system against every non-veterinarian who delivers a veterinary service.

As a matter of interest, Queensland is one of the few jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand where the prosecution of non-veterinarians is still possible under the Veterinary Surgeons legislation. The Queensland Board fought hard to retain this ability.

Current Topical Issues

Artificial Insemination is an act of veterinary science. An exemption applies to cattle, deer, goats, pigs and sheep which permits non-veterinarians to perform AI. No such exemption applies to horses.

AI of horses when performed for fee or reward should be conducted by a veterinary surgeon.

The potential disadvantages of non-veterinarians performing the procedure on horses are well documented in the AVA Policy Compendium and include spread of disease, injury, loss of semen quality and genetic defects. There is also the consideration that in optimal circumstances, particularly with horses of high value, restricted drugs should be utilised. Where restricted drugs are not utilised, repeated insemination can result in sperm antibody induced infertility.

The position in other states is – Victoria – not regulated, New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia – operators licensed under Artificial Breeding of Stock Acts, Tasmania – exempted.

Dental Procedures - With the exception of scaling, cleaning and polishing teeth, all dental procedures are deemed to be acts of veterinary science. An exemption has been given to the filing and rasping of horses' teeth.

Membership admission by examination and training in veterinary dentistry is available from the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists. A Diplomate of the American Veterinary Dental College is an eligible qualification for specialist registration in Australia. Any claim that dentistry is not an act of veterinary science should therefore be immediately dismissed.

Veterinary nurses are not formally trained to undertake dentistry procedures other than removal of tartar and polishing. Dentistry is not a routine procedure that a veterinary nurse may carry out under veterinary supervision.

Animal Physiotherapy – Introduction of a formal training course in animal physiotherapy for registered physiotherapists at the University of Queensland Gatton Campus has created considerable discussion.

Complete details of the course and its aims, and the conditions under which animal physiotherapists will be expected to practice were explained in the February 2003 edition of this newsletter. For details go to the Board website (Newsletters).

Report on Misconduct Proceedings

A condition of the conduct of a veterinary house call practice is that general anaesthetic procedures may only be performed at Board approved veterinary premises.

Veterinarians wishing to establish veterinary house call practices must seek prior Board approval by way of a submission addressing each of the standards that apply.

The provision of false or misleading information to the Board represents professional misconduct.

In October 2002, Board approval was given to a south-east Queensland veterinarian to conduct a house call service in his local area subject to compliance with the documented conditions and terms of his submission.

In January 2003 the Board gained information that the veterinarian concerned had spayed a cat at his residence, such premises not being Board approved as veterinary premises. The owner was concerned with a discharge from the suture line post-surgery and antibiotic treatment was sought from an approved practice with a good result. Board enquiries revealed that the cat had not gained full consciousness when released into the care of the owner after the desexing procedure.

Professional misconduct proceedings were initiated against the veterinarian for (1) attempting to mislead the Board by the giving of an assurance that general anaesthetic procedures would not be performed at unapproved premises and (2) that he was negligent in the practice of his profession by releasing a cat from his care when not recovered after surgery.

The veterinarian was found guilty on both counts. He expressed remorse for his actions and gave further undertakings relating to the conduct of general anaesthetic procedures.

A penalty of \$200.00 was imposed, in default a suspension from the Register.

The Board considered a monetary penalty was warranted to emphasise the seriousness of not being honest with the Board and as a message that the welfare of an animal should not be compromised merely for the benefit of a client.

Radiation Licences Radiation Safety Act 1999

Use Licence – Any veterinary surgeon who intends to use x-ray equipment must hold a use licence.

Possession licensees must always ensure that all users of their x-ray equipment are appropriately licensed.

Contact Radiation Health +61 7 3406 8018.

Possession Licence – Any veterinary surgeon who owns or intends to own x-ray equipment (including units no longer used) must hold a possession licence. A possession licence can be granted to an individual or a company. An application must be accompanied by the proposed radiation safety and protection plan.

More: www.vsb.qld.gov.au (Legislation) or Contact Radiation Health +61 7 3406 8018. Email: radiation_health.qld.gov.au.



Proposed RSPCA Mobile Desexing Unit

The Veterinary Surgeons Board of Queensland has long opposed the performance of surgical procedures from mobile surgical units as it believes the provision of a competent standard of practice could not always be assured. Only large expensive mobile units could physically meet the minimum requirements of veterinary premises and of major concern is the ability of a mobile unit to provide continuous post-operative and emergency care.

RSPCA Queensland is planning to launch a semi-trailer sized mobile desexing and adoption unit in the near future. It is understood the mobile unit will be for the benefit of means-tested owners and will predominately be a cat practice. It will not be designated as a 'veterinary' unit.

The RSPCA has demonstrated a willingness to comply with any regulatory requirements that may apply to the delivery of a veterinary service from a mobile unit and has provided the Board with preliminary construction plans for the mobile unit for perusal. The Board believes it will be given an opportunity to inspect the unit before it becomes operational.

RSPCA advises that veterinary staff for the unit will be sourced from veterinarians selected after a public tender process. The Board thought it important prior to the beginning of any tender process for practitioners to be aware that the employed registered veterinary surgeon will be the responsible person in terms of the Veterinary Surgeons Act in the event of any grievance lodged by a client of an RSPCA mobile desexing unit.

As a non-veterinary entity operating a non-veterinary designated unit the RSPCA would be the responsible party if a non-veterinarian was employed to undertake the veterinary procedures, or an employed veterinary surgeon was instructed to practise in a way that would be grounds for professional misconduct.

The Board would expect any RSPCA employed veterinarian practising from a mobile unit to be immediately contactable by a client after a mobile unit has left a location and that the client would be provided with details of the after-hours number and address where veterinary assistance would be available in the same locality if emergency post-operative care was required.

The Board considers it important that veterinarians are aware of these factors before considering tendering for a contract.

Use of Term 'specialist' - 'specialise'

It is opportune to remind the profession of the legal restrictions placed on the use of the word 'specialist' or derivatives of the word.

There are currently 65 veterinary specialists registered in Queensland and the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936 provides that only those 65 can use the title 'veterinary specialist' or a derivative, or words used in a context that indicates the person is a veterinary specialist.

This provision affords the public and referring veterinarians the ability to identify a practitioner who has undertaken post-graduate training and examination and has worked at least three years in the particular field of veterinary science the client wishes to utilise.

While some practitioners may consider they are entitled to say they 'specialise' in a particular field because the bulk of their practice has been devoted to that area over a period of time, there is no means to validate that claim. It is merely the opinion of that individual. The level of experience and competence of the person has not been formally evaluated.

Alternatives to the word 'specialise' should be used to demonstrate past experience and dedicated service eg 20 years experience equine AI; special interest in equine AI; practice dedicated to equine AI; expertise in equine AI.

(Note: nothing in the legislation prevents the use of the word 'expert' although the qualification to use it is also only a self-evaluation.)

It is the responsibility of practitioners to ensure that clients where referring to the veterinarian engaged by them, do not inadvertently place their vet in breach of the legislation through the mistaken use of the words 'specialist' or 'specialise' on their commercial or society websites, or in brochures and other forms of promotional advertising. Non-veterinarians are not expected to be aware of the restrictions placed on veterinarians in this respect.

Specialist practices must also ensure that in advertising, directories and signage the names of the specialist veterinarians engaged by the practice are listed separately to the names of the non-specialist practitioners.



Introducing the website of the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Queensland:

www.vsb.qld.gov.au

The site enables a search of the Queensland Register of Veterinary Surgeons and provides an information service to consumers and veterinarians on aspects of the conduct of veterinary science in Queensland both regulated and unregulated.

Home page - Incorporating new announcements and information from DPI of relevance to veterinarians.

Contact Us - Full contact details.

About the Veterinary Surgeons Board - Role, composition and staff of Board.

Search the Register – Enables a search of the Queensland Register of Veterinary Surgeons under name, certificate or location; confirms registration status of veterinary surgeon employees and locums; schedule drug providers can confirm registration of client; consumers can search for veterinarian of choice.

Relevant Legislation – what you need to know about:

- Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936
- Veterinary Surgeons Regulation 2002
- Animal Care and Protection Act 2001
- Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996
- Radiation Safety Act 1999

Guidelines – Information on frequently asked questions in respect to the regulation of the profession in general, guidelines for practitioners, standards of house call practices, student lecture notes and AVA code of conduct.

Registration Information – Information on the process of registration as a veterinary surgeon and veterinary specialist in various categories, restoration to the Register, annual renewal of registration, fees, locum agencies.

Veterinary Premises – Guide to gaining Board approval of veterinary premises, terms of sale of veterinary practices, signage at premises.

Continuing Veterinary Education

- Requirements for Recording Continuing Education Undertaken
- Guidelines
- Sample Record Form

Fees – Current statutory fees administered by Board.

Forms – Premises Application, Surgeon Application, CVE/CPD Recording Form, Payment Form.

Complaints – Outline of Board complaint process for consumers of veterinary services. Copy of AVA Code of Conduct.

Links – Links to registration boards in Australia and overseas, legislation, professional associations, veterinary schools, government and directories.

Newsletters – Past issues of Veterinary Register newsletter and selected articles.

Board Contact Details are:

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Telephone: +61 7 3239 3600

Facsimile: +61 7 3239 3510

Email: vsb.qld@dpi.qld.gov.au

Web: www.vsb.qld.gov.au.

For Up-to-Date Information from Queensland Department of Primary Industries on:

- Docking Dog's Tails
- Changes to Controls Over the Use of Chemicals to Treat Animals
- Supply of Medicated Stock Feeds containing S4 Antibiotics
- Notifiable Diseases
- Sale of Blood Products to Veterinary Practices

See the enclosed attachments.