



October Event

The Board is planning a similar event in Clare on Friday 27 October 2006, and in other locations in 2007.

Further information will be available on the website closer to the event, and through the newsletters.

We hope to meet many rural vets in Clare in October, and any other interested vets who wish to travel to Clare.

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Board meets the Small Animal Practice Group

In May 2006, the Board was invited to attend a meeting of the Small Animal Practice Group. The Group meets regularly at the Feathers Hotel, and on this occasion, 65 vets attended.

Presiding Officer of the Board (Paul Leadbeter) presented information to the meeting on the new Act and its implications for the veterinary profession. He talked about the change to practice ownership, where non-vets are now able to own veterinary practices. The new 'conflict of interest' section of the Act was also discussed, where vets are now required to provide advice to clients in writing if recommending a service or product in which they have a financial interest (see story on page 2 about Declaring Business Interests).

Licences for X-Rays

The Radiation Branch of the Environment Protection Authority randomly audits veterinary practices to ensure that the requirements of the Radiation Protection and Control Act are being met.

All veterinary surgeons must hold a current licence to operate X-ray units. And all X-ray units must be registered.

It has come to the attention of the Radiation Branch that some veterinarians do not hold a licence.

The Regulations to the Act mention '...under the directions of a veterinary surgeon', and the Presiding Officer defined the Board's interpretation of this.

This raised a number of questions, and resulted in a good discussion with the group.

Other changes discussed were Hospital Inspections, Continuing Professional Development, changes to the investigatory powers of the Board, and the Codes of Practice which are now endorsed under the new Act.

The Registrar, (Sue Millbank) talked about common complaints, and how to avoid complaints. A number of case studies were presented, including examples of good practice when dealing with a complaint, and the not so good

practice. Four points were made to the Group - the importance of good record keeping (the first line of evidence for the Board); ensuring clients have informed choice; getting consents; and comments about colleagues.

Many questions on a range of topics were asked and answered throughout the evening. The Board believes these forums are a valuable way to provide information to the profession, and to receive feedback on important issues. Future meetings are being planned, and the Board thanks the SAPB for making this opportunity available.

A copy of the presentation can be found on the Board's website – www.vsbsa.org.au – and go to the Vets page.

If you do not hold a licence, you should contact the Radiation Branch immediately, as it is an offence to use an X-ray unit without a licence.

Veterinarians must be familiar with the 'Code of Practice for the Safe Use of Ionizing Radiation in Veterinary Radiology'. Employers must also provide radiation workers with a radiation safety manual and an approved personal monitoring device.

You can contact the Radiation

Branch at the Department of Environment—telephone 8130 0700, or by email on radiationprotection@sa.gov.au.

Ownership of X-rays

X-rays belong to the practice that took them. If they are needed for a second opinion, you can either charge the client for a copy, or send the x-rays on to the next practice (with a request for them to be returned if necessary).

VSBSA Handbook

The Handbook has been updated and you will find a CD copy enclosed with this Newsletter. It now reflects the new Veterinary Practice Act 2003.

It draws upon the experiences of the profession and provides advice on a wide range of issues which most veterinary practices come across.

It also identifies some of the more common causes of complaints to the Board, and suggests ways to improve professional practice.

We hope this becomes a useful resource for the profession. If you have any enquiries or concerns about practice matters, feel free to contact the Registrar's office.

Declaring Business Interests—the provision is designed to avoid conflict of interest, and retain public confidence in the profession

Dealing with Abandoned or Uncollected Animals

The office regularly receives queries about what to do when an animal is not collected and/or is abandoned by its owner.

In general terms, the rights and obligations of veterinarians when confronted with this issue are that the veterinarian:

- is obligated to provide treatment in emergency situations for the welfare of the animal. In this situation, the animal must be stabilised before negotiating further treatment
- can refuse to provide further treatment if the owner is unable or unwilling to pay
- can charge for continued hospitalization of abandoned/uncollected animals and take action to recover costs and expenses incurred
- can turn the animal over to the pound after all reasonable attempts have been made to contact the owner

The Board strongly recommends that when confronted with this situation, all practices write to the owner by registered letter to the last known address. The letter should advise that if the animal is not collected within (at

least) 7 days, the animal becomes the property of the practice. The RSPCA or Animal Welfare League etc are unlikely to accept an animal unless a written attempt has been made to contact the owner advising them they will lose ownership if the animal is not collected within a specified time.



Declaring Business Interests — New Act

Under the new Act, all vets are required to declare any financial interest you or your relatives may have in any veterinary product or service.

This must be declared to clients in writing, if recommending that product or service to the client.

'Products' include pharmaceutical products, and 'services' may include other after hours services.

This provision is designed to avoid potential conflict of interest situations arising, and to ensure the public retains confidence in the profession.

Advice to the Board is that a notice in the surgery waiting room is not sufficient to satisfy these provisions of the Act.

The Board therefore suggests the following wording is used on Accounts

'It is a statutory requirement that we inform you that the principal (shareholders name) has a financial interest in (name of business).'

You will find a letter about these provisions of the new Act enclosed with this Newsletter.

If you have any queries about this, you should contact the Office and discuss your particular circumstances.

Email address list

The office is currently adding registered veterinarians email addresses to our system. We particularly want to have email addresses of Primary, Limited and Non-Practising registrants, so that information can be sent out quickly via email.

The office will not give out email addresses to unauthorized persons, and will only use your address for Board purposes.

If you are unsure whether you included your email address on your 2006 renewal form, or on your application form, then please contact the office on 8269 3216 or email vsbsa@senet.com.au.

If your email address changes at any time, please let us know as well.

Lay person

The Board is pursuing an action in the Magistrate's Court. This follows a complaint made to the Board.

It alleges that the person is 'holding out' to be a veterinary surgeon, contrary to the Veterinary Practice Act.

It is likely the matter will go to trial in the latter half of 2006.

Introducing the VSBSA Board Members

- ◆ Mr Paul Leadbeter LL.M. joined the Board as its Presiding Officer in 2002. Paul is a partner at Norman Waterhouse Lawyers and practices in Environmental and Planning Law.
- ◆ Dr Andrew Doube (BVSc) is a vet with knowledge of large animals. He graduated in 1970 from Melbourne University and has practiced in many parts of rural SA.
- ◆ Dr Chris Munchenberg (BSc, BVMS) graduated in 1988 from Murdoch Uni. He has worked in both small and large animal practices.
- ◆ Mrs Helen Radoslovich (BSc, MA, Hons) is a lay member of the Board with a long-standing interest in animal welfare. Helen is a Manager at Helping Hand Aged Care Organisation.
- ◆ Dr Andrew Carter is the Board member nominated by the AVA (SA). He graduated from Melbourne University in 1987 and worked with small animals before traveling to the UK. He was awarded a Diploma in Vet Dermatology by the RCVS in 2003.
- ◆ Ms Adele Steel is a lay member with knowledge of animal welfare. Adele has a Higher National Certificate in Dog Behaviour & Training, and has been a member of a number of working parties with the UK National Health System. Adele works at the Animal Welfare Unit in the Dept Environment in SA.
- ◆ Dr Robert Baker (BVSc, MSc, MAgSc, DipBusAdmin, MACVSc) graduated in 1968 from Sydney University. He is a senior policy officer in the Department of Primary Industries in South Australia.

Complaints

Some good examples of resolving complaints has emerged recently.

One practice owner met with a complainant who was concerned about a mis-diagnosis of pregnancy in a cat. The vet acknowledged responsibility for the misdiagnosis, assured the complainant that it was a highly unusual case and explained the circumstances which led to the misdiagnosis. The owner was satisfied with

the explanation. After considering the records and report, the Board agreed with the explanation provided by the vet. It noted that the vet had accepted responsibility, explained the situation to the client, who was satisfied with the outcome.

Another complaint involved a swab swallowed during a routine dental procedure. The vets went back over the procedure in fine detail with all in-

involved and could not find a clear answer to how this had happened. The Board considered all the reports and records and could not see how it occurred because all care had been taken. A meeting was arranged between the complaint and the vet. A detailed explanation of events was given, and the vets accepted responsibility for the incident. An apology was given, and was accepted by the complainant.

Hospital Inspections

There is a public expectation that veterinary hospitals will offer a higher standard of service than a normal veterinary practice. All veterinary hospitals must be accredited by the Board, unless already accredited by the ASAVA.

Under the new Act, Hospital accreditation is for 3 years, rather than 4 years under the old Act.

To be accredited, Hospitals must be inspected every 3 years by an inspector appointed by the Board.

Provisional Approval is available from the Board. This allows you to proceed with your building plans, and organize signage for the facility.

You will find information about the standards for Hospitals in the new Handbook.

Applications for Hospital Accreditation, and for Provisional Approval, are available from the Office.

Contact the Office if you have any queries, or if you wish to apply for Hospital accreditation or Provisional Approval.

The Board

The Board consists of 7 members appointed by the Governor.

- 1— is a vet nominated by the AVA (SA)
- 3 are vets (one with knowledge of large animals)
- 2 are lay persons (one with an interest in animal welfare)
- the Presiding Officer is a legal practitioner.

Members are appointed for 3 years, and each member has a Deputy. Board members are required to adhere to the SA Government's Code of Ethics for Members of Boards.

The good news is that the number of complaints to the Board have declined over the last 6 months.



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Locums and Insurance

Locums are covered for professional indemnity insurance if the locum is employed by the vet practice – i.e. replacing a vet who is sick or on annual leave, and being paid a salary.

If the locum is giving the veterinary practice a bill for services using an ABN, then they are deemed to be on contract. The locum is not an employee of the practice, and therefore you do not have insurance covered by the practice. The locum should have individual insurance in this circumstance.

If in doubt, you should contact your current insurance organisation or Guild Insurance.

Details of your professional indemnity insurance is required for Registration purposes. Only locums who are employed are exempt from providing this information, as they are deemed to be insured under their employer's policy.

AVBC Meeting in Hobart

In May 2006, representatives of all State and Territory Veterinary Boards met in Hobart.

National registration was a key agenda item. Though all State and Territory Boards agreed in principle to national registration, the meeting could not agree on the best model. A proposal from the Commonwealth's Animal Health Committee was put to the meeting, but not all States supported the model.

A Working Group was set up and charged with the task of developing a model by the end of 2006.

The Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia (VNCA) presented to the meeting on

registration of veterinary nurses. WA is the only State which currently registers veterinary nurses.

The meeting agreed this was an important issue, given the increasing role of veterinary nurses. Training and career paths for nurses was also discussed. VNCA will be included in a working group to examine the registration issue in more detail.

Supervision of new graduates was discussed, with all Board's agreeing supervision and support should be provided before new graduates can work on their own. Internships and supervision through vet schools was discussed.

The meeting was informed that the two new veterinary schools (James Cook and Charles Sturt) were still going through the accreditation process. SA reported that the University of Adelaide is doing a feasibility study into the establishment of a vet school at Roseworthy.

Consistency across States in Continuing Professional Development for Specialists was discussed, and guidelines agreed. AVBC is to contact all specialists.

Finally, the Chair of VSAAC will not continue in this role, and AVBC thanked Dr Craven for his strong commitment to this role over many years.

Areas of Expertise

An important issue for the profession is to be aware when you believe you do not have the expertise in the species and/or condition presented. It is in both your best interests, and those of your client, to refer on in these circumstances.

Attention New Graduates

New graduates are reminded that you need to provide a certified copy of your degree certificate for the Board's records. If you have not yet done this, please do so as soon as possible. If you are unsure whether you provided a certified copy, please contact the office on 8269 3216 to discuss.

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