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Use of the Title MRCVS

It has come to the Board's attention that some veterinarians are continuing to use the title MRCVS when it is not relevant to their situation. As this is not an academic qualification, its use by those who have membership of the RCVS could be considered misleading to the public, and is hence discouraged. It is not included on the Register unless the title is gained by examination.

Congratulations to Dr Julia Nicholls, OAM

The Board joins the profession in heartily congratulating Dr Julia Nicholls on being awarded the Order of Australia Medal for her contribution to the veterinary profession. Dr Nicholls is the first SA veterinarian to receive an Australian medal which was awarded through the Queen's Birthday list.

Dr Nicholls has had a long involvement with the VSBSA. Since arriving in South Australia in the 1980's, Julia has served on the Veterinary Surgeons Board for over 20 years. Dr Nicholls was first appointed to the Board in 1987 and continued to be a member until 1999. In 2002 Julia was appointed for a further three years, and continues to be the SA delegate to the AVBC.

Dr Nicholls has been a strong advocate for South Australia at AVBC meetings and is well respected within this national arena

as one who is committed to continuing high standards and ethical conduct across the profession. Julia has also been a member of the Executive Committee of the AVBC for a number of years.

This year, Julia was appointed chair of the National Veterinary Examination Panel, so continuing her involvement with national issues.

Along with her commitment to the state and national professional bodies, Julia has mentored new graduates as well as overseas graduates undertaking the National Veterinary Exam. More recently, Julia has been involved with Dr Andrew Carter and the AVA Committee providing regular tutorials to these overseas graduates, to assist them with the NVE.

Julia has long been involved in animal welfare issues, traveling overseas



Dr Julia Nicholls, OAM

to assist with problems of abandoned dogs and cats. Closer to home, Julia has been involved with the Animal Welfare League for many years, in both a practical way and serving in an executive capacity on the Board.

The Award specifically recognises Julia's long contribution to, and involvement with animal welfare, and her mentoring of overseas trained veterinarians. Julia is a well deserved recipient of this prestigious Award.

New Graduates

In 2006, the national body (AVBC) resolved that all State Boards should take a stronger stand on ensuring that new graduates are supported through their first year of practice.

The Veterinary Surgeons Board of SA endorsed this resolution and consequently, has now developed Guidelines considered to be the minimum acceptable standard for

practices employing new graduates.

The draft was sent to many practices employing new graduates for their comments, as well as to 2005 graduates and the AVA. Guild Insurance was also invited to provide comments on the Guideline.

The Guideline identifies employer supports such as:

- structured supervision
- opportunities for skill enhancement and feedback
- reasonable rostered hours of practice
- encouragement of integration with members of the practice and the profession

Copies of the Guideline will be available from the website, or contact the office if you would like a copy posted.

Tribunal Decision

The Tribunal of the Board recently determined that Dr P Kubler was guilty of unprofessional conduct. It permanently disqualified Dr Kubler from renewing his registration as a veterinary surgeon in South Australia, and also imposed a fine. The complaint concerned a failed desexing operation on a cat. It was further complicated by Dr Kubler's attempt to influence the complainant not to lodge the complaint, and his refusal to appear before the Board.

Some recent case studies

Two recent complaints to the Board involved vets attending animals. The Board recognises this is a difficult situation which can often confront vets in rural areas. There are no simple answers as all circumstances vary, but the Board's consideration of the complaints may provide some guidance.

Too long between visits....

One complaint concerned an old horse given repeated prescriptions of Phenylbutazone for an injury to a hind leg. Repeat prescriptions were given for a number of years. This included an 18 month period of time without the animal being seen by the vet. The Board considered this was too long to be providing repeat prescriptions without checking on the condition of the horse. During this time, the horse deteriorated considerably, and it was possible the vet would have suggested euthanasia had the animal been seen.

Prescription only medicines

The Board has become informally aware of situations where veterinarians may be making certain prescription only medicines available inappropriately.

Recent examples include providing quantities of Xylazine to equine dentists; and supplying an S.4 medication to a non-bona fide

Providing Quotes/Estimates

Recently several complaints and queries to the office have revolved around quotes / estimates provided by veterinary practices.

While the Board does not deal with complaints relating to fees, or compensation, it can look into circumstances where the fees charged significantly exceed the quoted price.

The Board recommended the practice institute a protocol for Prescription Only Medicines where animals should be seen at least every 6 months when supplying repeat prescriptions for similar medications. Attendance could include occasions when the vet is visiting the property to see other animals.

Evening call-out... Another complaint concerned a horse possibly with colic, where the complainant said the vet refused to attend the horse. The animal died the next day. In the evening of the day in question, the complainant telephoned the vet and asked

Evening call-out...

client without seeing the animal. All veterinarians should be aware that these activities are not condoned by the Board or Dept of Health, and may lead to further action. It is important that all veterinarians give consistent information to the public on the supply of

these medications. You should also be aware that the ultimate responsibility will lie with the prescribing veterinarian if something goes wrong.

If you have a query about supplying a prescription only medicine, contact the Registrar or Dept of Health.

It is always important when providing quotes or estimates to ensure that, as much as practicable, all parts of a service are included in the price. This is even more important when the quote is written.

Understandably a situation may change during treatment. In these circumstances, the client should be updated as soon as

possible, and made aware of any change in treatment, and change to the estimated fee.

It is always important to ensure that a client is well informed about all procedures and costs, and to check the client understands what they are being told. Good communication with a client can make all the difference.

National news — Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC)

The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council met in May 2007, and again national registration was discussed.

Because all States will need legislative change to enable registration across states/territories to be recognised, national registration is still some time away. However, agreement to the principles of national recognition of registration has been reached. This involves recognition of primary registration across all States and Territories. Ministers meet late in 2007 and are expected to endorse the model. Once legislation is in place in all States and Territories, na-

tional recognition of primary registration will commence.

The national body also discussed the recommendations of its Working Group on Veterinary Nurses. It agreed to continue the Working Group - which includes the Veterinary Nurses Council - so that it could develop a business case for a proposal to accredit veterinary nurses. WA is currently the only State that registers veterinary nurses.

Some discussion took place on the issue of Limited Registration and mutual recognition principles.

Under these principles, if one state grants Limited (or any other category) Registration to an applicant, the applicant is entitled to apply for similar registration in other States and NZ.

The AVBC also received reports from the Veterinary Schools Accreditation Advisory Committee, the National Veterinary Examination Standing Committee and Board of Examiners, and the Australasian Council of Registered Veterinary Specialists.

If you wish to view any reports from the AVBC meetings, contact the office of the Registrar.

Membership of the Board

The Minister for Agriculture recently appointed Dr Jane McNicholl to the Board. Dr McNicholl replaces Dr Andy Doube as the 'large animal' veterinarian on the Board. Dr Doube remains with the Board as a Deputy Member.

Registering Microchips

Recently the Board was informed of a situation where a vet registered a microchip even though the vet had not inserted the microchip. This was done at the request of the owner.

The vet who inserted the microchip had not registered it because the owner had not paid for the procedure — a fact not explained by the owner to the second vet.

Only the vet who inserts the microchip should register it.

Renewals on-line

The Board is examining the possibility of renewing registrations on-line for 2008. It is expected that renewals will still be sent to all veterinary surgeons through the post in November of each year. It will be your decision whether you choose to complete your renewal and

send it in by return post; or whether you choose to log on and renew your registration on-line.

Renewing on-line is expected to be quicker and simpler. It will reduce the chance of mistakes being made, or items being

missed, so your renewal will not have to be returned resulting in a delay.



PIRSA: Animal Health Committee on testing of Avian Influenza Virus

The Department of Primary Industries and Resources SA seeks the professions cooperation to ensure all suspicions of Avian Influenza (AI) are investigated by laboratory testing.

Samples from all suspected cases should be sent to a *NATA accredited veterinary laboratory* for forwarding to the Australian Animal Health Laboratory at Geelong. Hand held tests may

be used in some circumstances. Specifically:

- In an accredited laboratory as an adjunct to other laboratory testing, where confirmatory testing will be undertaken as a matter of course (e.g. testing of allantoic fluids or cell culture supernatants for agent).
- In a field investigation where there is sufficient concern of the possibil-

ity of AI and where samples are to be sent to a NATA accredited laboratory for further testing, a hand held test may be used to give an early indication that AI may be involved.

Please note that it is a veterinarian's obligation under the Livestock Act to immediately report any suspicion of an exotic disease to the Chief Veterinary Officer.

Stress and vets

Dr P Hatch is conducting research into job satisfaction and workplace stress in veterinarians, across Australia. The research is being conducted as part of a PhD thesis. Dr Hatch will be sending a questionnaire out to vets in Australia in August 2007, asking for the profession's responses on this topic. He encourages vets to complete the questionnaire and return it to him.

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VSBSA Handbook

Again the Board wishes to draw the professions attention to the VSBSA Handbook as a useful resource. It contains relevant information on avoiding complaints, CPD, general guidelines and policies, controlled substances as well as information about Codes and Standards.

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

If you do not have a copy of the Handbook please contact the office, and a CD or hardcopy can be forwarded to you. The office also welcomes your calls on any queries you may have.

A Word on Closing ...

Over the last 12 months, the Board has received a number of enquiries from members of the public and the profession about practices that have closed. Most often, the concerns expressed have been that client/patient records are not available. Another concern for clients has been that the practice closed without advising them of the imminent closure, or discussing alternative arrangements for the future care of their animals.

The Board recognises that practices may need to close for a number of reasons, and sometimes at short notice (e.g. illness). In normal circumstances, however, the Board recommends that

- clients and surrounding practitioners are given at least 4 weeks notice of the practice closing date, and preferably longer

- clients are also given information about whether their records have been forwarded to another vet in the region
- if client records have not been made available to other practices, clients should be informed about how they may access their records.

Practitioners should be aware that client/patient records are required to be held for at least 2 years after the closure of a practice, if the records have not been forwarded to another practice.

These procedures do not apply when a practice is sold to another veterinary surgeon or veterinary services provider. It only applies when the practice is closed and no longer operates as a veterinary clinic.

Child-resistant packaging for substances

The Department of Health (Drug and Alcohol Services) will change the Regulations on the packaging of poisons from 1st July 2007. The Regulations change relates to the need for child-resistant packaging for certain substances.

You should visit www.tga.gov.au and see the Therapeutic Goods Order No 65 (TGO 65) on child-resistant packaging for more information.

Have a Laugh

A man goes into a cinema with his dog to watch a film. It's a romantic comedy and when there's a funny scene the dog starts laughing. A little later on there's a sad part and suddenly the dog starts crying.

This goes on throughout the entire film, laughing and crying at all the right places. A man sitting a few rows back has witnessed the entire thing and decides to follow the man out. In the foyer, he approaches the dog owner and says, "That's truly amazing!"

"It certainly is" The dog owner replies, "He hated the book!"



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