



# VSBSA NEWSLETTER

May 2005

## News from the Office

After many years of service Helen Ward has retired as the Registrar to the Veterinary Surgeons Board of SA. The Board would like to thank Helen for her valuable contribution and wishes her all the best for the future. Helen had a very astute understanding about the issues of interest to the Board and performed an important role in supporting the Board for over a decade.

The Board now welcomes a new Registrar, Sue Millbank. Sue has worked in the SA Public Service for over 20 years, and has a good understanding about the role of Boards. Sue comes at a time when the Board anticipates a transition period from the current Veterinary Surgeons Act 1985 to the new Veterinary Practice Act 2003.



### **The Board can be contacted at:**

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## News from the Board

The Board has welcomed a new Deputy Lay Member, John Counihan. John was appointed by the Minister in May 2005, and will be Deputy to the current Lay Member, Helen Radoslovich. John is the owner of the Burnside Pet Centre and has a long interest in animal welfare issues.

## Veterinary Practice Act 2003

The new Act is yet to be proclaimed as the Regulations to the Act have yet to be finalized. They are expected to be finished later in 2005, allowing the Act to be proclaimed.

The new Act will:

- > Give greater emphasis on public interest and animal welfare issues
- > Include an additional lay member on the Board
- > Include Veterinary Service Providers (i.e. non-vets owning veterinary companies)
- > Define veterinary hospitals
- > Give greater emphasis on Continuing Professional Development
- > Give more flexibility in registration and specialist registration
- > Give broader powers in relation to handling of complaints

The new Act will also endorse the following codes:

- > Code of Professional Conduct
- > Standards for veterinary hospitals
- > Code of practice for the operation of commercial boarding establishments
- > Code of practice for the bark reduction of dogs

## Important Change to Ketamine S4 to S8

The National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee has re-scheduled Ketamine from Schedule 4 to Schedule 8. This has been based on information which indicates increasing illicit use and diversion of Ketamine, and growing evidence of physical and psychological dependence among recreational users of Ketamine.

*The decision came into effect on 1 May 2005.*

From this date, the requirements of the Controlled Substances Act and Regulations for Drugs of Dependence will apply to Ketamine. This includes the need for Ketamine to be kept locked away.

More information on this decision can be found at the Therapeutic Goods Administration website – [www.tga.gov.au/ndpsc](http://www.tga.gov.au/ndpsc). Click on 'NDPSC Public Notices', then 'Record of Reasons' for October 2004 and February 2005. You can also contact the South Australian Department of Health for more information on 8226 7387.

**Please visit our website for more information about the Board and its work – [www.vsbsa.org.au](http://www.vsbsa.org.au)**

### **Victorian Vet Board Meeting in Mildura**

In April 2005, the Registrar attended a meeting in Mildura put on by the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria, on 'Complaints: How to avoid one'. This was the last of 9 'roadshows' for the profession in Victoria on the topic. Other seminars have been held on issues such as 'Controlled Substances'.

The presentation was very informal, with the President giving an overview of the statistics on complaints received in Victoria. While the number of complaints have risen, they have not kept pace with the recent rise in the number of vets practicing in Victoria. The importance of keeping up to date written records was impressed on all attendees.

A number of questions were raised on the legal issues associated with a vet retaining an animal if the client doesn't, can't or won't pay, including the responsibility of the vet to treat the animal. Board members were able to assist vets by giving guidance on appropriate ways to handle such problems.

General discussion also took place on other matters, such as the likelihood of national registration and the increasing scrutiny of vets on the use and handling of drugs.

Overall, attendees seemed better informed about how to avoid complaints, and had a better understanding about the role of the Board in Victoria.

*The SA Board is keen to develop a similar approach, and would be interested to hear from the profession on the topics of interest to you.*

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### **Complaints**

The Office continues to receive complaints at the average of one per week. Complaints generally arise because of: communication problems resulting in misunderstandings (e.g. perceived lack of caring, consent for treatment, lack of information etc); quotations for work which are then exceeded; and poor follow up procedures.

The Board will continue to promote 'good practice principles' which can assist practices in avoiding complaints. These principles include: good record-keeping; clear policies and protocols on issues such as dispensing of drugs, referrals, clients unable to pay, and so on; training of staff in practice policies and protocols; and regular communication through practice meetings.

The Handbook (copies available from the Office, and also on our website) provides more information on the types of complaints received in the Office.

### **Radiology Equipment**

It is important that all practices either own, or have access to, radiology equipment. If a veterinarian does not have access to equipment then the case should be referred to another practice.

### **Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Meeting**

The AVBC met in Brisbane in May 2005, and considered a range of issues. The 'hot topic' was National Registration. In previous years the AVBC has not supported national registration, however, this position changed in 2005. The motion was passed almost unanimously that the AVBC supported in principle national registration. The details on the model for national registration, and what this will imply for all State and Territory Boards, have yet to be resolved, and will undoubtedly take time to work through. However, there was a clear direction that national registration will provide efficiencies, and be of benefit to the profession.

Other matters discussed by the AVBC included reports from the NVE Board of Examiners and the Veterinary Schools Accreditation and Advisory Committee. The AVBC meeting also signaled an increasing interest in the role of Continuing Professional Development.

South Australia has been a longstanding member of the Executive of the AVBC, however, it decided not to re-nominate for this position in 2005.

If you have an interest in the role of the AVBC, please contact this office on 8269 3216, or Dr Julia Nicholls on 8344 4233.

### **Corticosteroids in Avian Medicine**

The Board has recently sought advice on the use of corticosteroids for birds from an avian specialist in Queensland. His advice is that corticosteroids in any formulation – either parenterally or topically – is not recommended because of their frequent and severe side-effects, including:

- ◆ Immunosuppression
- ◆ Iatrogenic diabetes mellitus
- ◆ Steroid-induced hepatopathy
- ◆ Adrenal suppression

The Board acknowledges that veterinarians should take each case on its merits, weighing up risks against benefits. It provides this advice as general information to the profession.

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