



VSBSA NEWSLETTER

November 2005

2006 Renewals - *Don't put them aside, fill them in now and send them off*

It's that time of year again. Your annual Renewal of Registration for 2006 is due and needs to be received no later than 31 December 2005 (please note that late payment may incur a reinstatement fee).

Enclosed are your renewal forms for 2006. Unfortunately, the Board has had to increase renewal fees this year. It is the first increase for a number of years, and is a result of the increasing costs in fulfilling the Board's role.

Payment by credit card can be made. Please complete all sections of the forms, including signing the declaration – even if you are exempt from insurance. Sending in only one form will hold up your renewal.

Only one Notice of Registration Renewal will be issued (i.e. no reminder notices). If a renewal is not received by the set time, the name will be removed from the Register and a penalty will apply for reinstatement. If you do not wish to remain on the Register, please circle the appropriate section on the renewal and return the form.

Before returning your completed renewal form please make sure that you have included: signed declaration, payment, photocopy of CPD card. Give Alison a ring at the Board (8269 3216) if you have any queries.

Annual Practising Certificates will be returned to you as soon as possible after processing. *Please note that this certificate represents your receipt for taxation purposes, please keep it in a safe place for use throughout the year if needs be.*

New Act Proclaimed

On 15 September 2005, the new Veterinary Practice Act 2003 was proclaimed. Though passed by Parliament in 2003 the Act did not come into operation until the Regulations were gazetted. The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1985 has now been repealed. The most significant changes in the Act include:

- **Increased attention to the protection of animal health, safety and welfare and the public interest.** In line with this the number of Board members has been increased by one member. A new lay member with an interest in animal health, safety and welfare has been included. The new member is Adele Steel from the Department of Environment and Heritage to the Board. Her Deputy Member will be Dr Mark Peters, CEO of the RSPCA, and the Board welcomes both new members.
- **The definition of 'unprofessional conduct'.** There are two key changes to the definition. Firstly improper or unethical conduct relates to all aspects of professional practice, not only the act of veterinary treatment. Secondly, unprofessional conduct now includes contravention of codes of conduct and professional standards endorsed by the Board. Currently, the endorsed codes are the Code of Professional Conduct; Standards for Veterinary Hospitals; Standards for Veterinary premises; Code of practice for the operation of commercial boarding establishments; and the Code of practice for the bark reduction of dogs. Copies of all codes are available on the website, and in the Handbook.
- **Ownership of veterinary practices.** This change enables non-veterinarians as well as veterinarians to own veterinary practices, as a 'veterinary services provider'. Veterinary Services Providers are required to provide information to the Veterinary Surgeons Board within one month of establishment. All veterinary services providers are also required to keep the Board informed on all changes in ownership or part-ownership, and other required information.

Generally, each person in authority in the entity established as a veterinary services provider is liable for any penalty if the entity is guilty of an offence under the Act. (See page 4 for further information.)

- **Disciplinary process.** The new Act provides for greater powers of investigation into complaints. If there are reasonable grounds for suspecting:
 - * there is proper cause for disciplinary action against a person
 - * that a veterinary surgeon is medically unfit to provide veterinary treatment
 - * that any other person is guilty of an offence against this Act,

an inspector may investigate the matter. Further, composition of disciplinary tribunals will be 3 members (rather than 4), at least one of whom must be a veterinarian.

- **Continuing Professional Development.** The new Act puts greater emphasis on Continuing Professional Development, and has a rency of practice provision, where Board approval is required if a veterinary surgeon has not practiced for 3 years.
- **Veterinary Hospital inspections.** Accreditation by the Board is for a period of 3 years (not 4).

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New Act (continued from page 1)

- **Increase in penalties.** Most penalties are increased under the new Act, and any right of appeal is now to the District Court rather than the Supreme Court.
- **Codes of Conduct and Professional Standards.** Approved codes and standards are endorsed under the new Act. Currently, this includes the Code of Professional Conduct; Standards for Veterinary Hospitals; Standards for Veterinary Premises; Standards for Mobile Practices; Code of Practice for Boarding Establishments; Code of Practice for the bark reduction of dogs.

Should you have any queries about the Act please contact the Registrar. A new Handbook reflecting the provisions of the Act will be distributed shortly.

DRUGS

S4 Drugs for Shearing of Rams

Shearers have raised the question as to whether veterinarians can provide them with S4 drugs to sedate rams when shearing. The issue for shearers is the size and behaviour of some rams, and the resulting occupational health and safety concerns for shearers if the ram is difficult to handle.

The issue for veterinarians is their legal responsibilities in relation to the supply of controlled substances (including S4 drugs) for the purpose of treating or sedating animals. In particular, only veterinarians can supply S4 drugs for these purposes, and as such, veterinarians are responsible for the 'trail' of the prescribed medication. Vets are also responsible for the outcome from the use of the medication. Providing S4 drugs direct to shearers for their use as they determine will compromise the veterinarian, and the veterinary profession.

The Board has recently considered this issue, and agreed that uniformity of approach across the profession is imperative. Not following the Board's principles (see below) may result in the wrong drug being prescribed, or the wrong dose or strength of drug made available. This will compromise the animal's health and welfare. It is also important that all veterinarians adopt the principles so that the profession retains the confidence of the public in its capacity to provide proper care to animals.

The Board recognises there are both animal welfare and public interest issues which need to be considered on this issue. It has therefore adopted the following principles for the provision of S4 drugs for use in shearing rams over 100 kg in weight:

1. The prescribed drug is provided to a 'bona-fide client' of the veterinarian. A 'bona-fide' client is the owner of the animal/s, or a 'responsible agent' such as the farm manager. A 'responsible agent' is not a regular or irregular contractor providing a service to the animal (i.e. a shearer, farm contractor and so on)
2. There is a therapeutic need for the prescribed drug.



3. The veterinarian records the transaction of the prescribed drugs as required, and obtains the signature of the bona-fide client to whom the drugs are provided.
4. All other requirements of the Controlled Substances Act are adhered to in the provision of S4 drugs—in particular, the veterinarian must personally supervise the sale of the prescription drug; labeling requirements (e.g. 'For Animal Use Only').

More details (e.g. who is a 'bona-fide client'; who is a 'responsible agent'; how to establish a therapeutic need) are posted on the Board's website, and will be available in the new edition of the Handbook. The Board has also developed specific forms to assist all vets in recording the appropriate information.

S8 Drugs

The Drugs of Dependence Unit of the Department of Health want to raise awareness about issues associated with the prescribing and supply of Schedule 8 drugs. With advances in veterinary medicine and a greater emphasis on the provision of effective analgesia, opioid drugs such as oxycodone (Endone), codeine phosphate, morphine (Anamorph), pethidine tablets, fentanyl patches and methadone (Physeptone) as well as stimulant drugs such as dexamphetamine and methylphenidate (Ritalin) are now being supplied to owners to treat their animals after discharge from the clinic. By definition these drugs have the potential to be misused and can cause dependence in people with repeated use. Increased availability from veterinary sources may lead to targeting of the profession by drug-dependent people to obtain supplies through deception or clinic break-ins. Of particular note, SAPOL have advised that illicit supplies of Temgesic from unknown sources have been detected in SA.

The Drugs of Dependence Unit is responsible for monitoring prescriptions sent in each month from all SA pharmacies to minimise misuse and dependence. This Unit maintains a list of circulating drug seekers that is available for veterinarians to access if they have concerns about suspicious client requests.

S8 Drugs (continued from page 2)

This information can be accessed by calling the Unit on ph 1300 652 584 or applying for password-protected online access (www.health.sa.gov.au/gateway/drugsofdependence).

Supplying S8 drugs should only be considered if the owner is well known to the clinic and the veterinarian is confident of responsible and appropriate use. Injectable preparations should not be provided. It is recommended that if there is an established therapeutic need and S8 medications are deemed to be appropriate discharge medications, veterinarians comply with the legislative requirements under the Controlled Substances Act and Regulations summarised in the Veterinary Surgeon’s Board handbook (labelling etc).

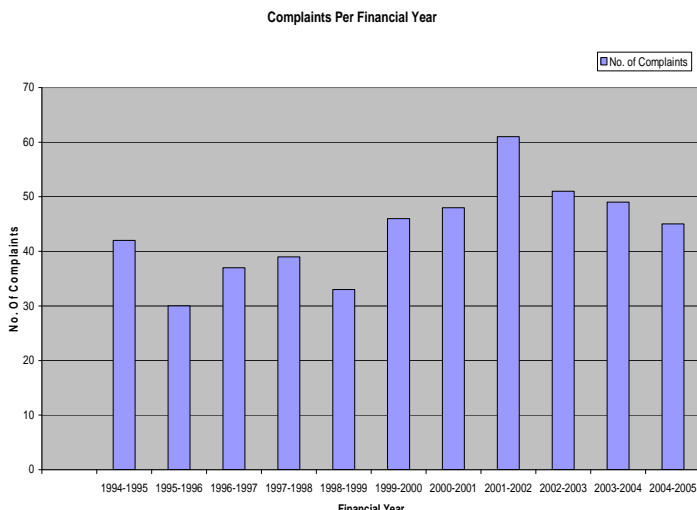
If treatment is likely to exceed what would be expected for short-term emergency or acute conditions it is recommended that S8 drugs be provided on prescription to be dispensed from a pharmacy. This enables the Unit to monitor drug use as it does with human therapeutics. This would allow the detection of supplies provided to known drug-dependent people and subsequent notification of veterinarians. If pharmacy dispensing is not possible then supplies should be restricted to a minimum of weekly collection.

It is also recommended that Fentanyl patches are returned by owners to the clinic for safe disposal because the reservoir of opioid left in the transdermal patch is a potential risk. Fatal incidents resulting from misuse have previously been reported in Tasmania (Pharmaceutical Services Branch –Department of Health and Human Services December 2002).

For further information, contact the Drugs of Dependence Unit of the Department of Health on 8226 6000.

Annual Report 2004 / 05

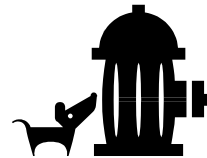
The Annual Report is now available on the Board’s website. Below is a table which charts the number of complaints considered by the Board over the last decade.



Euthanasia & Third Party Involvement

It is understood that there are circumstances where veterinarians will recommend euthanasia when the owner is absent and a third party (i.e. a carer while the owner is absent) is involved. This may be recommended as the best course of action to relieve the suffering of the animal.

When this type of situation arises, the Board suggests that where the practical circumstances allow, that veterinarians should try and contact the owner of the animal when there is a decision to euthanase, even when a carer is acting as the owner’s agent. The Board recognises that this is not always possible, as the owner may not be contactable. You should make your decision based on the individual circumstances of the situation, but in all cases, remember to obtain the written consent of the owner or the carer.



Record Keeping - ‘Not written down = Not done’

It is important to maintain good records. Anything less leaves the veterinarian vulnerable in the event of a complaint or civil action. Well-documented, up to date and professional records provide a picture of good protocols in place and strongly support your case in the event of a complaint or legal action. In multi person practices, good record keeping is essential to provide continuity of treatment between veterinarians.

Several complaints have come to the attention of the Board recently where better record keeping would have been helpful to both the Board, and the veterinarian. Some tips for better record keeping are:

- ‘if it’s not written down—it’s not done’ should be your benchmark. The Board assumes procedures are done when they are recorded; and conversely not done when they are not recorded.
- make sure your records are accurate, and kept contemporaneously.
- if you need to add something later on, include the date, time and your initials.
- if sending your records to another vet, make sure a complete copy of the record is sent.

For more information on record keeping, see the Handbook, or contact the Registrar if you have any queries.

Have you Moved Address &/or Changed your Name?

If you do not tell us you have moved address &/or changed your name then our records are not up to date and you may miss out on receiving important information from the Board. Please note that under the *Veterinary Practice Act 2003*, Section 31, 'a veterinary surgeon must, within 3 months after changing his or her name or personal or business address, inform the Board in writing of the change'.

Veterinary Deans Unite

The Deans of Australia and New Zealand's seven veterinary schools have combined to face the challenges confronting veterinary education and the veterinary profession.

The Veterinary Deans have met informally for many years and these arrangements have now been formalized with agreed terms of reference for an "Australian Veterinary Deans Committee" (AVDC). The Committee will meet in person twice a year and by telephone conference to progress an active business agenda. The current Chairperson is Professor John Edwards, Murdoch University, and members are:

Professor Kym Abbott – Charles Sturt University (Wagga)
Professor Lee Fitzpatrick – James Cook University (Townsville)
Professor Norman Williamson – Massey University (Palmerston North, NZ)
Professor Ivan Caple – University of Melbourne
Professor Lloyd Reeve-Johnson – University of Queensland (Brisbane)
and
Professor Leo Jeffcott – Sydney University.

The aims of the AVDC are to:

- To provide a forum for discussion on matters relating to veterinary education and the veterinary profession
- To develop policy in relation to veterinary education
- To lobby in regard to policy and resources for veterinary education
- To foster a spirit of co-operation between veterinary schools and to co-ordinate activities where possible.
- To provide a point of contact for Veterinary Deans for national and international organizations such as DEST, the Australian and New Zealand Veterinary Associations, AVBC, VSAAC, RCVS, AVMA etc
- To promote the achievements of the veterinary education sector.

AVDC members are currently collaborating to achieve proper funding for clinical training, carrying out a benchmarking comparison of Veterinary Teaching Hospitals, strategies for engagement with national organizations and opportunities for collaboration.

For any comment or request for further information, please contact John Edwards at d.hudson@murdoch.edu.au or phone (08) 9360 2636.

Veterinary Services Providers

Under the new Act, a 'Veterinary Services Provider' is defined as 'a person (not being a veterinary surgeon) who provides veterinary treatment through the instrumentality of a veterinary surgeon'. All veterinary services providers are required to provide information to the Veterinary Surgeons Board. A letter advising how this section of the Act will be managed will be sent to all currently registered companies and entities. The information which must be provided will be identified. Under the Act, the Board is required to keep this information updated, and available for general inspection. For further information, contact the Registrar.

Animal Welfare Course

A new Graduate Certificate in Animal Welfare is being offered in 2006 through Monash University. Eligibility for enrolment is offered to students who have previously completed a university degree, or who have equivalent industry experience. The course involves coursework and reading, participation in electronic discussions, planning a research project and supervised practical experience. For more information, see their website at www.med.monash.edu.au/psych/student/psgrad.

The Board can be contacted at:

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Closure of Office over Christmas

Please note that the office will be closed as of 4.00pm Friday 23rd December 2005, and will reopen 10.00am Tuesday 3rd January 2006.

The Board thanks everyone for their assistance in 2005, and wishes you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy & Safe New Year.

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