

Minimum Standards for Practising as a Veterinarian Amendment Notice 2011 (No. 1)

Pursuant to section 75(i) of the Veterinarians Act 2005, the Veterinary Council of New Zealand sets out in this notice* the following prescribed minimum standards for practising as a veterinarian:

1. Fitness to Practise

A veterinarian must be fit in order to maintain his or her practising certificate and to practise as a veterinarian in New Zealand.

Matters that may bring fitness to practise into question can include:

- (a) mental or physical health conditions;
- (b) any addictive or inappropriate taking of drugs or alcohol;
- (c) any investigations, in New Zealand or overseas, by an employer, registration or professional body, educational institution or other authority (eg racing authority) relating to any matter that may be the subject of disciplinary proceedings;
- (d) a formal competence enquiry by an employer or registration body;
- (e) an adverse finding in any disciplinary action by an employer, registration or professional body, or other authority (eg racing authority);
- (f) being the subject of a police investigation and/or being the holder of a conviction in any criminal proceeding (including traffic offences involving alcohol and/or drugs), where the offence is punishable by imprisonment for a term of three months or longer; and
- (g) being the holder of a conviction for any offence against the Veterinarians Act 2005, the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997, the Animal Welfare Act 1981, the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 and subordinate legislation, and any other Act or subordinate legislation that has a direct bearing on the veterinary profession.

All persons are required to provide the council with a statement about their fitness to practise when they apply for registration or for a practising certificate.

The council may also examine a person (section 25(a)), require statutory declarations (section 25(b)), require other information (section 25(c)) and take various actions under specific, relevant sections of the Veterinarians Act 2005.

2. Professional Conduct Standards

Pursuant to section 88(3) of the Veterinarians Act 2005, the council refers persons to the document "Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians" (the "Code") available on its website

www.vetcouncil.org.nz

and from the council's office on request. This sets out the professional conduct standards veterinarians are required to meet and may be measured against.

The Code is structured around the following core principles of veterinary professional behaviour:

- (a) Protecting animal welfare and alleviating animal suffering;
- (b) practising in a way that promotes effective communication and trust, meets confidentiality and consent requirements, and recognises clients' right to choose;
- (c) interacting with colleagues honestly and with respect and in a way that fosters good relationships and communication;
- (d) acting in a manner that promotes the public's trust and confidence in the profession;
- (e) striving to provide a high standard of veterinary practice;
- (f) exercising sound professional judgement when authorising, dispensing, recommending, selling and using veterinary medicines; and
- (g) practising in accordance with relevant legislation and other applicable standards.

Supporting each Code principle is a series of statements which set out the specific expectations of veterinarians.

3. Competence to Practise

(a) Competency Standards

Pursuant to section 88(3) of the Veterinarians Act 2005, the council refers persons to the document "Competency Standards and Performance Indicators for Veterinarians" available on its website

www.vetcouncil.org.nz

and from the council's office on request. This sets out the competency standards council expects veterinarians to meet, at the point of initial registration, and on an ongoing basis, and provides criteria against which an individual veterinarian's performance may be measured.

(b) Recency of Practice

Non-recency of practice can impact on performance. All applicants for a practising certificate are required to provide the council with information on their recency of practice. In the following situations, the council, after consideration of the individual circumstances of the case, may propose to decline or place conditions upon the applicant's practising certificate (section 26(3)(c)) for:

- those who have not practised as a veterinarian for the last three consecutive years, or have not practised as a veterinarian for the last three consecutive years in the area in which they intend to practise; and
- those who hold a recognised qualification or a pass in a prescribed examination or assessment programme (section 6) but have not:
 - practised as a veterinarian for one or more years subsequent to gaining registration; or
 - practised for one or more years in the area in which they intend to practise subsequent to gaining registration.

(c) *Continuing Professional Development*

The council requires all veterinarians to maintain and enhance their performance by engaging in continuing professional development activities.

Pursuant to section 88(3) of the Veterinarians Act 2005, the council refers persons to the document "Continuing Professional Development – Information for Veterinarians" available on its website

www.vetcouncil.org.nz

and from the council's office on request. This sets out the continuing professional development standards council expects veterinarians to meet.

Under section 25, when considering an application for a practising certificate, the council may require the applicant to provide any document or information that the council considers, on reasonable grounds, is necessary to assess his or her application.

The council will use this section to monitor veterinarian's compliance with the continuing professional development declarations made in their annual practising certificate declarations. Section 26 may be used in situations of non-compliance.

*This notice replaces the Veterinary Council of New Zealand notice published in the *New Zealand Gazette*, 31 March 2011, No. 41, page 1007. The changes relate to the addition of the professional conduct standards the council requires veterinarians to meet, as set out in the document "Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians".

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