



## 2008 Review of the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians.

### We need your views



The Code of Professional Conduct sets out the peer defined standards the Council expects veterinarians

to adhere to. The Code is an important tool for assuring that the public interest is protected and provides direction for the Complaints Assessment and Judicial Committees when cases alleging professional misconduct arise.

A major review of the Code of Professional Conduct will be undertaken in 2008 prompted in part by the need to address the forthcoming changes by NZFSA to the classification of veterinary medicines and the legislative changes which occurred with the implementation of the new Veterinarians Act.

The Council therefore invites written submissions from veterinarians and other interested parties on suggested amendments or additions to the Code of Professional Conduct.

### Please forward your submission to the Registrar by letter or email by Monday 3 March 2008

The submissions will be considered by the Council along with the recommendations of a joint Council/NZFSA working party which will be considering the impact on the Code of the ACVM changes to the use, prescription and sale of veterinary medicines.

Council will then develop its draft proposals for changes to the Code and circulate these for comment, prior to making any final decisions.

## Annual Practising Fees for 2008

At its November meeting the Council agreed to retain the annual practising fee at its current level of \$275 rebated to \$250 for early payment.

The budgeted deficit of \$13,000 for the 2007 financial year is not likely to eventuate because of increased interest income and lower discipline costs. As such the Council expects the end of year position at 31 December 2007 to be a surplus of around \$55,000.

Council has therefore prepared a deficit budget for the 2008 year, to reduce reserves, but will need to consider whether APC fees should be increased in 2009.

The Council is committed to ensuring that it operates in a cost effective manner while ensuring an appropriate balance between its requirement to protect the public interest and affordability for veterinarians.

The cost of running a regulatory authority is not insignificant and the Veterinary

Council does not enjoy the significant economies of scale available to professions with larger numbers.

Despite this the fees veterinarians pay compare very favourably with those of other registered practitioners, as seen in the table below

Profession	APC \$	No. of practitioners
Pharmacists	495	2800
Social Workers	450	1750
Dentists	700	1700
Doctors	540	11000
Nurses	96	45000
Chiropractors	1100	300
Veterinarians	275	2300

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## Results of the New Zealand National Veterinary Examinations (NZNVE)

Five candidates sat the Final NZNVE clinical/written examination at Massey University in November. Two candidates passed. Two candidates were awarded supplementary examinations and will need to sit and pass the section they failed before being eligible for registration. One candidate failed.

## Complaints Survey

The Council's Complaints Assessment Committee has introduced a survey to gain feedback from members of the public and veterinarians on its complaint investigation process. The aim of the survey is to measure the effectiveness of the process and identify what changes might be needed.

## Veterinary Council election results

The votes to elect three veterinarians to membership of the Veterinary Council were counted on 22 November 2007

The number of votes for each candidate was:

Ronald George GIBSON, 621

Peter John Squire JERRAM, 652

Grahame Frederick JOYCE, 425

Mark Cameron ROBSON, 488

Julie Catherine WAGNER, 665

The Returning Officer has therefore declared Ron Gibson, Peter Jerram and Julie Wagner to be duly elected to the Veterinary Council.

Completed ballot papers were received back from 1021 veterinarians giving a 43% voter 'turn out'.

Thank you to those of you who showed your support for this democratic method of appointment.

## Should we have minimum standards of veterinary practice and should continuing professional development be a requirement for ongoing registration?

The Council welcomes the NZVA Vice President Richard Wild's call, in the November edition of VetScript, for a debate on these issues.

The Veterinarians Act 2005 charges the Veterinary Council with the responsibility for prescribing minimum standards for practising as a veterinarian, including standards relating to fitness to practice and the maintenance, examination or improvement of the overall competence of a veterinarian to practise.

The Council has made a start in this area by prescribing minimum fitness to practise standards (in relation to health, disciplinary and criminal issues); recency of practice standards and the requirement for veterinarians to record and report on their professional development.

Council considers it essential that professional standards are defined and established with the active involvement of the profession. As such it appreciates the lead NZVA is taking in this area, encourages veterinarians to contribute to this very important debate and looks forward to considering the outcome.

## Christmas Greeting



Grace and Liam Haggie  
(November 07)

Image taken by  
Jo Frances Photography

The Council and its staff extend their best wishes for a safe and enjoyable holiday season and thanks those who have assisted the Council in its work during the year.



## Farewell to Grahame Joyce

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Grahame Joyce was elected to the Veterinary Council in January 2005 and brought with him extremely useful experience and knowledge of the work of the Council from his previous membership of the Veterinary Surgeons Board.

The Council appreciated Grahame's commonsense and thoughtful approach. He brought an excellent understanding of, and perspective, on the realities of veterinary practice at the 'coal face' to the Council table.

Grahame made valuable contributions to the work of the Complaints Assessment Committee and was very aware of the opportunities the new Veterinarians Act brings to address concerns through education, retraining and rehabilitation rather than punitive measures. As such the Council is delighted that Grahame has agreed to stay on as a member of the Complaints Assessment Committee at least until the New Year.

The Council will miss Grahame's wise comments and considered approach and wishes him all the best for the future. Grahame's significant contributions to the regulation of the profession will be formally acknowledged by Council at a farewell function in the New Year.



## Welcome to Peter Jerram

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Peter Jerram is the newly elected veterinarian on the Veterinary Council.

Peter graduated from Massey in 1979. He is recently retired, having worked in mixed practice for 28 years. He originally worked as a large animal vet, later as a small animal practitioner with a

large input into managing an expanding practice. He has a particular interest in canine reproduction.

Peter has served on two Council Judicial Committees and as such has some understanding of the roles and responsibilities associated with Council membership.

Peter is a keen outdoorsman and with his wife Ally lives near Blenheim where they have raised 3 children, and now grow figs commercially.

Peter considers that there is a need for experienced Council members with strong beliefs in the importance of professionalism, business and personal ethics, and the ability to apply common sense. He is looking forward to his role as a Council member and is keen to contribute to the regulation of the profession which has given him such a rewarding and interesting career.

Peter will attend his first Council meeting in February 2008

## Newly Registered Specialist: Dr Susan Dykgraaf

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Dr Susan Dykgraaf gained specialist registration in Equine Surgery in November. Dr Dykgraaf is a 1995 Massey graduate and gained a Master of Veterinary Science with first class honours from Massey in 2004. Her thesis was on the effect of early exercise on the articular cartilage and subchondral bone of the distal third metacarpal/metatarsal bones of young thoroughbred horses.

Dr Dykgraaf completed a three year residency in equine surgery at the University of California's Davis Veterinary

Medical Teaching Hospital in 2006 and was awarded a Diploma of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons by examination in February 2007. She completed a one year Fellowship in Equine Surgery in July 2007.

Dr Dykgraaf is a member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists by examination in surgery of horses (2002) and by examination in medicine of horses (2001).

Dr Dykgraaf practises at Matamata Veterinary Services.

## Your views sought on the public display of post nominals and registration of additional qualifications

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Post nominal titles are letters placed after the name of an individual to indicate that they hold qualifications, offices and honours or are members of organisations.

Additional qualifications are qualifications which have been approved by the Veterinary Council for entry on the Register of Veterinarians.

The over use of post nominals can be confusing to the public and create an inflated view of a veterinarian's skills and knowledge.

The Veterinary Council is therefore seeking your views on the following proposed policy and guidance in this area. This is based on similar guidance issued by other regulatory authorities.

### *Proposed Guidance on the use of post nominal titles*

The public display of post nominal qualifications and honorary titles should be limited to:

- Undergraduate or postgraduate veterinary qualifications and New Zealand National Veterinary Examinations by virtue of which registration or specialist registration is awarded eg BVSc Massey 2004 or BVSc Belgrade 1993, NZNVE 2005
- Qualifications approved by the Veterinary Council as additional qualifications for inclusion in the Register of Veterinarians (see opposite for approval criteria)
- Membership of professional bodies (eg NZVA member or MRCVS).
- Civilian and military decorations promulgated in the NZ Gazette

Honorary titles and memberships which do not meet the criteria for inclusion on the Register of Veterinarians should be separated from recognised qualifications in letterhead paper, for example by placing honorary titles and memberships at the bottom of the page.

The above policy should apply to material on public display including:

- signage
- media advertising (including electronic media)

- marketing material
- yellow pages advertising

Veterinarians may advertise their areas of particular interest, but, unless they are registered as a specialist should do so in conjunction with a common descriptor e.g. veterinarian with a particular interest in equine health.

### *Proposed criteria for the inclusion of additional qualifications on the Register*

A qualification will be approved for entry on the Register of Veterinarians if:

- it has relevance to veterinary practice; and
- has been awarded following successful completion of a recognised course of training or study which includes an examination.

A pass in a licensing/registration examination is not considered an additional qualification and will only be included on the register if this was the basis for New Zealand registration.

### *What will adoption of this guidance mean?*

- membership of professional bodies (such as MRCVS) will no longer be approved for inclusion on the register, unless achieved by examination
- veterinarians will not be prevented from advertising memberships/honorary titles in their own material, but these will not appear on the public register of veterinarians
- veterinarians should seriously consider separating out honorary titles and memberships from recognised qualifications the next time they change their stationery, business cards, signage etc
- veterinarians holding additional qualifications and titles which do not meet the new criteria for inclusion on the register will be encouraged to remove these from the register in the next annual practising certificate renewal round.

**Please send your comments by letter or email to the Registrar by Monday 11 February 2008**

## Council meeting dates in 2008



28 and 29 February 2008

27 May 2008

26 August 2008

24 and 25 November 2008

Veterinary Council of New Zealand  
as at 20 November 2007

Back row:

Julie Wagner, Jim Edwards,  
Penny Mudford

Front row:

Grahame Joyce, Ron Gibson (Chair),  
Norm Williamson (Deputy Chair),  
Barbara Benson.

## At a glance.....what's Council been up to?

Ron Gibson, VCNZ Chair attended the Australasian Veterinary Board Council meeting on 22 November	Council staff are busy processing the applications of Massey new graduates	Competency review panel members received training in October in competency review procedures.
Council has participated in November meetings of the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Advisory Council (AVMAC) and its working group on the classification of veterinary medicines under the new ACVM Act	<i>Draft supervision protocols and reporting templates have been developed for use in situations where veterinarians practise under supervision. NZVA input has been sought before they are finalised.</i>	Professor Norm Williamson, Deputy Chair has been involved in accreditation visits to Australian Veterinary Schools as a member of the VSAAC visiting teams.
A Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition (TTMR) Registration application form has been developed for use by Australian registered veterinarians seeking to register in New Zealand. Registration under TTMR is faster than the normal registration process.	The policy on English test requirements has been amended to allow for some flexibility around the 2 year validity of a pass for those who have maintained their English language skills by living, working and/or studying in a country where English is the first language	To capture the experience gained since the implementation of the new Act and to assist with decision-making for the Complaints Assessment Committees and Council decision guidelines are being developed drawing from recent Council and CAC discussions and the decisions and the experience of the other health regulatory authorities.
Registration applicants are now being required to provide letters of good standing from all jurisdictions in which they are currently registered	Council has approved the amended NZVA Code for Writing Prescriptions subject to minor amendments to take account of the ACVM Amendment Act 2007.	<i>A joint VCNZ/ACVM working group has been set up to address the changes to the classification of veterinary medicines and the impact this will have on the Code of Professional Conduct.</i>

## What information about veterinarians is publicly available?

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Under the Veterinarians Act 2005 the Register of Veterinarians is a public document. As such the following information about veterinarians is available publicly:

- name, qualifications and registration status
- details of any conditions on practice arising from competence, health or disciplinary considerations
- whether the veterinarian is suspended and why

The outcome of disciplinary proceedings is also available publicly, as long as the veterinarian has not been granted name suppression.

Council's policy is to not disclose other information about veterinarians unless:

- the veterinarian has agreed to its release
- there is an express statutory requirement
- there is an urgent and overwhelming public interest in releasing the information
- there is an order of discovery from the Court.

As such the following information is not normally available publicly:

- The veterinarian's address and/or phone, fax, e-mail address where the practitioner has not agreed to this being published in the Register
- Current complaints
- Informal complaints
- Past complaints (unless the complaint resulted in a judicial hearing)
- Competence review investigations
- Competence review reports
- Results of competence reviews unless these result in conditions on practice being imposed
- Veterinarian's voluntary health undertakings with the Council

## Your responsibilities under the Veterinarians Act 2005

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As a registered veterinarian you have certain responsibilities under the Veterinarians Act 2005 and its regulations. In particular you must:

- not practise without holding a practising certificate
- provide the information required by the Veterinary Council when applying for a practising certificate along with the relevant fee
- not describe yourself as or imply that you are a specialist, unless you are registered in the veterinary specialty concerned
- notify the Council within one month of changing your name, address or practice
- comply with any conditions that the Veterinary Council may place on your scope of practice
- maintain minimum practising standards
- provide information to the Council's Complaints Assessment Committee on request
- comply with any orders that the Council's Judicial

Committee may make following a disciplinary hearing

- make practice records available to inform any review of your competence
- comply with any requirements arising from a competence review or medical assessment

### Make sure you use your new postcode when writing to us.

New Zealand Post has implemented new postcodes for all mail in New Zealand.

These must be in use from 1 July 2008.

To ensure all our newsletters and other correspondence reaches you, please use your new postcode when advising us of a change of address or in any other communication.

See this website if you do not already know your code:

[www.nzpost.co.nz/Cultures/en-NZ/OnlineTools/PostCodeFinder](http://www.nzpost.co.nz/Cultures/en-NZ/OnlineTools/PostCodeFinder)

## Important notice for veterinarians seeking to employ new staff in December

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The Council offices will be closed for two weeks from 21 December 2007.

Please make sure that any veterinarians you are seeking to employ in December or January are registered and hold a practising certificate before they start practice.

Registration application forms can be downloaded from the Council's website [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz)

Registration applications must be received by Friday 14 December 2007 to be processed before the Christmas period. The Council office will reopen on 7 January 2008

## Pro rata and refund APC fee policy

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*In response to requests from veterinarians who begin or cease practice during the year the Council has decided to introduce a quarterly prorata and refund annual practising certificate (APC) fee policy.*

Council fees are based on cost recovery. As such it is appropriate that:

- part time practitioners are charged the same APC fee as full time practitioners given the costs to the Council remain the same regardless of whether or not the veterinarian is working in a full or part-time capacity
- those who commence or cease practise during the year are charged a reduced APC fee given the shorter registration period and consequent reduced costs to Council
- a fee of \$56 is charged to cover the additional staff time involved in administering pro rata APC fees or refunds

## Reduced fees for those ceasing practice during the practising year

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It is not feasible to introduce a prospective pro rata APC fee for those proposing to cease practise part way through a practising year.

Rather such applicants will be required to pay the full fee up front, and then seek a refund upon ceasing practice.

The onus will be on veterinarians to apply and they must return their annual practising certificate to the Council office to be eligible for a refund.

The amount refunded will be calculated on a quarterly basis and will include an administrative fee of \$56.

Those ceasing practice between January and March, the last quarter of the practising year will not be eligible for a refund. For those ceasing practice before this time the refund will be as follows:

October – December . . . . . \$13

July – September . . . . . \$82

April – June . . . . . \$151

## Pro rata APC fee for those registering during the year

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The fee charged will be apportioned on a quarterly basis and will include an administrative fee of \$56.

Those registering between April and June, the first quarter of the practising year will be required to pay the full APC fee of \$275. For those registering after June, the fee will be reduced as follows:

July – September: . . . . . \$263

October – December: . . . . . \$194

January – March: . . . . . \$125

## Requirements for 24 hour care and emergency response

One of the issues Council has been asked to consider in its review of the Code of Professional Conduct is whether the provisions in relation to continuity of service should be amended.

Currently section 6.5 of the Code requires a veterinarian who undertakes to provide clinical services to make provision or arrangement for these services to be available to bona fide clients at all times. As such if the veterinarian concerned is off duty he or she must ensure that clients can obtain services from another member of the profession with whom prior arrangements have been made.

In addition, in an emergency every clinical practice must be prepared to assist and administer first aid to sick or injured animals when called upon.

### *What is happening overseas?*

The New Zealand requirements are similar to those in equivalent jurisdictions. However there have been two notable changes.

In May of this year the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Western Australia removed the requirements for veterinarians to provide notices stating the name of the nearest veterinary surgeon who has agreed to take emergency calls, and requiring hospitals and clinics to have a telephone diversion system when unattended. This essentially means that there is no longer any requirement for veterinarians to provide after hours care, although it is expected that the majority of veterinarians will continue to provide this service for their clients. The Board has also taken steps to protect animal welfare by allowing certain non-veterinarians to have access to prescription animal remedies and to be able to perform acts of veterinary science usually restricted to veterinarians.

In the United Kingdom the RCVS, after a significant consultation exercise, has retained the requirements for 24 hour care and emergency cover, but has acknowledged that in some circumstances and some regions this might not be possible. As such RCVS has developed a list of factors for veterinarians to consider when asked to:

- Attend an animal away from the practice premises, particularly at night
- Provide emergency services in remote regions or in circumstances where there is inadequate cover of a particular species.

These factors will also be taken into account by RCVS in deciding whether a veterinarian's actions were reasonable in the event of concerns being raised.

### *What is happening in New Zealand?*

The Council is aware that the requirements for 24 hour

cover and emergency response can place considerable pressure on rural and remote mixed and large animal practices, given the veterinarians concerned often need



to travel to the animal and the distances involved can be considerable.

There are reports of particular issues in the Wellington region and the East Coast of the North Island with large animal practitioners not being able to take on additional clients or moving out of large animal practice because of the after hours and emergency care requirements. These issues will be exacerbated if fewer veterinarians choose to enter into or remain in large animal practice.

### *We need your views*

Before considering this issue further the Council is seeking information from the profession about the realities of providing 24 hour cover and emergency care. We need to know the extent of the problem in New Zealand and the specific difficulties veterinarians may be facing in providing continuity of care and/or emergency care.

We are particularly keen to hear from remote, rural and large animal practitioners and those in areas where there is insufficient veterinary cover.

**Please email or write to the Registrar by Monday 11 February 2008**

## Don't forget to renew your practising certificate

Remember current Practising Certificates expire on 31 March 2008.

Applications forms will be sent out in mid January and you must return your completed form and fee by 29 February to be eligible for the rebated fee of \$250.00. The fee for applications received after 29 February will be \$275.62

It is an offence to practise without holding a current practising certificate. The Veterinarians Act 2005 provides that veterinarians who do so commit an offence and are liable on summary conviction to a fine up to \$10,000. Other consequences of not holding a current practising certificate are that you may not be covered by your indemnity insurer or eligible to carry out certification and prescribing activities.