



## Appointment of Janet Eden as CEO/Registrar



The Council has appointed Janet Eden as CEO/Registrar.

Janet had been filling in for Julie Haggie while she was on parental leave. On receiving Julie's resignation, the Council undertook a process to employ a permanent CEO/Registrar. This resulted in Janet being offered and accepting the position.

The Council is very pleased to be able to continue to benefit from Janet's good knowledge of regulatory matters, considerable experience in implementing new legislation and sound track record as CEO and Registrar of the Dental Council.

## We are moving

The Council is moving offices on 23 December.

Our new physical address is  
Level 11, Kordia House, 109 Willis St, Wellington  
All other contact details remain the same

## Christmas Greeting



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

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# Review of the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians

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We are aiming to consult on the revised draft Code of Conduct by mid 2009. The proposed requirements for the management of veterinary medicines will be available on the Council's website [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz) from mid December.

The Code working party, with representatives from the Council, NZVA, the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) Group of NZFSA, MAF and the public, met for the third time at the end of November.

## Proposed requirements for the classification and veterinary management of veterinary medicines (PARS)

The priority for the working group has been to develop draft ethical standards around authorising, dispensing, recommending, selling and using veterinary medicines.

These take into account the proposed ACVM changes to the classification of veterinary medicines and when finalised will refer to explanatory guidance on how veterinarians can best meet the new requirements.

We are planning to issue the draft standards for comment early in the New Year. At the same time ACVM will release its proposed new classification system for veterinary medicines and NZVA will be in contact with members on its role in providing guidance on meeting the proposed new requirements.

Joint ACVM/NZVA/VCNZ roadshows will be held within the first six months of the New Year to discuss the proposals with veterinarians.

The working party is meeting again this month and will be developing proposals on other ethical standards relating to animal welfare, client and professional relationships. This will include consideration of the current requirements around 24 hour and emergency care.

*We will report further in the next NewsBrief.*

## Why do we need to change the Code of Conduct?

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Under the 1994 Veterinarians Act the Code was needed to define all aspects of a veterinarian's performance.

The 2005 Act provided for competency matters to be dealt with by Council in a separate way from discipline matters. This separate competence pathway is now in place.

The revised Code therefore needs to focus on overarching ethical conduct requirements –the sorts of things which if seriously breached could lead to consideration of professional misconduct and possible disciplinary action.

By contrast competence concerns are dealt with in a rehabilitative/ educational way.

There will always be some overlap between the ethical and competence standards. Performance that falls significantly below the expected competence standards and which has been conducted in a reckless or negligent manner could become grounds for professional misconduct charges.

## 2009 Annual Plan Initiatives

To advance its strategic plan objectives the Council has approved a number of new initiatives, over and above business as usual in 2009.

These include:

- Pursuing electronic systems for verification of registration and APC applicants' good standing status with trusted regulatory authorities
- Producing an annual workforce analysis
- Convening a working party to make recommendations on a future continuing professional development framework
- Training for Competency Assessment Panel members
- Completing the review of the Code of Professional Conduct
- Researching and making recommendations to Government on the regulation of veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians
- Training for Complaints Assessment Committee and Judicial Committee members
- Governance training for Council
- Reviewing and improving communication with the profession and other stakeholders

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

The Council offices will close on 24 December and reopen on 5 January 2009

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 Tuesday 16 December 2008 to be processed before the Christmas period.**

You can check a veterinarian's registration and practising status on the online register of veterinarians on the website.

### Results of the 2008 New Zealand National Veterinary Examinations (NZNVE)

Twenty three candidates sat the Preliminary Registration Examinations this year. Ten candidates were resitting. Of these 23 candidates, 4 passed overall and another 9 achieved a conditional pass (meaning they must pass the final examination on the first attempt or resit and pass the Preliminary Examination before being eligible to resit the final exam).

Nine candidates sat final examination at Massey University in late November. Of these 1 passed overall, 4 need to re-sit supplementary exams and 4 failed.

### Council meeting dates in 2009

2 and 3 March

25 May

31 August

30 November/1 December

### Newly Registered Specialists

Dr Michael Reichel –  
Veterinary Public Health

Dr Tamas Ambrisko –  
Veterinary Anaesthesia

## Finalised competency standards

Please familiarise yourself with the standards the Council expects veterinarians to meet. These are included in the perforated last page of this newsletter.

Thank you to all who responded to the request for comments on the draft competency standards and performance indicators for veterinarians.

Your feedback was taken into account in finalising the standards which have now been gazetted as the practising standards the Council:

- expects veterinarians to meet at the point of initial registration and on an ongoing basis
- uses to measure an individual veterinarian's performance during the competency assessment process

We recommend you retain the copy provided.

### Why aren't there different standards for new registrants and more experienced vets?

These are not needed because the standards take into account the concept of 'reasonableness'. This means that the Council and its Committees, when considering compliance with standards will be looking at the standard reasonably to be expected of the individual veterinarian concerned taking into account the practice environment, experience levels and the views of informed peers.

### Are the standards set in concrete?

No. While the gazetting process means that the standards have the legal status of regulations, changes can be made very quickly by publishing a notice in the weekly NZ Gazette - without reference to the Parliamentary process.

The Council will review the standards on a regular basis and is very open to receiving suggestions for change.

### Do I have to comply with all the competency standards?

We recognise that very few veterinarians engage in the full range of practice they trained in. While the standards are reasonably generic there may be some that are not relevant to your practice, particularly if you are engaged in non clinical activities. As a registered professional you have a responsibility to maintain competence in the field of activity you practise in and not to work in a field you have not practised in for five years or more without Council approval.

(refer to the Council's policy on Recency of Practice at [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz))

### What do I do if compliance is outside my control?

You must comply with Council standards unless there is a good reason for not doing so.

The Council and NZVA are developing guidance on what to do if compliance is beyond your control. Meantime we offer the following advice:

If you can't comply because this is outside your control you must take all reasonable steps to comply. These steps will depend on your individual circumstances but we recommend:

- where compliance is not possible and is associated with, for example, resource constraints or practice policy, bring the non-compliance to the attention of someone (such as your employer) who can do something about it. Keep a record.
- where you are providing services which don't fully comply with Council's requirements, provide the best possible care. Record the reasons why.
- that if the point comes where the "best possible care" is such a departure from expected standards that it poses a risk to the public interest and animal welfare then you may need to decline to provide the service. This will be a question for your professional judgement taking into account Council requirements and accepted practice standards. Where there is any doubt, seek advice, for example from a senior colleague, your employer or NZVA. The Council can also provide advice and assistance in this area. The client will need to be involved in the decision in a way that is consistent with the informed consent process. Keep good records of this.

## How can I get more information?

Please contact the Registrar by phone or email: [registrar@vetcouncil.org.nz](mailto:registrar@vetcouncil.org.nz)

We welcome invitations from groups, such as NZVA regional or special interest branches, to attend meetings to talk about standards issues, the new competency processes or any other topical issues.

Contact the Registrar to arrange.

# Annual Practising Fees for 2009

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## Fees remain the same but an increase may be required in 2010

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 Council expects its end of year position at 31 December 2008 to be a surplus of around \$36,000 with a balance of \$860,000.

Significant additional expenditure is planned in 2009 to advance strategic plan initiatives and to take account of increased property rental and salary costs. Council has therefore prepared a deficit budget for the 2009 year which will reduce reserves by \$200,000.

An adequate reserve level is required to provide a buffer against unforeseen events such as court action or increases in the number of disciplinary cases.

The Council remains 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.

However serious consideration will need to be given to increasing the APC fee in 2010 to ensure adequate reserves. Your views will be sought before the Council makes any final decision.

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## Don't forget to renew your practising certificate

*Remember current Practising Certificates expire on 31 March 2009.*

Application forms will be sent out in mid January and you must return your completed form and fee by 28 February to be eligible for the rebated fee of \$250.00. The fee for applications received after 28 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.

## Who needs a practising certificate?

*If you are registered with the Veterinary Council and are seeking to practise from 1 April 2009 you must hold a practising certificate.*

The Council defines practice in this context as wider than clinical practice to include reporting or giving advice in a veterinary capacity, regulatory and compliance functions, teaching, consultancy, research and management roles, given that such roles influence clinical practice and impact on the public interest.

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## Are your contact details recorded correctly?

The public register of veterinarians and list of practices and employers are online at [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz). These are updated daily.

Please check your entry.

If details are incorrect, please email the changes to [vet@vetcouncil.org.nz](mailto:vet@vetcouncil.org.nz).

If you have changed your contact details during the year, you may wish to revisit your options as to which of those details you want published in the online register.

We can only publish your contact address, the name of your practice, your phone and email details if you agree. Again, email any changes to [vet@vetcouncil.org.nz](mailto:vet@vetcouncil.org.nz).

If you need an electronic or hard copy of the complete register or practice list please contact us. We are intending to make PDF versions available on the website for downloading, but this facility may not be available until the New Year.

## Continuing Professional Development

*Council is introducing compulsory continuing professional development (CPD) requirements for the issue of a practising certificate. This won't happen overnight and your views will be sought before the Council makes decisions on the future CPD framework.*

Currently the Council requires veterinarians to report on their CPD activities, even if this is a nil return. Engaging in CPD is not compulsory, but failing to keep up to date is taken into account when concerns about an individual's conduct or competence arise.

CPD requirements for the issue of an annual practising certificate are the norm for most professions in New Zealand and for veterinarians in some Australian states.

At its meeting last month the Council agreed with the NZVA's submission that CPD should be a mandatory component of ongoing registration.

The provisions around mandatory CPD need to be realistic and relevant and

to be worked through carefully with the profession. As such the Council is establishing a working party with NZVA, VetLearn and Government veterinary participation, to develop recommendations on a future CPD framework. This will include what the mandatory requirements should be, guidance on identifying, planning and recording CPD, the length of the CPD cycle, the approval of structured CPD and CPD providers, verification and compliance monitoring and how non compliance will be handled.

The current Council system for recording CPD activities is not working well and more user friendly systems are needed. As such the Council is supportive of NZVA's plans for an electronic CPD recording system modeled on the AVA system.

The aim of CPD is to ensure vets are up to date, maintain standards and engage in life long learning. In looking at mandatory requirements the Council recognises that most vets currently participate in CPD

activities and maintain standards. As such any new system will be, in essence, a formalisation and recognition of the investment veterinarians have already made into quality improvement. For the majority of vets compulsory CPD will not require any more activity that is already being undertaken. There is a minority however for whom CPD is a relatively new activity and it is perhaps this group that is at greatest risk of failing to maintain essential competencies.

In establishing the requirements Council is keen to be as flexible as possible - so that the variety of continuing competency measures which are already in place can be recognised and incorporated into the framework.

We will report on the working party's progress in future NewsBriefs and seek your views before any final decisions are made.

## In brief.....what's Council been up to?

Reminded wholesalers of the need to ensure veterinarians accessing veterinary medicines hold a current practising certificate by checking the online register of vets	<i>Reviewing the memorandum of understanding and operational agreements with the NZFSA Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines and Compliance Investigation Groups</i>	Discussions with NZVA on standards, proposals to regulate veterinary technicians and nurses and continuing professional development requirements for the issue of a practising certificate
Continued participation in 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	Meetings with MAF, NZVA and Massey representatives on strategies to address the rural veterinarian shortage including debt relief.	<i>Discussions with NZFSA Compliance Investigation Group officers to improve information exchange and reporting on issues of mutual interest.</i>
<i>Discussions with Australian authorities over admitting final veterinary registration candidates into each others exams in the event of under or over subscription</i>	Reinstatement of the recognition of Irish veterinarians who graduated from NUI up to and including 1988 (previous recognition was from 2004 onwards only)	<i>Approval of Competency Standards, Competency Assessment Policies and Tools for use in Competence Assessment</i>
Produced a new information booklet "What Happens at a VCNZ Judicial Hearing"	Approved the establishment of an additional VCNZ office position to assist in managing the increased workload associated with the new competency provisions	A disciplinary hearing was held in Auckland in November. At the time of writing the Judicial Committee's decision on the professional misconduct charges had not been released.
Council representatives met with the new Minister Hon David Carter to discuss current issues	<i>Review and confirmation of all registration and governance policies</i>	Defended allegations in Judicial Review proceedings, the outcome of which is not yet known.
Norm Williamson, Deputy Chair participated in the accreditation visit to assess the Queensland veterinary science degree course	<i>The Registrar met with the Companion Animal Society Executive to discuss current Council issues and CAS proposals for refresher and retraining programmes for vets returning to practice</i>	A team of 2 vets and one layperson undertook the first competence assessment of a veterinarian's practice under the new legislative provisions.



## Competency Standards and Performance Indicators for Veterinarians

### Introduction

The Veterinarians Act 2005 requires the Veterinary Council to:

- register persons and assess whether veterinarians meet the requirements for continued registration or eligibility for a practising certificate
- set and implement standards for veterinary performance
- prescribe minimum practising standards relating to the maintenance, examination or improvement of the overall competence of a veterinarian to practise

The Act also provides the Council with the ability to review veterinarians' competence to practise.

The purpose of this document is to:

- set out the competencies Council expects veterinarians to meet at the point of registration and on an ongoing basis
- provide criteria against which an individual veterinarian's performance may be measured

These standards and performance indicators are based on the current graduating competencies of BVSc (Massey) students and as such are subject to change.

The Council recognises that veterinary practice is complex and encompasses clinical and non clinical activities. The "Competency Standards and Performance Indicators for Veterinarians":

- do not necessarily cover all aspects and areas of a veterinarian's practice; and
- some of the competency standards will not be relevant to the work of veterinarians engaged in non clinical practice.

In considering an individual veterinarian's competence the Council will also take into account the performance standards considered reasonable by informed peers.

The Council considers that a competent veterinarian is one who applies knowledge, skills, attitudes, communication and judgement to the delivery of appropriate veterinary services in accordance with their field of veterinary practice. In considering how well a veterinarian is working, consideration must be given to the demonstration of competence through performing the tasks required in their field of veterinary practice, to an acceptable standard and to be able to do this on a consistent basis.

## Competency Standards and Indicators

The veterinarian must:

**1. Understand the scientific and evidence basis for veterinary medicine and integrate this knowledge into current practice**

**Indicators:**

- Demonstrates an understanding of the preclinical and paraclinical factors in veterinary practice
- Demonstrates an understanding of recent developments in veterinary practice, the evidential base of veterinary practice and new treatment modalities based on research
- Demonstrates an understanding of relevant pharmacology, drug interactions and adverse reactions
- Demonstrates the ability to find, utilise and manage information
- Uses this to inform effective practice
- Makes valid judgements and deductions on the basis of scientific evidence and information available
- Communicates this knowledge to clients and the wider community

**2. Obtain and record relevant information sufficient for analysis, diagnosis and retrieval**

*Obtain by interview and examination a relevant, accurate and detailed history of animals presented and record this information logically, legibly and securely*

*Carry out a thorough systematic physical and clinical examination of the animal presented*

*Where indicated, carry out or arrange such diagnostic tests and procedures (such as haematology, pathology, radiology and imaging) as are needed to make a diagnosis*

*Know when to investigate the environment in which the animals under investigation are kept*

**Indicators:**

**Records:**

- show an adequate and accurate history
- contain an adequate record of the physical and clinical examination
- are legible, time bound and retrievable
- are treated as confidential to the owner or agent and are not divulged to others without consent, unless there is a legal obligation to do so
- contain results of diagnostic tests and procedures as appropriate to diagnose and manage the individual case
- appropriate radiographs or images taken of adequate diagnostic quality
- contain detail, where indicated, on the environment in which the animals under investigation are kept
- contain evidence of adopted treatment strategies
- retain evidence of consent to the treatment plan strategies

- should be of such detail that another veterinarian could take over the management of the case at any time

**3. Analyse information to enable accurate diagnosis and develop appropriate treatment strategies**

*Assess the history, physical and clinical examination outcomes and diagnostic tests.*

*Evaluate the effect of the environment in which the animals are kept, if indicated*

*Identify problems and their causes*

*Develop a diagnosis or diagnostic hypothesis*

*Identify contra-indications and consequences of intervention*

*Develop appropriate evidence based strategies for dealing effectively with commonly diagnosed conditions and diseases*

*Fully inform the client of treatment options, likely outcomes, risks and costs and obtain their informed consent to proceed with treatment or undertake post mortems*

*Recognise personal limitations in dealing with unfamiliar, complicated or technically difficult cases and seek further advice and assistance, or refer such cases to others*

**Indicators:**

Demonstrates and records:

- adequate analysis of information collected
- accurate diagnosis
- adequate, evidence based treatment strategies, including the appropriate use of veterinary medicines
- client's informed consent
- advice sought from other veterinarians, where appropriate

**4. Know when and how to refer**

*Recognises the limitations of knowledge and experience and refers for advice and/or treatment in situations where the animal requires a greater level of knowledge and/or skills*

**Indicators:**

- Obtains advice from other veterinarians where necessary
- Makes appropriate referrals
- Completes and provides relevant documentation

**5. Implement safe and effective veterinary procedures and therapeutic strategies**

**Indicators:**

- Approaches, handles and restrains animals in an effective, safe, humane and ethical way which is appropriate to the circumstances
- Reaches sound conclusions following routine post mortem examination of common domestic animals
- Carries out therapeutic procedures on animals to maximise the likelihood of a

satisfactory outcome and minimise the risks of untoward effects for the animals themselves and public health and safety, food safety and quality

- Demonstrates appropriate and responsible use of veterinary medicines
- Records and monitors therapeutic procedures
- Follows up therapeutic responses and modifies approach where appropriate
- Recognises and records requirements for analgesia and/or anaesthesia
- Safely induces, maintains and monitors analgesia and anaesthesia and takes steps to ensure safe and humane recovery
- Carries out surgical procedures using appropriate techniques and procedures before, during and after surgery that minimise the risk to the animal and maximise the likelihood of a successful outcome
- Undertakes accurate pre-operative assessment, uses correct techniques to minimise trauma and gives adequate post operative instructions and follow up care
- Deals effectively with the immediate emergency needs of animals and ensures the relief of pain and suffering
- Evaluates the need for euthanasia and when required carries it out safely and humanely, with the informed consent of the owner (where known) and using procedures appropriate for the species concerned and the circumstances

#### **6. Use veterinary skills and knowledge to:**

- prevent and relieve animal suffering
- maintain and enhance the health, productivity and well being of animals
- promote and protect public health, animal product safety and certification and New Zealand biosecurity

#### **Indicators:**

- Demonstrates understanding of the importance of the unique disease status of New Zealand
- Recognises exotic and/or notifiable diseases and takes appropriate action, including communicating to those with a need to know
- Understands the principles and practice involved in controlling the spread of diseases
- Provides appropriate first level advice on the public health implications of animal diseases
- Assesses the need for and advises on the implementation of programmes to promote the health, well being and productivity and performance of animals through such means as dietary management and feeding, vaccination, preventive and curative treatments for common diseases, housing and general management, training and behavioural management and modification.
- Understands animal welfare issues and

recognises the special responsibilities of veterinarians in safeguarding and promoting animal welfare, including communicating to those with a need to know in the event of concerns

- Understands, advises on, and complies with the procedures and animal welfare, ethical and statutory requirements relating to the transport and hygienic production and processing of animals for food and other animal products
- Understands the regulatory and professional requirements for the inspection and certification of animals and animal products (including germplasm and those products intended for human consumption)
- Understands the basic requirements for the production of safe food and other products of animal origin including the compliance verification and quality assurance procedures involved
- Maintains the integrity of veterinary certification by complying with all legal and professional requirements, ensuring that certified statements are accurate and that there are no conflicts of interest which could impact on professional judgement.

#### **7. Communicate effectively**

##### **Indicators:**

Demonstrates:

- effective oral and written communication skills
- an understanding of verbal and non verbal means of communication and cultural differences
- good listening skills
- avoidance of jargon
- effective conflict management techniques

With clients demonstrates:

- rapport, sensitivity, empathy, courtesy and respect
- clear and accurate explanations of findings, treatment options and likely outcomes in easily understood language
- client's understanding of the information provided is confirmed
- the need for sensitivity and support for grieving clients in situations of euthanasia

With other veterinarians

- refers where necessary
- seeks advice where necessary
- provides advice on diagnoses, treatment and prognoses to referring veterinarians in a timely manner
- works collaboratively and avoids negative public comment about others

#### **8. Practise in a professional, ethical and legal manner**

##### **Indicators:**

Demonstrates understanding of, and complies with the professional and

legislative requirements relating to veterinary practice in New Zealand including:

- the Veterinarians Act 2005
- the VCNZ Code of Professional Conduct
- the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) Act and related requirements
- Medicine and Misuse of Drugs Act
- Legislative requirements regarding the safe and secure storage of drugs and the recording of their use
- the Animal Welfare Act, relevant Codes of Welfare and in research situations, the Code of Ethical Conduct for the Use of Animals in Research of the organisations responsible for the research
- Occupational Safety and Health legislation
- Radiation Protection Act
- Employment Relations Act
- Relevant rules of the Racing or Harness Racing Conferences, Greyhound Association or similar bodies
- Nationwide schemes, relevant to their practice, such as the Bobby Calf Antibacterial Residues Prevention Scheme, Tb Quality Assurance Scheme, National Velveting Standards Body Accreditation Programme and the National Bovine Tuberculosis Pest Management Strategy.
- The Resource Management Act 1993 in relation to the disposal of dead animals

Practises ethically and upholds the public's trust in, and integrity of the profession by:

- using knowledge and skills for the benefit of society
- maintaining an appropriate standard of personal and professional behaviour
- ensuring the continuity of clinical services for bona fide clients
- administering emergency first aid and pain relief to sick or injured animals when called upon
- cooperating with and working collaboratively with colleagues, support staff and clients
- maintaining knowledge and skills through continuing professional development
- practising within the boundaries of competence (except in an emergency where immediate relief of pain is required)
- ensuring that newly registered or inexperienced veterinarians are supervised and supported
- reporting to the Veterinary Council in situations where a colleague's competence or health condition appears to be placing the public interest at risk