



## Goodbye and Good luck to Julie Haggie



At its last meeting the Council received Julie Haggie's letter of resignation.

Julie has been on parental leave from the CEO/Registrar position since August 2007 and has decided that, in the short term, she does not wish to juggle child rearing with the demands of a full time job.

Julie gave the Council six years of excellent service and was held in very high regard for her great communication and liaison skills, her sound advice, thoroughness and efficient management of the Council office.

We wish her all the very best and much joy in her new role.

The Council is currently setting up the process for employing a permanent Registrar/CEO.

## VCNZ 2007 Annual Report

In the last NewsBrief we advised that the VCNZ Handbook will not be published this year and that we will use the savings to fund the major review of the Code of Professional Conduct.

Traditionally the Handbook has included the Council's annual report together with

the Register of Veterinarians, a list of practices and the Code of Professional Conduct. All of this information can now be found on the Council's website: [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz)

Those needing a hard copy can obtain this on request from the Council offices.

## International 'consultations'

The Council has recently considered a query about the legality of overseas veterinarians providing advice, on request, to New Zealand veterinarians on patients located in New Zealand.

The Council has decided that in such circumstances the overseas veterinarian

does not have to be registered in New Zealand provided the patient is under the care and clinical responsibility of the New Zealand veterinarian who has requested the advice.

## Recording of Massey qualifications on the Register of Veterinarians

Some Massey graduates may notice that the year they graduated has been changed on the Register of Veterinarians. Massey degrees are normally conferred in May, some seven months after the last year of study. In some cases in the past the year of graduation was incorrectly recorded as the last year of study. The Register is being amended to correct this.

You can check your register entry at [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz)

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## MAF Biosecurity request for comments

MAFBNZ is seeking submissions from all interested parties on any aspect of the:

- revised Official Assurance Programme for live animals and germplasm
- MAFBNZ Policy for managing conflicts of interest when providing official assurances for export of live animals and germplasm.

These documents, and a submission form, are available on the MAFBNZ website: [www.biosecurity.govt.nz/biosecconsult/oap-live-animals-germplasm](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/biosecconsult/oap-live-animals-germplasm).

Hard copies of these documents can also be obtained on request.

All submissions must be received by MAFBNZ no later than 5pm on **Friday 1 August 2008**.

MAFBNZ commenced reviewing the Official Assurance Programme (OAP) for exporting live animals and animal germplasm in July 2007. The project had a wide scope extending from examining the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the system through to revising and developing standards needed to deliver a robust and transparent system.

Following the close of submissions, all feedback will be analysed and the final OAP prepared. A document summarising the submissions will be made public and distributed to each submitter.

The revised OAP for live animals and germplasm will be issued on 1 September 2008. Implementation will be staged according to the table below.

## Implementation for revised OAP and MAFBNZ Conflict of Interest Policy

Date	Target activity
1 September 2008	Revised OAP and MAFBNZ Conflict of Interest Policy are issued.
30 November 2008	Authorised persons, recognised agencies and recognised persons will develop procedures to meet specifications of the revised OAP and MAFBNZ Conflict of Interest Policy.
1 December 2008 - 31 January 2009	MAFBNZ will work with the organisations above to clarify and rectify any issues.
1 February 2009	Exporters must operate under the revised OAP, unless specific dispensations are given by MAFBNZ to export under the previous OAP. Semen centres and embryo teams will operate under the previous OAP until their respective audits for approval are due.
1 May 2009	All exporters must operate under the revised OAP from this date. No dispensations will be granted.

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

Adoption of a strategic plan for 2008 – 2012 (available at <a href="http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz">www.vetcouncil.org.nz</a> Under "News and Issues")	Completion of the annual audit process which resulted in an unqualified and positive audit report	Mounting a stand at the NZVA conference
Continuing to participate 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 ACVMA Act	Ron Gibson, VCNZ Chair attended a meeting with MAF officials and NZVA and Massey representatives to develop strategies to address the rural veterinarian shortage	Ron Gibson, VCNZ Chair and Nick Twyford, CAC Chair participated in the Massey Veterinarian Leadership experience involving three days of team building for identified Massey veterinary students
Investigating electronic systems to verify veterinarians' good standing status with overseas jurisdictions	Ron Gibson, VCNZ Chair attended an educational forum in April which identified a number of strategic priorities for Australasian veterinary education.	Nick Twyford participated in a joint session on complaints at the NZVA conference with VPIS representatives and lawyers
A submission to the Australian Productivity Commissions review of the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition scheme	Reviewing the content of the annual workforce survey with a view to producing a meaningful analysis of the veterinary workforce on an annual basis	The Chair and Registrar attended the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council meeting in Perth
The Complaints Assessment Committee met with VPIS representatives in April	Presentations to final year Massey students as part of the Prelude to Practice	Developing competency review tools

# Information from the Register of Veterinarians

## Gender and ages of practising veterinarians – June 2008

Age Range	Females	Males	Total
20 - 25	62	17	79
25 - 30	171	67	238
30 - 35	220	97	317
35 - 40	186	141	327
40 - 45	170	142	312
45 -50	124	182	306
50 - 55	81	211	292
55 - 60	38	166	204
60 - 65	9	131	140
65 - 70		54	54
70 - 75		19	19
75 - 80		7	7
80 +		4	4
Totals	1061	1238	2299

## Retention rates of Massey New Graduates 1994 – 2008

Registration year	Practising in NZ April08	Practising certificate not renewed	Overseas	Total	Percentage practising in NZ
1994	42	13	9	64	66%
1995	54	16	12	82	66%
1996	48	21	15	84	57%
1997	29	11	4	44	66%
1998	34	13	10	57	60%
1999	55	9	13	77	71%
2000	35	12	19	66	53%
2001	27	11	11	49	55%
2002	37	17	26	80	46%
2003	36	25	14	75	48%
2004	31	5	7	43	72%
2005	47	13	8	68	69%
2006	23	6	6	35	66%
2007	64	11	1	76	84%
Totals	562	183	155	900	62%

## Work type (%) of veterinarians in New Zealand in 1999 and 2007

Work type	1999	2008
Animal welfare	2	3
Beef cattle	8	6
Dairy cattle	10	13
Deer	7	3
Horses	9	9
Poultry	1	0.3
Sheep	8	6
Animal health	1	1
Wildlife	2	1
Birds	8	4
Cats	17	14
Dogs	16	13
Goats	5	0.4
Meat Certification	2	9*
Practice management	4	3
	100	83.7**

\* includes compliance, biosecurity, export certification. \*\* other minor categories not included were exotics, consultancy, epidemiology, goats, lifestyle blocks, pigs and teaching

## New Registrations in 2007 (by country)

Great Britain	52
New Zealand (Massey)	77
Australia	17
USA	17
The Netherlands	10
Ireland	7
South Africa	4
Canada	4
Germany	2
Czechoslovakia	2
Jordan	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>

## Newly Registered Specialist - Dr Dawn Seddon

Dr Dawn Seddon gained specialist registration in Veterinary Clinical Pathology in May 2008.

Dr Seddon is a 1991 Pretoria graduate who registered in New Zealand in 1999. She completed a three year senior clinical training scholarship, which included a MSc with distinction in Veterinary Pathology at the Royal Veterinary College, University of London in 1998.

Her elective research project during her training was on osteosarcomas in dogs – looking at p53 and other markers for means of histochemical identification.

Dr Seddon was awarded a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists – Clinical Pathology in 2007.

Dr Seddon works for Gribbles Veterinary Pathology, Hamilton as a diagnostic pathologist.

## Wine Winners

Many thanks to the 80+ vets attending the NZVA conference who helped test proposed multi choice questions for the National Veterinary Registration Examination.

The winners of the wine were Mark Mirkin and Juliet Matthews.

# Competency Standards for Veterinarians

## Your views sought on competency standards and performance indicators for veterinarians

The Council is seeking your views on the draft competency standards and performance indicators it has developed to:

- set out the competencies expected for registration as a veterinarian in New Zealand
- provide criteria against which an individual veterinarian's performance may be measured

A summary of the draft competency standards is set out below. A full copy of the policy document with accompanying performance indicators is available on the Council's website: [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz) under "News and Issues". A hard copy can be obtained on request from the Council's office. Please send your comments to the Registrar by Friday **15 August 2008**

The Council considers that a competent veterinarian is one who applies knowledge, skills, attitudes, communication and judgment 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 to an acceptable standard and to be able to do this on a consistent basis.

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

## Draft Competency Standards

The veterinarian must:

1. Understand the current scientific basis of veterinary practice and integrate this into effective practice
2. Obtain and record sufficient information
3. Analyse information, diagnose and develop effective treatment strategies
4. Know when to refer
5. Implement safe and effective veterinary procedures and therapeutic strategies
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

7. Communicate effectively
8. Practise in a professional, ethical and legal manner

Veterinary practice is complex and encompasses clinical and non clinical activities. The draft competency standards and performance indicators do not necessarily cover all aspects and areas of a veterinarian's practice. In addition some of the competency standards will not be relevant to the work of veterinarians engaged in non clinical practice.

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

## Report on Complaints received in 2007



Fifty four complaints were received in 2007, 34 of which reached the threshold for preliminary investigation by the six alternate VCNZ Complaints Assessment Committees (CACs) active in 2007.

The standing CAC of Drs Nick Twyford and Grahame Joyce and layperson Mary Mountier considered the bulk of the complaints, with other CACs being convened in the event of their unavailability or possible conflicts of interest.

Preliminary investigation normally involves the CAC seeking the comments of the veterinarian involved which are then considered alongside the original

complaint. Eighteen of the 34 complaints preliminarily investigated in 2007 did not reach the threshold for further investigation, 4 were withdrawn by the complainant and 2 are on hold. As such 22 of the complaints received in 2007 are now closed, and 10 have been carried forward into 2008.

CACs also continued their investigations of 14 complaints received in 2006, making a total of 48 complaints actively investigated during the 2007 year.

Thirty one of the 2006 and 2007 complaints investigated in 2007 are now closed. In 22 cases (71%) the outcome was decided based on the initial letters and in 8 cases further information was sought. Whilst a higher number of complaints than usual were not investigated, the initial assessment and consideration for most of those un-investigated complaints was lengthy.

In one complaint parties were interviewed. Five complaints received in 2006 have not yet been resolved and in these cases as well as in 5 complaints from 2007

the CAC has sought formal or informal legal advice from its legal assessor. In 15 cases the CAC considered the complaint unfounded and took no action, in 11 cases it found some justification for the complaint and made recommendations to the veterinarian, in 2 cases it referred the complaint to mediation and in 3 cases, all involving one veterinarian, it referred the matter to the Council's Health Committee.

Five of the 2007 complaints did not involve a complainant, having been referred from Council under section 39 of the Act on the basis of information received.

Further detail is set out in the complaints summary on page 5.

**Serving on a CAC is not an easy job – particularly for the veterinarian members. The Council is very grateful to those who recognise the profession's duty to self regulate and who despite heavy workloads and the sometimes thankless task, continue to contribute in this area.**

## Complaints Summary 2003-2007

	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
Number of Complaints	54	45	55	49	47
<b>Complaint Category</b>					
Inappropriate Behaviour	5	5	0	16	0
Unsatisfactory Treatment	29	28	27	16	25
Unprofessional/Unethical Behaviour (incl PARs)	18	13	27	16	19
Fees Charged	2	1	1	1	3
	<b>54</b>	<b>48*</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Species/Type</b>					
Cat	12	9	18	9	16
Dog	23	17	17	17	18
Horse	3	3	3	4	2
Other	2	1	0	1	3
Prescription Animal Remedy Issue	5	3	2	2	2
Behaviour	9	9	15	16	6
	<b>54</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Complaint Outcome</b>					
No professional misconduct	10	19	25	22	21
No professional misconduct, advice given	10	8	12	11	17
Diversion (no longer applicable)	0	0	0	1	0
Charges laid	0	1	2	4	1
Did not reach criteria/withdrawn	22	9	18	12	14
	<b>42</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>57*</b>	<b>50*</b>	<b>53*</b>
Uncompleted at reporting time	8	8	-	-	-
Mediation attempted	1	2	0	2	0
Referral for health assessment	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Timeframes for completion of investigation</b>					
1-3 months	37	24	33	34	29
4-6 months	5	7	16	13	13
7+ months	12	14	6	2	5
	<b>54</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Complaint/investigation originated by</b>					
Client	35	30	37	30	34
Another veterinarian	6	5	7	11	6
Referral from Council	5	9	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

\* Note: Variations in the figures under 'complaint category' and 'complaint outcome' can arise because some complaints have more than one issue, or have been lodged against two or more veterinarians.

## Who needs to register as a trader of restricted veterinary medicines?

Veterinarians' attention is drawn to recent ACVM advice on who needs to register as a trader of restricted veterinary medicines.

Some veterinary products have restrictions on their sale and use. This means that the affected products can be sold only by ACVM Group recognised/approved traders.

### Vets who are considered approved

Veterinary registration and a current APC is sufficient for recognition/approval as a trader:

- if you only sell products directly to your clients as a result of veterinary consultations
- if you do not operate a retail outlet
- if you do not involve non-veterinary staff in sales transactions.

### Vets who need to apply for approval

You need to apply to be a recognised/approved trader:

- if you operate retail outlets and/or involve non-veterinary staff in sales transactions of these restricted sale products
- if you offer or promote the selling/supply of prescription animal remedy (PAR) products under a prescription or authorisation of another veterinarian.

### Operating plans required for recognition/approval

If you do have to be recognised/approved, you must supply information to ACVM in the form of an operating plan that documents how you meet the requirements of the *ACVM Standard for Prescription Animal Remedy Veterinary Medicines* and the conditions of registration of restricted

sale products. It must also specify your trading sites and the person responsible for the trading activities. The plan will be reviewed as part of your recognition/approval.

### Next step if you are not recognised/approved

If you meet the criteria above and have not made an application for recognition/approval as a trader, please refer to <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/acvm/subject/approved-traders/index.htm>

The current register of recognised/approved traders is on the ACVM website at <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/acvm/register-lists/par-traders.htm>. If you are already recognised/approved, please check your details on the register and notify the ACVM Group of any changes. Use the 'contact this person' option at the bottom of the VetQuickSearch home page to email ACVM.

## Review of the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians



A working party, comprising Council, NZVA, NZFSA, MAF and lay representatives, is meeting this month to progress the review of the Council's Code of Professional Conduct.

The Council has agreed that the revised code should be a much shorter document. The aim is to provide veterinarians with a set of overarching ethical principles which they can apply to a variety of situations—

rather than trying to address every possible scenario.

Advice will also be provided on where to find further information.

At its meeting this month the working group will be focusing on the development of these high level ethical principles and draft guidance on the authorisation and use of restricted veterinary medicines. We will report further in the next NewsBrief

## Veterinary Council policy on competence assessment

Under the Veterinarians Act 2005 the Council can review a veterinarian's competence to practise on its own initiative or on the recommendation of a Complaints Assessment Committee. If competence is found wanting remedial measures can be put in place.

At its last meeting the Council provisionally approved a draft policy on how it will implement the competence assessment provisions.

The Council signaled this work and the direction it was taking, in the October 2007 NewsBrief and sought comment. In developing the policy the Council therefore took into account the feedback received from the profession and the preliminary views of NZVA. The policy is based on the competence assessment policies and experiences of the human health regulatory authorities, who have had the ability to undertake competence assessments for some years.

The Council is seeking feedback on its approach to the implementation of the competency assessment provisions. A summary of the Council's policy on competence assessment is set out on pages 7 and 8. The full document is available on the Council's website: [www.vetcouncil.org.nz](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz) under "News and Issues". Hard copies are available on request from the Council's office. Please send your comments to the Registrar by **Friday 15 August 2008**.

# Summary of Veterinary Council policy on competence and competence assessment

## Introduction

The Veterinary Council's principal purpose is to protect the public interest by ensuring that veterinarians are competent and fit to practise – not just at the time of initial registration, but on an ongoing basis.

There are two strands to the Council's competency provisions. The first is focused on the profession as a whole and is aimed at ensuring that veterinarians continue to be competent by maintaining recency of practice and engaging in continuing professional development. The second strand relates to the few individuals whose competence has been called into question. The Act allows the Council to assess the veterinarian's practice and to put in place remedial measures if competence is found wanting.

### Determinants of a Competence Assessment

The following factors increase the probability of underlying incompetence and may, in combination, or on their own, lead to a competence assessment:

- A pattern of poor standards of care or performance over a period of time, that suggests that the veterinarian's practice may not meet the required standard of competence
- The magnitude of the mistakes – evidence of a significant knowledge or skill deficit or a one off serious departure from accepted standards of practice
- Working in a professionally isolated environment or in an environment which does not assist the maintenance and/or development of competency.

### When competence assessment is not appropriate

The following factors decrease the likelihood of Council deciding to assess the competence of a veterinarian:

- the matter would be more appropriately dealt with by other agencies such as the Courts, the Police or Government agencies and does not directly relate to professional or clinical competence
- the matter is one of professional misconduct which is more appropriately dealt with by the Complaints Assessment Committee.

## Veterinary Council Approach to Competence Assessment

Competency assessments do not investigate complaints and are not a disciplinary process. They are designed to be evaluative, educational and rehabilitative in nature and based on thorough, transparent and fair processes.

Competence assessment is however a formal statutory process which can have significant consequences for the veterinarian concerned. In recognition of the anxiety that they can cause, they are also as consultative and supportive as possible.

The fact that a veterinarian is undergoing a competence assessment is not public information.

### Notification to the Veterinarian

If the Council is considering undertaking a competence assessment the veterinarian will be advised of why and asked to comment. The veterinarian is also asked to comment on any factors, such as personal health, environmental, managerial, or systems which may be impacting on his or her practice and what steps have been taken to address these.

If, after receiving the veterinarian's comments, the Council decides that a competence assessment should be undertaken, the veterinarian is provided with the reasons for the decision to carry out the assessment and asked to comment

on the proposed terms of reference and membership of the assessment team. The Competence Assessment Team (CAT) is a committee of Council.

The veterinarian is given brief background details of the proposed assessors and may request a change if he or she perceives a conflict of interest or lack of expertise to assess his or her specific practice. Such a request will be carefully considered, but may not be granted.

The veterinarian is also advised of:

- the requirement to make practice records available to the assessment team
- his or her right to have a support person or observer present during the assessment
- Council's expectation that s/he will inform their employer and relevant others that the competence assessment is taking place
- his or her opportunity to comment on the assessment team's report before it is considered by Council

### The Competence Review Committee and Competency Assessment Teams

The Council's Competence Review Committee (CRC) is responsible for overseeing the competence assessment process. When Council has made a decision to require a veterinarian to undertake a competence assessment, the CRC develops the terms of reference for the review,

appoints assessors and a convenor, and provides support and guidance to the Competence Assessment Team (CAT) undertaking the assessment.

The Council maintains a panel of trained veterinarians and laymembers who are available to undertake competence assessments. A Competence Assessment Team of up to 3 members is appointed from the panel of assessors. Members usually include a person familiar with assessment methods and a peer practising in the same branch of veterinary medicine as the person being assessed. One person will be appointed to convene the assessment team.

### Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the assessment provide a summary of why the competence assessment is being carried out and outline the scope of the assessment. This is usually focussed on the area/s of concern which prompted the assessment, but may be more general depending on the individual circumstances of the case.

The competency assessment is not a 'fishing expedition'. However if the Competence Assessment Team identify any other competence issues during the course of the assessment, which would normally be serious enough to warrant concern, these are notified to Council.

The assessment wherever possible uses standard assessment techniques (e.g. structured interviews, communication

skills, clinical case management, records assessment and practice systems) but some aspects may need to be adapted to meet the needs of the particular assessment. The terms of reference contain suggestions on the tools most suitable to use for the particular circumstances.

## Competence Assessment Process

The Competence Assessment Team will visit the veterinarian in his or her place of work. The veterinarian can expect the onsite part of the assessment to last one day and may have a support person present.

Within a month of conducting the assessment, the Competence Assessment Team will write a draft report to the Council with a recommendation on whether the veterinarian's practice meets the standard of competence reasonably to be expected of a veterinarian practising in the relevant area of practice.

Where the team is of the opinion that the veterinarian does not meet the required standard of competence the report will also include recommendations to Council on:

- how the deficiency or deficiencies might be overcome;
- whether an educational programme would be appropriate, and if so the scope of such a programme;
- other requirements to promote and ensure competent practice - whether by conditions placed on the veterinarian's

registration or practising certificate or by voluntary agreement; and

- the method/s by which the veterinarian should be reassessed after any educational programme and/or completion of other requirements

The veterinarian is provided with a copy of the draft report and asked to comment and the Competency Assessment Team takes these comments into account in finalising its report to Council.

A copy of the final report is provided to the veterinarian who is invited to make submissions to Council, either in writing or in person.

The Council considers the report together with any submissions from the veterinarian. The veterinarian or the convenor of the CAT may be present at the Council meeting.

If the Assessment Team has determined that the veterinarian does not meet the required standard of competence, then the Council may take one or more actions under s60 of the Act. These include cancelling or suspending the veterinarian's registration or practising certificate or imposing conditions on the veterinarian's practice.

However the Council has decided that its use of these statutory suspension, cancellation or conditions on practice provisions will only be used in situations where the veterinarian is not co-operative and his or her practice falls below the

required standard and poses a significant threat to the public interest.

As such, the usual outcomes of a competency assessment process, if the veterinarian's practice does not meet the required standard of competence, will be a voluntary agreement with the veterinarian to undertake an educational programme and/or practise under certain requirements such as supervision, oversight, limitations on the range of practice or practical experience. Such agreements are not noted on the veterinarian's public register.

## Appeal rights

The competence assessment process observes the rules of natural justice.

A veterinarian has no appeal rights under the Veterinarians Act regarding the Council's decision to require him or her to undergo a competence assessment. However the veterinarian may seek judicial assessment on the process the Council has undertaken in reaching any decision

Under s64 of the Veterinarians Act a veterinarian may also appeal to the District Court against any decision to suspend his or her practising certificate or registration or to impose conditions

## Costs of the Assessment

The Council pays for the costs of any competency assessment. The veterinarian meets the costs of any subsequent educational programme or other requirements such as supervision.

## Competency Assessment Process

