



Seasons Greetings

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.



The New Zealand Veterinarian workforce – survey results

The Council has released the results of the first annual veterinarian workforce survey.

Information about the New Zealand veterinary workforce has for a number of years been collected by the Council via a questionnaire completed at the time veterinarians renew their annual practising certificates.

In 2009, driven by concerns about the shortage of veterinarians in rural areas, the scope of the questionnaire was widened and the Council agreed to commission and publish an analysis of the workforce data on an ongoing basis.

Key facts from the survey follow.

- At 30 June 2009 there were 2360 practising veterinarians which represents 58 veterinarians per 100,000 head of population. The number of veterinarians ranged from 14 per 100,000 in the Carterton District to 246 per 100,000 in Matamata-Piako
- The active workforce has increased by 29% since 2002.
- Women veterinarians now comprise 47% of the active workforce
- Thirty one percent of the active workforce received their primary veterinary degree overseas. Graduates from the United Kingdom comprise the largest group of international veterinarians (9%) followed by Australia (8%)
- Based on details provided for the 2008 practising year, 34% of veterinarians worked with large animals, 39%

with companion animals and 26% in laboratories, regulatory activities, teaching, research and epidemiology

- There has been a progressive aging of the workforce. In 2009 veterinarians 25 – 30 years of age comprised 10% of the active workforce, a decrease from 12% recorded in 2002. This is matched by an increase in the numbers of veterinarian aged 50 - 55 years of age from 10% in 2002 to 13% in 2009.
- For New Zealand trained veterinarians first registering with VCNZ in 2002 and 2003, 85% and 83% respectively continued to take out an APC after 3 years. For 2004 and 2005 Massey graduates the 3 year retention rate was 93% and 91% respectively. Retention rates for international graduates were in general less than that of Massey graduates. There was a high rate of loss after two years which likely reflects these veterinarians returning to their country of origin following a working holiday in New Zealand. Ongoing monitoring of this aspect of the profession will allow trends in retention to be identified with greater certainty.

A copy of the full report can be found at <http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/pubs.php>

The workforce analysis relies on veterinarians' willingness to complete the workforce survey and the Council thanks the profession for its continued cooperation.

Dr Mark Stevenson undertook the analysis of the statistical information and developed the report. The Council is very appreciative of his contribution

Inside this Issue

The New Zealand Veterinarian workforce – survey results	1
Formalisation of VCNZ and NZVA working relationship	2
The Council office will be closed from 4pm Thursday 24 December until Monday 11 January.	2
Council meeting dates in 2010.....	2
Toxic Algae Warning.....	2
2010 Annual Plan Initiatives.....	2
Annual Practising Fees.....	3
Don't forget to renew your practising certificate.....	3
Can retired veterinarians use the courtesy title "Doctor"?.....	3
Outcomes of Council Performance Analysis..	3
Review of the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians	3
Recency of Practice Requirements for new graduates	4
Registration application and letter of good standing fees to rise.....	4
In brief.....what else has Council been up to?.....	4

Contact

Veterinary Council
of New Zealand
PO Box 10-563
Wellington
Level 11
109 Willis St
vet@vetcouncil.org.nz
www.vetcouncil.org.nz

The Council office will be closed from 4pm Thursday 24 December until Monday 11 January.

Registration applications must be received by Monday 21 December 2009 to be processed before the holiday period.

Council meeting dates in 2010

1 March, 24 May, 30 August, 29 and 30 November

Review of the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians

The Council thanks those veterinarians who have taken the time to provide comments on the drafts of the proposed ethical requirements applying to client and professional relationships.

The Code Review working party met in October and was to have met in early December but this meeting has been deferred until early February.

We will report progress in the next NewsBrief.

Toxic Algae Warning

Environment Canterbury has asked that vets be alerted to the likelihood of algal mats recently noticed in Canterbury rivers being *Phormidium*. Contact by skin or swallowing can cause rashes, skin and eye irritation, allergic reactions, gastrointestinal upset, and other effects in humans and animals.

For further information refer to: <http://ecan.govt.nz/services/online-services/monitoring/swimming-water-quality/Pages/river-warnings.aspx>



Richard Wild, NZVA President and Ron Gibson, VCNZ Chair sign the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations.

Formalisation of VCNZ and NZVA working relationship

The Veterinary Council and Veterinary Association have strong mutual interests in promoting and maintaining high standards of veterinary practice.

While the two organisations have separate and distinct functions, it is in the best interests of the profession and the public if a co-operative working relationship is maintained.

VCNZ and NZVA have therefore formalised their existing collaboration in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU is aimed at enhancing the way the two organisations work together by clarifying roles and responsibilities, providing clear lines of communication and avoiding duplication of effort.

A copy of the MOU is available at <http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/pubs.php>

2010 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 2010. These include:

- ♦ Reviewing the equivalency of the New Zealand and Australian final registration examination for overseas veterinarians holding non prescribed qualifications
- ♦ Developing a manual of procedures for Final NZNVE examiners
- ♦ Finalising and consulting on the proposed continuing professional development framework
- ♦ Developing guidance for veterinarians supervising other veterinarians, for example those returning to practice after a break, or those with a health condition which impacts on their fitness to practise
- ♦ Finalising and consulting on the revised draft Code of Professional Conduct
- ♦ (subject to Cabinet approval to proceed with legislative change) establishing a working party to consult on, and develop an implementation plan for, the regulation of para-professionals including Massey Bachelor of Veterinary Technology graduates and veterinary nurses
- ♦ Reviewing current means of communication with a focus on increasing understanding of the Council's functions and the statutory and legal restraints within which it must operate

Annual Practising Fees

The APC fee for 2010/11 is increasing from \$275 to \$320

At its meeting on 30 November, and following consultation with the profession, the Council agreed to increase the annual practising fee by \$45 with a \$20 rebate for early payment.

The APC fee was last increased nine years ago. While the Council continues to carefully manage funds obtained from fees there have been substantial increases in the costs of goods and services over the last 9 years and more recently significant additional costs associated with developing

and implementing the health and competence assurance provisions of the Veterinarians Act 2005 and conducting a major review of the Code of Professional Conduct.

Further increases in the APC fee may be required in 2011 and 2012 but this will be examined in mid 2010.

The Council remains committed to ensuring that it operates in a cost effective manner while ensuring an appropriate balance is maintained between ensuring the effective discharge of its statutory responsibilities and affordability for veterinarians.

Outcomes of Council Performance Analysis

The Council thanks those individuals and organisations who took the time to provide feedback on the Council's work.

Twenty-six responses were received, 8 from organisations, 16 from veterinarians and 2 from non veterinarians. The small number of replies received, wide variation in the responses, and incomplete questionnaires makes it difficult to draw any overall meaningful conclusions. For example while organisations rated Council's overall performance as 7.6 on a scale of 1 to 10, veterinary respondents rated it as 5.2, the low score reflecting their individual concerns about the management of the complaints processes.

Despite this the Council has taken in, and will be addressing, the following issues arising from the feedback:

- Greater 'face to face' engagement with the profession
- Raising awareness of the legal and statutory constraints the Council and its Committees must operate within
- Educating veterinarians and the public on the differing roles and functions of NZVA and the Council
- From 2010, providing more

information on the outcomes of Complaints Assessment Committee cases through anonymised reporting in NewsBrief and on the website

- Encouraging the profession's full participation in the November 2010 election process for the 3 elected veterinary members of the Council
- Examining Council and Committee composition, terms of appointment and succession planning
- Continuing to address process issues associated with complaints assessment and investigation
- Providing more information on registration requirements and the registration examination process
- Continuing the focus on early resolution of complaints and rehabilitative measures to address concerns while ensuring that disciplinary measures are strenuously pursued where there is reckless or repeated breaches of, or willful disregard for, the required standards
- Encouraging and increasing awareness about notifying concerns about poor performance or conduct and the associated information requirements

Further detail on the feedback received and an analysis of comments is available from the Council office on request.

Don't forget to renew your practising certificate

Remember current Practising Certificates expire on 31 March 2010.

Application forms will be sent out in mid January and you must return your completed form and fee by 26 February 2010 to be eligible for the rebated fee of \$300. Applications for renewal at the full fee rate of \$320 must be returned by 24 March 2010 to ensure your APC is able to be issued by 1 April.

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 practicing certificate?

If you are registered with the Veterinary Council and are seeking to practise from 1 April 2010 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.

Can retired veterinarians use the courtesy title "Doctor"?

Veterinarians are entitled to use the courtesy title "Dr" provided that in doing so there is no inference or suggestion that they hold a PhD (when they do not) or are a medical practitioner.

There has been confusion over whether those who have retired from practice can continue to use the courtesy title. This has arisen because the Veterinarians Act defines a veterinarian as a person who is registered and holds a current practising certificate. As such it could be considered that the use of the courtesy title implied that the person concerned was entitled to practise as a veterinarian.

However the Council considers that retired veterinarians should continue to be able to use the courtesy title "Dr" provided they do so with the descriptor 'retired veterinarian'.

Registration application and letter of good standing fees to rise

The Council is giving notice that it intends to increase fees for registration applications and letters of good standing from 1 March 2010. Prior to doing so it invites comment from the profession.

The Veterinarians Act 2005 requires the Council to be guided by the following principles in setting fees:

- The fees must be fair and reasonable
- The income from fees must provide the Council with adequate funding to carry out its functions
- The structure of the fee system should seek to eliminate any cross-subsidisation between fee payers.

The one-off registration application fee that vets pay when first registering with the Council has remained at the same level since 2000. So has the fee for a letter of good standing. In addition the same application fee has applied for Massey new graduates, overseas applicants and those seeking registration in a limited scope of practice - even though the costs of assessing the applications vary considerably.

The Council has reviewed the level of fees, using a robust costing model which takes into account both direct and indirect costs for each activity.

The current fees do not cover costs which means that veterinarians are subsidising these services through their annual practising certificate fees.

To ensure cost recovery the fees need to increase as follows:

- ~ Massey new graduate registration application fee: \$307 (from \$247.50)
- ~ TTMRA registration application fee: \$307 (from \$247.50)
- ~ Registration application fee for overseas applicants holding prescribed qualifications and for registration examination applicants: \$337 (from \$247.50)
- ~ Limited registration application fee: \$743 (from \$247.50)
- ~ Letter of good standing fee: \$61 (from \$25)

Please send any comments on the proposed fee increases to the Registrar at janet.eden@vetcouncil.org.nz by Friday 22 January 2010.

The review also examined registration examination and specialist registration fees and Council will be re-looking at these after further information has been obtained on AVBC and Massey charges.

Going forward Council has agreed to review all fees on at least a three yearly basis.

Council Reappointment

The Minister has recently reappointed laymember Barbara Benson for a second term of three years expiring on 31 December 2012

Newly Registered Specialist

Congratulations to Dr Michael King who has recently gained specialist registration in Small Animal Surgery

Recency of Practice Requirements for new graduates

Following consultation via the last NewsBrief the Council has agreed to amend its recency of practice policy to ensure that sufficient measures are in place to protect the public interest and support new graduates who do not commence practice until one or more years after graduation.

The revised policy will require any recent graduate who has not practised within a year of graduation to seek the Council's approval before doing so.

In brief.....what else has Council been up to?

Met with NZFSA officials to discuss veterinary operating instructions and proposals to address the current variations between NZFSA and VCNZ standards.	Signing of a revised Memorandum of Understanding and Operational Agreements with NZFSA.
Provided the Minister with the finalised submission on proposed changes to the legislation to accommodate the regulation of para professionals.	Continued participation in meetings of the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Advisory Council (AVMAC)
Norm Williamson, Deputy Chair, participated in the first combined accreditation site visit to Murdoch University. The team included representatives from AVMA, RCVS, AVBC and observers from EAEVE and the South African Veterinary Council.	Staged the final registration examination at Massey University. Four candidates passed, two passed supplementary examinations and three failed overall.
Met with NZVA Board.	Chair attended AVBC meeting in Melbourne.
Finalised an agreement with AVBC around the final examination of each others candidates in the event of a shortfall or over subscription in either country.	Defended an appeal in the District Court against a Judicial Committee decision. Hearing adjourned to January 2010 pending receipt of a report the Court has requested from the Judicial Committee.
Approved revised financial management and reserves policies.	Undertook a facilitated team management profiling session.