



VCNZ at NZVA Conference



Janet Eden (Registrar VCNZ) on left, Helen Beban (Professional Advisor VCNZ) with Stuart Bruere at the VCNZ stand.

Thanks to all those who visited our stand at the NZVA Conference and attempted, and gave feedback on the questions we were trialing for inclusion into the Australasian National Veterinary Examination. This is the means by which veterinarians who do not hold approved qualifications can demonstrate their competence to be

registered in New Zealand. 51 veterinarians completed the 20 question trial. Results were anonymous. Your comments as to the suitability of the questions for clinical practice were most appreciated. Winner of the case of wine was Catherine Watson from Invercargill (right). Congratulations Cath!

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Maintaining New Zealand’s Biosecurity

MPI recently conducted a survey to determine the awareness of veterinarians of important exotic diseases and how to respond if they suspect an exotic disease incursion. The awareness of most veterinarians was high, however those trained overseas had less awareness of New Zealand’s system which protects our unique biosecurity status. MPI in conjunction with VCNZ has developed a flyer that details what to do if you suspect an exotic disease or pest. The Exotic Disease Hotline (0800 80 99 66) is staffed 24 hours a day. If you see something that makes you suspicious of an exotic pest or disease while on a farm visit,

stay on the farm and call the hotline. You will get a call back from one of the veterinarians in the incursion investigation team immediately. They will talk you through your concerns and how to respond. The flyer will be sent to all new registrants with the VCNZ. You can download this at: http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/documentation/Other/VCNZGuidance_VeterinariansRoleInMaintainingNZs-Biosecurity.pdf Veterinarians play a vital part in the front line to protect our biosecurity. The experts at MPI are there to guide you. Remember, help is just a phone call away.

To report suspected exotic land, freshwater and marine pests, or exotic diseases in plants or animals, call:

0800 80 99 66

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



Visit www.mpi.govt.nz for more information on exotic pests, diseases and biosecurity issues in New Zealand

NZVA, VCNZ Social Media Guide for Veterinarians

Whether you are a committed user of social media or a complete novice, we hope you'll find this guide useful. It aims to provide you with useful tips on responsible social media use to keep you professionally safe in your role as a veterinarian; whether in clinical practice, government, industry or academia. Increasingly kiwis use social media to inform and influence buying decisions. 90% of kiwis between 19 and 39 now use social media (Colmar Brunton research, July 2013). The all-important "baby boomer" market are big users of social media with 66% of people aged 65-69 using social media. The guide discusses ways to leverage

social media for your veterinary practices. Relevant sections of the Code of Professional Conduct (COPC) which relate to social media are outlined in the guide. You will find the examples that show potential pit-falls in the use of social media, which could expose you to complaints being laid with VCNZ especially helpful. Social media offers opportunities and risks. Use this guide to protect yourself and your practice and make the most of



what social media offers.
http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/documentation/Other/VCNZ_NZVA_SocialMediaGuide.pdf

Are vaccination "books" veterinary certificates?

Most veterinarians use booklets supplied by vaccine manufacturers to record vaccinations given to cats and dogs. These booklets often have other information/purposes as well: information about the breeder, information about the health of the pet at the time the vaccination was given, weight, areas where pet owners can record when and what external and internal parasite treatments are given. We commonly call these "vaccination certificates" **but we should be aware that the term "veterinary certificate" has a precise definition and must meet specified standards.**

The Explanatory Notes to the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians, Professional Integrity section part 2 "Veterinarians must maintain the integrity of certification," provides detailed information on obligations for veterinary certification.

http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/CPC/ProfIntegrity/CPC_ProfIntegrity.php

This section is vital for the integrity of certification for trading access of animals and animal products. It is also pertinent to the exportation and importation of cats and dogs.

Veterinary certificate of vaccination

Only a veterinarian can certify (sign) a veterinary certificate and only if he/she can personally verify the validity of the information being attested (and confirmed by his/her signature and status as a veterinarian). This means that the veterinarian must actually administer the vaccine or must witness the vaccination being given.

If a veterinary nurse administers the vaccine, the veterinarian must observe this (be present in the room) in order to sign a veterinary certificate that the vaccine has been administered. A certificate signed by a nurse for a veterinarian (pp the veterinarian) is not a valid veterinary certificate of vaccination.

If you are issuing a veterinary certificate of vaccination, make certain that ALL necessary details are contained in the document.

Check your compliance with the VCNZ requirements for a veterinary certificate: http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/CPC/ProfIntegrity/CPC_ProfIntegrity.php

Record of vaccination

The booklets that we commonly call vaccination certificates provide historical information about the vaccinations administered and treatment dates. This is useful information for pet owners and for veterinarians. They can also be used as a record of vaccination status for admission to a boarding kennel or cattery. Such a record of vaccination can be signed by a non-veterinarian (such as in the case of a veterinary nurse acting under approved Veterinary Operating Instructions (VOIs) as long as the certificate of vaccination is not identified as a veterinary certificate and it is clear that the certifier is not a veterinarian. The vaccine type and date of administration can be verified by the administrator identifying the administrator as a non-veterinarian

(such as a veterinary nurse). This could not be used as a veterinary certificate for export, and this needs to be clearly communicated to the breeder/owner.

Some commonly used booklets have a heading "Veterinarians signature". If this format is to be used by a non-veterinarian as a record of vaccination, confusion can occur. Practices allowing non-veterinarians to vaccinate under VOIs need to consider this.

A vaccination certificate or record of vaccination must have enough information to identify the animal and the owner. In short fill out the booklet fully and carefully and make sure that non-veterinarians are aware of the issues around providing accurate, full details.

How should a vaccination record/certificate be identified as a duplicate?

Requests for duplicate vaccination records are common situations: where a booklet is lost or the client forgets to bring in the original booklet. The clinic could provide a non-certified vaccination record setting out the previous vaccinations.

In summary

It is not appropriate for a vet nurse to pp a veterinarian's signature on a veterinary certificate. Remember that a vaccination certificate is not complete without details which identify the animal and the owner. For litters of puppies or kittens, ensure the breeder details (or SPCA details) are completed.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Auditor Training Day

In preparation for the pilot CPD audits in September/October 2014, VCNZ held a training day for CPD auditors in July. Catherine Watson, Chris Hutchings, Nigel Coddington, Ian Walker, Pieter Verhoek and Callum Irvine took part. Barbara Benson (lay member of VCNZ Council) gave the auditors a brief history of the development of the Compulsory CPD Framework. A working party was set up in 2009 convened by Peter Jerram (VCNZ). The group comprised: Tony Zohrab (NZFSA), Hans Andersen (NZVA), Andre van Halderen (MAF), Liz Norman (IVABS), Peter Jolly (VetLearn) and Barbara Benson (VCNZ). CPD frameworks operating in other jurisdictions were examined including: RCVS (UK), AVA Vet Ed, Veterinary Council Ireland, Pharmacy

Council NZ, Dental Council NZ, Physiotherapists Board NZ and NZ Medical Council. The draft CPD framework was consulted on in October 2010. There were 46 responses and 85% of the respondents supported the proposals. The final framework is a "high trust" model. It is up to individual veterinarians to plan their CPD and decide if appropriate learning took place. Verification of participation is required and veterinarians are encouraged to self-reflect on the impact of the learning on their practise. It was recognised that some of the best learning can occur in informal setting such as over lunch! Collegial learning activity is an important requirement in the new framework. Deputy Registrar (Despina Arathimos) took the group through the revised CPD Information for Veterinarians.

This document gives you all the information you need to get to grips with the new framework. See: <http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/documentation/CPDInformationforVets.pdf> Professional Advisor (Helen Beban) went through the CPD Auditor's Handbook and report template. A sample CPD record was analysed by the group. The group also completed another sample, including a report, individually and results were discussed to ensure consistency of interpretation and report writing. VCNZ has already had contact from veterinary clinics wanting to prepare for CPD auditing by doing internal audits. This is a great idea and one that we can help you with. Contact Helen Beban if you would like assistance with internal CPD audits: helen.beban@vetcouncil.org.nz

What to do when the pet owner refuses euthanasia

Veterinarians have both a legal (Animal Welfare Act 1999) and professional responsibility (Veterinary Council of New Zealand (VCNZ) Code of Practice for Veterinarians (the Code), to remedy situations where they are aware an animal(s) is in unnecessary pain or distress. This includes the need to administer first aid and adequate pain relief (and even euthanasia) whether or not payment can be made at the time of the treatment. In rare circumstances this also applies where the owner refuses euthanasia. The over-riding priority is to ensure that animal welfare is not compromised.

Where the veterinarian decides euthanasia is required and the owner disagrees, the owner has the right to seek a second opinion from another veterinarian provided this is within a reasonable time frame and the pet's welfare is not compromised. This may include the second veterinarian actually coming to your clinic if you cannot provide adequate pain relief and means to adequately transfer the pet. This may be the case in spinal injury cases. Be patient and try to give the owner time to come around to the decision

themselves if you can provide adequate pain relief. This may include some time with the pet at home if this can be appropriately managed. Owners need to understand their responsibilities under the Animal Welfare Act and to appreciate your responsibilities as a veterinarian. Hopefully you can discuss this with the owner in a non-threatening way but you may need to outline Section 11 of the Animal Welfare Act for them or even put this in writing as a last resort. VCNZ recommends that you seek the assistance of "an Inspector or auxiliary officer appointed under the Act" in situations where you decide an animal should be euthanased but the owner is not known or where the owner disagrees. An SPCA Inspector is appointed under the Act to make these decisions and the involvement of the SPCA is strongly advised. If an SPCA Inspector is not available, the assistance of a Police Officer (also appointed under the Act) is recommended. In all cases it is important that you ensure informed consent has been obtained and documented if at all possible. This may include the signing of

a Euthanasia Consent Form or signing over the pet to the SPCA, but informed consent is a process and is more than simply signing a form. The pet owner must understand the process. If this is not possible it is vital that the process you followed is fully documented in the clinical record.

A recent case brought to our attention demonstrated how involving the SPCA can be very beneficial for the pet owner and veterinarian. The case involved a pet severely mauled by a dog. The owners could not afford the extensive treatment necessary and the prognosis was guarded. The owners would not consider euthanasia for religious reasons. The veterinarian sought assistance from the local SPCA and the owner was offered the option of signing the pet over to the SPCA. The SPCA and veterinarian could then work together to determine the best outcome for the pet regardless of financial and religious considerations. In the end the owner decided to sign the euthanasia form, rather than hand the pet over to the SPCA. A similar case in late 2013 was resolved by the owner signing the pet over to the SPCA.

Outcome of VCNZ Judicial Committee hearing

In a disciplinary hearing on 8 May 2014 the Judicial Committee considered charges of professional misconduct brought by a Complaints Assessment Committee (CAC) on the grounds that the veterinarian concerned had inappropriately, and without the authorisation of his employer, or the clients concerned:

- altered the practice computer system to change 23 telephone numbers relating to 21 clients and/or email addresses (by making those details incorrect);
- altered the practice computer appointment diary by removing details of 9 future bookings which had been scheduled for the veterinarian;
- altered the practice computer appointment diary by removing details of bookings completed by the veterinarian when aware or ought to have been aware that this would make it difficult for the practice to be able to invoice for the services provided.

The veterinarian concerned did not dispute the facts, acknowledged that his actions were unprofessional and apologised unequivocally.

His actions were taken following the breakdown of an agreement to purchase shares in an existing practice, which he had resigned from his previous employment to join. The withdrawal of the offer of practice ownership caused him considerable emotional and financial stress and he felt “used” having contributed to growth of the practice by the introduction of new clients. The records altered were associated with the contact details of the clients he had introduced to the practice.

During the hearing it was made clear that the Judicial Committee did not have any authority to sit in judgement on the negotiations that took place between the veterinarians concerned, nor to question or assess the motivations of the other veterinarian.

While acknowledging the veterinarian’s motivations in taking the actions he did, the Judicial Committee considered that he was wrong to do so. **In altering records belonging to another party for his own personal gain and protection, the veterinarian breached the requirements of the Code of Professional Conduct.**

The Judicial Committee found the charges of professional misconduct proven, determining that:

- the public are entitled to know that the records kept by veterinarians concerning the services rendered for them and their animals are accurate and the records passed from one veterinarian to another will be accurate such that there can be continuity of good practice in provision of care for their animals.

- the veterinary profession must have its standards maintained by ensuring honesty between veterinarians and the accuracy of record keeping.

The following mitigating factors were considered by the Judicial Committee in deciding on appropriate penalties:

- the alteration to records were made to preserve the good will that the veterinarian had with the clients concerned so that they could be carried on to his future veterinary practice
- no clinical records were altered in any way that posed any risk to the animals concerned

- the alterations were corrected in a short timeframe so any risk was minimised
- there was no harm or loss to any client, or animal, or to the business of the other veterinarian
- the veterinarian showed significant contrition, cooperated with the CAC process and presented very reasonable submissions.

The veterinarian was censured and ordered to pay 25% of the costs of the CAC and Judicial Committee proceedings.

Name suppression of the veterinarian and other interested parties was also granted, with the Judicial Committee noting that the veterinarian’s interests in re-establishing himself professionally, in the context of the disappointments and outcomes of the shareholding negotiations, outweighed the interest of the public in having his name published.

This case highlights the high level of integrity, accountability and professionalism veterinarians are expected to maintain in their record keeping. It is not acceptable to tamper with records no matter what the mitigating circumstances may be.

The outcomes of this case also show the power of apology and accepting responsibility for one’s actions; and the value of cooperating with CAC investigations and disciplinary proceedings.

The Judicial Committee’s full decision can be found here (<http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/committeeFind.php>)

Workforce Issues

The Council began tracking workforce data and publishing an annual workforce analysis in 2009. Data for the surveys is drawn from a questionnaire voluntarily completed by veterinarians when they apply for a practising certificate. The 2012/13 New Zealand Veterinary Workforce survey attracted 2219 responses, representing a 96% response rate.

Key facts from the 2012/13 workforce analysis

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Size of workforce	a	2,275	2,312	2,360	2,392	2,425	2,521	2,608
% change from previous year		+4.8	+1.6	+2.1	+1.4	+1.4	+4.0	+3.5
Vets per 100,000 population	b	54	54	55	55	55	57	59
Percent IVG FTEs	c	-	-	27	28	28	28	28
Percent women FTEs	d	-	-	42	43	43	45	47
Percent specialist FTEs		-	-	-	2.7	2.6	2.9	3.0
Median age (years)		-	-	43	43	43	43	43
Average routine work hours	e	-	-	42	42	41	41	41

a Numbers of practising veterinarians with an APC on 30 June of respective year.

b Population counts from Statistics New Zealand http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population.aspx.

c IVG: international veterinary graduate full time equivalents.

d Number of women FTEs divided by the total number of practising veterinarian FTEs.

e Average routine work hours per week, includes activities carried out as a veterinarian during business hours as well as veterinary work done while on call. The full report is available on the Council’s website. http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/documentation/VCNZ_VeterinaryWorkforce2012-13.pdf

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