



Veterinary Council Update January 2015

Tail docking, APCs and MPI Voluntary Bonding Scheme

1. Docking of dogs tails by lay persons – Request for information by 13 February 2015

At a recent Veterinary Council meeting with local practitioners in Christchurch tail docking was raised as an issue. We are interested in hearing whether veterinarians are seeing any cases of tail docking by lay persons not being done in accordance with the minimum standard (below) or cases where docking has led to problems for the puppies.

The 2011 revised Code of Professional Conduct does not allow veterinarians to remove dogs' tails, unless for justifiable medical reasons. The explanatory notes to section 6 of the Animal Welfare part of the Code state:

VCNZ considers that amputation of all or part of a dog's tail without having a justifiable medical reason or because the dog is a particular breed, type or conformation is unacceptable. It is the policy of NZVA that tails should not be docked. While the Animal Welfare (Dogs) Code of Welfare 2010 makes provision for tails to be docked (minimum standard 17), allowing a tail band to be used by an appropriately experienced person operating under a documented quality assurance system (such as the Accredited Tail Dockers Scheme promoted by the New Zealand Kennel Club) veterinarians are required to comply with the Code of Professional Conduct as the Codes of Welfare do not necessarily reflect veterinary policy or ethics.

The Animal Welfare (Dogs) Code of Welfare 2010 sets out the following minimum standard (No.17) in relation to tail docking:

- (a) *Tails may only be shortened or removed by using a tail band—*
- (i) in puppies that are less than four days old in which the eyes have not started to open; and*
 - (ii) by a person who possesses the appropriate knowledge, training and competency necessary to do so effectively, and who is acting under a documented quality assurance scheme that assures compliance with this minimum standard; and*
 - (iii) the remaining length of the tail must be sufficient to avoid compromising health and welfare when the dog is mature.*
- (b) *Tails that need to be shortened or removed to manage existing injury or disease, must only be shortened or removed by a veterinarian using appropriate pain relief.*



VCNZ, along with NZVA, submitted to the review of the Animal Welfare Act that all non-therapeutic docking of dogs' tails should be prohibited.

We are seeking information from veterinarians on any cases seen of tails not being docked by laypersons in accordance with the above minimum standard; or where the docking has resulted in adverse outcomes for the puppies.

Please send this – preferably by email to registrar@vetcouncil.org.nz – by Friday 13 February. If you send copies of records or photos please remove identifying details before doing so.

2. Annual Practising Certificate (APC) Renewal

We will be emailing you early next month with instructions and a unique user ID to access and use the online system for renewing your APC. Please make sure we have your current email address, preferably not a shared one. Contact vet@vetcouncil.org.nz if you need to change your email address.

Online renewal will be available during the 'bulk' APC renewal process from early February to 31 March 2015. Online APC applications can only be paid via Credit Card or Bank Transfer (Direct Credit).

If you wish to pay by cheque, or are unable to use the online system, you will need to download a hardcopy application form [here](#); complete and post it to us with the fee.

Please make it a priority to apply for your APC before your current one expires on 31 March 2015.

By renewing your practising certificate the Council is confirming to the public that you are competent and fit to practise. It is illegal to practise as a veterinarian without holding a practising certificate. Those who do, risk prosecution, a fine of up to \$10,000 and lack of indemnity cover.

It is your professional responsibility, not your employer's, to renew your practising certificate. However some large employers require their employees to complete a hard copy application to be collated centrally and forwarded to VCNZ with a bulk payment. Please make sure you are aware of your employer's requirements.



3. MPI Advice to Veterinarians and Practice Principals: Voluntary Bonding Scheme for Veterinarians (2015)

The 2015 Round for the Voluntary Bonding scheme for Veterinarians opens for registrations on Monday 8 February 2015. All applications will be managed through the MPI portal and must be received via this portal by 6.00 pm on Monday 23 February. An application guide will be available on the MPI website before the round opens. The guide will include information about registering to use the portal and the documents needed to support the application.

The scheme is capped at 30 participants. If more than 30 eligible applications are received for a funding round then there will be a ballot to select the 30 participants. In this round, for the first time, a second ballot of the remaining applicants will be run to create a preferential list of eligible applicants. Should a participant from this round leave the scheme within the first two years or insufficient applications are received for the next funding round the first eligible name on the preferential list will be invited to join the scheme.

If you have any questions prior to the commencement of the round please contact MPI directly by emailing vet.scheme@mpi.govt.nz or phoning David O'Dea on 04 819 4216.