



VCNZ update – December 2016

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Welcome to our last update for 2016. The office will be closed from 23 December, reopening after the holidays on 4 January. We wish you all a relaxing and happy holiday break.

Client relationships

We've updated the [Client relationships](#) section of the Code.

We asked for your feedback on this section earlier in the year. The Professional Standards Committee and Council looked at all the feedback before agreeing on the changes which are online now. Thanks to everyone who sent comments.

Vetscript articles

In the [November](#) issue of Vetscript, Wayne Ricketts talks about providing services to clients who don't pay. In [December](#), Wayne looked back at the year and some of the work that VCNZ has been involved in.

Annual Practising Certificate (APC) Fees payable to VCNZ in 2017

The APC fee for 2017 is \$559. An early payment fee of \$533 applies to applications and payments received before close of business on 28 February.

In October we asked for your feedback on a proposed 5.1% increase in APC fees. The increase was to allow us to continue to meet our statutory responsibilities in the face of:

- reduced income from a drop in vets registering and taking out a practising certificate
- a spike in the number of formal complaints and the likelihood of a number of disciplinary hearings in 2017
- unsustainable workload in the VCNZ office arising from increased "business as usual work" including the increasing complexity of complaint cases; additional work associated with the new registrant project; and Council's increased focus on communications and growing links with stakeholders including the profession.

At its November meeting Council spent time reviewing the nine submissions received. Three supported the fee increase, two were against it, and three didn't state a view either way.

Several of the submitters suggested that Council should be operating a user pays model – requiring those making complaints, and the vets subject to the complaints, to contribute to the costs. Another submitter suggested that we should be seeking funding from Government.

The Veterinary Council is a statutory body, operating under the Veterinarians Act. The Act protects your right to call yourself a veterinarian, and to be able to diagnose and treat animals, authorise RVMs and prescription medicines, carry out surgical procedures, certify etc.

Under the Act, members of the public have the right to make a complaint against a vet. The Act doesn't allow us to charge for this. Charging the public to make a complaint would risk judicial review, and conflict with the public and Parliament.

The only time the Act allows us to recoup costs is if disciplinary charges are proven against a vet.

Council sets standards for the whole profession; and must address poor practice and bad behavior, and bear those costs.

Council aims to be a fair and trusted regulator, which works with the profession so the public trusts vets. In accordance with best practice regulation principles, we seek to regulate by:

- maintaining, improving and assuring the professional standards of the overwhelming majority of the profession as well as identifying and addressing the outliers
- ensuring the confidence of both the public and the profession through being impartial. This includes maintaining independence from Government
- not creating unnecessary burdens but being proportionate to the risks we address and the benefit this brings.

After considering the submissions received, Council has decided to proceed with the 5.1% increase in fees.

The 2017 practising certificate fee will therefore be \$559, discounted to \$533, for early payment by 28 February 2017.

Online Annual Practising Certificate (APC) Renewal

You can renew your APC online for the 2017/18 APC renewal round. We'll email you in early February with advice on how to access the online system.

Please make sure we have your current email address, preferably not a shared one. Contact vet@vetcouncil.org.nz to change this.

Online renewal will be available during the 'bulk' APC renewal process from early February to 31 March 2017.

The early payment fee of \$533 applies to applications and payments received before close of business on 28 February. After that the fee is \$559.

Online APC applications can only be paid via direct credit or credit card.

If you wish to pay by cheque or can't use the online system, you can download the application form [here](#).

Please make it a priority to apply for your APC before your current one expires on 31 March 2017.

By renewing your practising certificate the Council is providing an assurance 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.

Requirements for employers bulk paying the APC fees of their employees

If your practice has previously bulk paid the APC renewal fees of your veterinarian employees you can continue to do so.

We emailed the contact person we have recorded for your practice/organisation with advice on what to do on 2 December. Please let us know if you haven't received this by ringing us on 04 473 9600 or emailing vet@vetcouncil.org.nz

As occurred this year, you will need to make payment to the Council's bank account by 31 January 2017 and provide a spreadsheet with the names, registration numbers and amounts paid for each veterinarian, on the same day as the bulk payment is made (or cheque provided).

If you can't meet the bulk payment deadline of 31 January please call Margriet Philipsen or Denise Meuli on 04 473 9600 to discuss your options.