



29 June 2017



Update from the Chair

The Council's role is to set and maintain veterinary standards in a fair and consistent way. As Chair of the Council, I see firsthand how much work Council members, with support from the office, put into this.

However, I'm aware that much of what we do may not be visible to you. And we want to fix that.

The Council makes decisions that affect the whole profession, as well as your clients and the public. We want you to be confident that we're making good decisions. For that to happen, we know you need to know more about what we do, what we're working on, and what happens at Council meetings.

The Council meets in person four times a year. Some of what is said in meetings is confidential – this might be personal information about applicants for registration, or about veterinarians who are involved with us because of health, competence, recency of practice, or conduct issues. We can't report back on everything, but we're going to start updating you about the things we can.

Our last meeting was held last month in Wellington. The agenda is always full, and this meeting overflowed into a teleconference a couple of weeks later.

Here's a summary of what we talked about at that meeting.

- A report back on a recent meeting between staff and the Veterinary Professional Insurance Society (VPIS). We meet regularly with VPIS, who can give us valuable feedback on our complaints process.
- We looked at the strategic and annual plan objectives to check we're on track (which we are so far). The office is working on the next annual report now.
- We're working on a programme for recent registrants. We want to make sure that everyone new to practice in New Zealand is supported. We know that new registrants have a wide range of experiences. We also know that experienced vets who are new to New Zealand will need different support from vets who have just graduated and are new to practice. We're working on ways to support new registrants, and give employers guidelines on what they can do to best support new registrants. Work is underway and we hope we'll be able to update you soon.
- The Professional Standards Committee has been working on infection control guidelines. These were approved and will be added to the Code of Professional Conduct in the near future.
- Each year one of our meetings is held outside Wellington. We have an evening meet and greet/Q and A with local vets after the meeting. It's your opportunity to come and meet the Council and ask us your questions. This November we'll be meeting in Hamilton. There'll be more on this and RSVP details closer to the time. We hope to see some of you there.
- The Council meeting was followed by the two day meeting of the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) in Wellington. This is the first time AVBC has met in New Zealand. It was a great opportunity for all the veterinary boards and councils of Australia and New Zealand to get together and talk about common issues. Because of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement, it's really important that we share an approach to registration issues.

Our next meeting is in August. I'll update you again after that meeting, and in the meantime the office will keep you updated on what's happening.

Nick Twyford
Chair

Supporting recent graduates

If you employ newly qualified vets, you must give them adequate support and training to develop their competence and ensure they practise safely.

If you plan to employ new or recent graduates, you should make sure that both you and the vet you're employing have a clear understanding of expectations around support and training. We strongly recommend that this is recorded in writing for both parties' future reference.

In a recent case looked at by a Complaints Assessment Committee (CAC), three recently registered veterinarians raised concerns about their former employer, who is also a vet. The CAC considered some of the issues raised (such as employment issues) were outside its scope but it considered concerns about a lack of support for new graduates, disparaging other veterinarians, unethical practice, compromising animal welfare, bullying, and manipulation.

The CAC noted the negative impact on both the complainants and the vet complained about. The first few years in practice are vitally important in the development of a new vet's confidence and technical abilities.

No formal action was taken, but the CAC reminded the vet to review the Code requirements around support of newly registered vets. It also strongly recommended that when recruiting a recent graduate, the level of support and training to be provided is documented and mutually understood. The [full decision is on our website](#).

The [Professional Relationships](#) section of the Code says that veterinarians must ensure that veterinary colleagues within the practice are appropriately supported, particularly those who are newly registered or inexperienced.

The explanatory notes add:

- *Newly registered or inexperienced veterinarians may not have had the opportunity to fully develop their skills. All veterinarians in the practice must ensure that inexperienced practitioners are appropriately supervised and supported at all times.*
- *Regular practice meetings, seminars and performance feedback/review meetings together with formal induction of new employees helps ensure that practice values are adopted and professional standards are maintained.*
- *When a veterinarian is subject to Council's competence and/or health processes, their employer is expected to provide them with appropriate support. This includes cooperating with all reasonable Council requests that allow the assessment of the veterinarian and where necessary reassessment or monitoring.*

- *When veterinarians start working at a practice, the relationship and accountabilities should be clearly defined and agreed, in a robust and fair contract or employment agreement. Failure to do so can lead to difficulties and dispute.*



Under stress? Need support?

Vitae offers support and confidential counselling to all vets.

There's a 24/7 phone service available on 0508 664 981.

This service is jointly funded by NZVA and Council.

Update from the SPCA

The SPCA recently voted to form one organisation from its current 45 independent centres.



The goal is to bring the SPCA together so that it can work more effectively as a team and do more for vulnerable animals in New Zealand. [Read more...](#)

Changes to Radiation Safety

The new Radiation Safety Act and Regulations came into force in March. Codes of Practice are now being developed. Once these are finalised, the Radiation Safety Office will begin work on Compliance Guides which will sit under the Codes of Practice and will be most relevant to veterinarians.

Licensing

All veterinary practices will ultimately need to move from user licences to the new source licences; however this process can't be finalised until the Codes of Practice and Guidelines have been completed.

Until then, practices will continue to be audited against the requirements of the CSP21 document. Those with expired user licences will continue to be able to operate under the existing CSP21 requirements legally without a licence until the new application process for a source licence is agreed and finalised.

The Radiation Safety Office and its auditors will contact clinics regarding transitioning to user licences when the process is finalised. There is no need for clinics to proactively engage the Office prior to this.

June Vetscript

In the June issue of Vetscript, Wayne Ricketts looks at how vets responded in recent extreme weather events in the Bay of Plenty.

Vetscript is available to NZVA members, or you can [read the article on our website](#).

NEWS AND VIEWS



Veterinarians step up in Cyclones Debbie and Cook

Wayne Ricketts of VCNZ is humbled by the responses of animal rescue teams during the recent Edgcombe flooding.

THIS MONTH'S PIECE is a bit of a departure from my usual regulatory themes. Yet it reflects who we are as veterinarians, and how veterinarians could be more active in the future (canvassed in my VET2031 article in February). This commentary takes into account the other hat I wear as MPI's National Animal Welfare Coordinator, a role that involves managing MPI's lead responsibility for the coordination of animal welfare in emergencies.

The recent tail-end cyclones that hit in April, and were especially damaging in the Bay of Plenty, were testament to the fact that the Asia Pacific region is very prone to hydro-meteorological events (eg cyclones, storms and floods). Such events accounted for more than 70% of intense natural disasters in the region between 1971 and 2010. We also know that hydro-meteorological and climatological disasters (eg droughts), rather than geophysical disasters (eg earthquakes and volcanic eruptions), have been trending upwards in recent decades. We are particularly vulnerable in New Zealand because so many of us live near water.

Disaster preparedness for animals has economic, social and welfare benefits, yet many countries continue to omit animals from their national and regional contingency planning. Responses are often chaotic, inefficient and uncoordinated, or absent altogether. Hurricane Katrina was a wake-up call to the world about what happens if people can't evacuate with their pets (and this also applies to livestock). Often they refuse to leave, or they return illegally to

retrieve their animals, putting themselves at risk, as well as the rescue teams who may have to save them.

Many studies indicate that 20-30% of human evacuation failures are related to pet ownership. Many Edgcombe residents were reluctant to leave without their pets (but were forced to), and there were reports of farmers in the area refusing to leave before they were satisfied their cows were safe.

New Zealand does recognise animals in its disaster planning, but we are still on a learning curve. As the responsible organisation, MPI is assisted by a number of support agencies, including the NZVA.

Urban Search and Rescue, large animal rescue, triage, animal behaviour and swift water rescue. The swift water training was put to frequent use in Edgcombe as the teams negotiated water contaminated with sewage, diesel and debris.

More than 800 animals were rescued, including cats, dogs, aviary birds, poultry and a smattering of livestock - oh, plus a couple of anoles. Personally, I found it humbling to hear of some of these rescue efforts, and I want to acknowledge the team members for putting their lives in danger to do this.

NZVA Academic Director Lotte Cantley, who also helped out, says: "I feel privileged

"MANY OF THE RESCUE TEAMS ARE VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE SPECIALLY TRAINED, AND THEY OFFER THIS INCREDIBLE SERVICE IN THEIR OWN TIME BECAUSE THEY REALLY CARE. THEY ARE REAL HEROES."

So where do veterinarians fit in? During the recent cyclones, the SPCA's National Rescue Unit was deployed immediately. It was soon joined by local veterinarians Karen Gow, Gillian Hogarth and Chris Peterson. Other local veterinarians also offered their assistance. Massey's veterinary animal rescue team, led by Rachel Stratton, arrived soon afterwards. Team members also include SPCA inspectors and veterinary nurses. The permanent members of these teams have received specific training, such as in

to work alongside the unbelievably hardworking rescue teams that toiled tirelessly day and night, rescuing and relocating hundreds of stranded and bewildered animals from the Edgcombe flood. This was teamwork at its best. With minimal sleep and foul floodwaters to cope with, the rescue teams partnered to make this the largest animal rescue that New Zealand has ever seen.

"It was impressive to see everyone working together to make the rescue a success. Everyone knew their role,

and everyone had an important part to play. The morale remained high among the teams as they literally swam through floodwaters to save livestock and pets. The rescue teams had one goal, and that was to rescue the animals and reunite them with owners who had already lost so much. Many of the rescue teams are volunteers who are specially trained, and they offer this incredible service in their own time because they really care. They are real heroes."

Animal rescue, triage and animal healthcare are just some of the roles veterinarians can be involved with in emergencies. Others include pre-disaster planning, control of disease transmission, disaster assessment, information dissemination, advising clients to plan for

their animals, herd management, and involvement in recovery.

Dr Sebastian Heath, an American veterinarian, says that "emergency managers can take advantage of the bonds people have with their animals to instil appropriate behaviour among pet owners in disasters".

Veterinarians can also assist with this, Sebastian adds. "Veterinarians play an important role in responding to disasters, but they could play a more significant role by shaping society's attitudes to animals, and by disease mitigation and preparedness."

Veterinarians play a critical role in ensuring the safety of livestock and of New Zealand's food supply and our livestock-based economy.

We need to be ready for possible animal disease emergencies and disasters.

The American Veterinary Medical Association encourages and fosters veterinary leadership in dealing with "all hazards/all species" preparedness for disasters and emergencies involving animals, animal and public health and other veterinary issues.

MPI is now considering how it might create a veterinary emergency reserve across the country to compliment and strengthen the SPCA and Massey teams. After speaking to veterinarians in the past few years and hearing presentations at the 2016 NZVA conference about veterinarians in disasters, my sense is that veterinarians have a real keenness to be more involved. Watch this space. @

NEWS AND VIEWS



Bobby calves

The regulations change on 1 August. Make sure you're familiar with these. [Read more...](#)