



# VCNZ Update

VETERINARY COUNCIL  
OF NEW ZEALAND  
Te Kaunihera Rata Kararehe o Aotearoa

## Are vaccination “books” veterinary certificates?

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Veterinarians vaccinate cats and dogs and fill in their booklets every day. But how aware are we of the significance of signing (or not signing) these “certificates”, of the robustness of the process and the implications of how these “certificates” may be used?

Most veterinarians use booklets supplied by vaccine manufacturers to record vaccinations given to cats and dogs. These booklets often have other purposes as well: information about the breeder, information about the health of the pet at the time the vaccination was given, weight and pages where pet owners can record parasite treatments. 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” provide detailed information on obligations for veterinary certification. These can be found at:

[www.vetcouncil.org.nz/CPC/ProfIntegrity/CPC\\_ProfIntegrity.php](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/CPC/ProfIntegrity/CPC_ProfIntegrity.php)

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

The Companion Animal Society provides a policy for vaccine use in companion animals in New Zealand. This policy documents essential elements of a vaccination certificate. This policy can be found at:

[www.nzva.org.nz/policies/9a-vaccine-use-companion-animals-new-zealand](http://www.nzva.org.nz/policies/9a-vaccine-use-companion-animals-new-zealand)

### Veterinary certificate of vaccination

Only a veterinarian can certify (sign) a veterinary certificate and only if they can personally verify the validity of the information being attested (and confirmed by their signature and status as a veterinarian). This means the veterinarian must 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 veterinary nurse for a veterinarian (pp. the veterinarian) is not a valid veterinary certificate of vaccination.**

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If you are issuing a veterinary certificate of vaccination, make certain that *all* necessary details are contained in the document (whether this is in the form of a “vaccination booklet” or other form of certification). Check your compliance with the VCNZ requirements for a veterinary certificate at: [www.vetcouncil.org.nz/CPC/ProfIntegrity/CPC\\_ProfIntegrity.php](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/CPC/ProfIntegrity/CPC_ProfIntegrity.php)

### Certificate of vaccination or vaccination certificate

The booklets 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. These booklets are also 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, or 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 (veterinary nurse).

This could *not* be used as a veterinary certificate for export, and this needs to be

clearly communicated to the breeder or owner.

It could be used as a record of vaccination for admission to a boarding kennel or cattery as long as the boarding establishment is happy to accept such a record.

A problem exists if using a booklet where the certifier is identified as a veterinarian. The commonly used booklets have a heading “Veterinarian’s 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 completely and carefully and make sure that non-veterinarians are aware of the issues around providing accurate, full details if they are approved under VOIs.

### How should a vaccination record or certificate be identified as a duplicate?

Requests for duplicate vaccination records are common situations, for example, 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. Beware of using the vaccination booklets for this purpose

because these may imply a veterinary certificate is being given.

Where the client forgets to bring in the booklet when a new vaccination being administered and the purpose of the record is to assure a boarding establishment of appropriate or recent vaccination, only the most current entry may need to be recorded in a new booklet. If a veterinary certificate of vaccination is required to be duplicated, then this must be identified as a duplicate. A veterinarian can only certify a veterinary certificate where they can personally verify the information. Thus, the veterinarian cannot certify a duplicate as a veterinary certificate where they did not certify the original.

### In summary

It is not appropriate for a veterinary nurse to pp. a veterinarian’s signature on a veterinary certificate. If the intention is that the document is a veterinary vaccination certificate, then the veterinarian must be signing it. This applies for duplicate entries and for new entries.

Remember that a vaccination certificate is not complete without details that identify the animal and the owner. When vaccinating a litter of puppies or kittens for the breeder, make sure the breeder details are entered with as much information as possible to identify the puppy or kitten (colour, sex, weight at the time of vaccination). ■