



VCNZ Update

VETERINARY COUNCIL
OF NEW ZEALAND
Te Kaunihera Rata Kararehe o Aotearoa

Can veterinarians access owner details from the National Dog Database?

by Helen Beban, Professional Adviser, Veterinary Council of New Zealand

It is not unusual for people to bring lost dogs they have found to their local vet clinic. These are concerned people who want to prevent road injury to the dog and reunite it with its owners. With compulsory microchipping of dogs, finding the owners should be straightforward.

If the dog is microchipped, you can contact the Companion Animal Register and, if the dog is registered, they will provide this information. If the dog is microchipped but not on the Companion Animal Register, you will need to get this information from your local territorial authority through the National Dog Database.

Section 35 of the Dog Control Act 1996 states that where a veterinarian “requests, for any lawful purpose, the name and address of the registered owner of any specified dog... the territorial authority shall comply with the request”.

This applies whether the dog is injured or not.

A recent situation in a South Island town has highlighted that the issue of veterinarians gaining owner details in the case of lost dogs may vary according to the local council interpretation of the law. In this case, the local authority would release the information only if the dog was injured.

This interpretation of the law may have arisen from the wording in the Department of Internal Affairs question and answer section on release of information.

“Only authorised council staff have access to the database. The law entitles specified persons such as police, SPCA officers and vets to ask councils for information on the owner of a dog for lawful purposes (such as treating an injured dog).”

If you find yourself in a similar situation, talk to your local dog control manager. It may be a misinterpretation of the law. You are entitled as a veterinarian to obtain the details of a dog owner for lawful purposes, such as returning a lost dog to its owner.

Continuing professional development (CPD) pilot audit

Most of the veterinarians selected for the pilot audit have returned their CPD records to VCNZ, and the auditors are assessing these. It is apparent that many veterinarians' CPD records contain well in excess of the minimum requirements. Some have given feedback that they did not always keep verifiable records (proof of attendance such as certificates, agendas of

meetings, notes on what was learnt and so on). They found that providing this information retrospectively was time consuming.

- For the purposes of audit, you need only show compliance with the minimum requirements. If you provide appropriate, verified records for the minimum CPD requirement, you have passed. Once the minimum requirements are met, the auditor stops assessing your CPD entries.
- You have the choice of providing certificates, meeting agendas and so on *or* a short summary of what you have learnt and how this will affect your work. This is called a reflective statement. It need only be a few sentences, as long as it is appropriate to your work.
- Use this “wake up call” to set up systems so that you can easily

provide verification of CPD if your name is selected. Set aside time regularly to keep your records updated. Talk about this as a practice and decide on ways that you can achieve this together (someone writes notes from the weekly clinic meetings and so on).

VCNZ regional collegial discussion events

We thank the **Auckland Veterinary Association** for the opportunity to engage with about 70 veterinarians at its meeting on 25 September. There was lively discussion, particularly around CPD. The need for effective communication with the profession was highlighted. A popular suggestion from the group was the provision of real-life case studies in such areas as professional standard concerns and common complaint issues.

Veterinarians in the wider **Canterbury** area are welcome to attend a question and answer evening with VCNZ on **Thursday 11 December**. Please take this opportunity to engage with us and share your views. It will be held at the Elevate Bar and Function Centre, Colombo Street, Christchurch, from 6.30pm.

VCNZ will take part in the **2015 combined roadshows with NZVA and the Ministry for Primary Industries Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Group**. Details are in VetLearn Update. We look forward to meeting many of you at these regional events. ■



Lost dogs are often brought in to veterinary clinics. Veterinarians are entitled to obtain details from the National Dog Database for purposes of returning a dog to its owner.