



VETERINARY COUNCIL
OF NEW ZEALAND
Te Kaunihera Rata Kararehe o Aotearoa

VCNZ update

Fulfilling your CPD requirements: Tips for part-time vets

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

We have had a lot of calls from part-time veterinarians concerned about fulfilling their continuing professional development (CPD) requirements. Most callers fit into one of two categories: mothers who have taken time out from full-time paid work to care for their children and veterinarians nearing the sunset of their careers who do not wish to work full time.

The callers are committed veterinarians who perform valuable roles, for example, as locum vets when colleagues are on holiday, filling in on Saturdays to allow colleagues to have time for rest and relaxation, on animal welfare advisory committees and so on. We wish to help them to continue to contribute to the profession, while also ensuring veterinary standards are maintained.

Part-time veterinarians often say that they “cannot afford to be NZVA members”. NZVA membership conveys many benefits to part-time veterinarians including connecting with colleagues and having access to NZVA CPD opportunities. The membership fee for part-time veterinarians has a generous discount. Veterinarians who intend to return to practice are encouraged to regard NZVA membership as an investment in their future careers. Cost-effective CPD opportunities, such as regional branch meetings, are available to NZVA members.

The Veterinary Council of New Zealand (VCNZ) recognises that attending conferences can be onerous for veterinarians such as those in solo practice or those in part-time work with other commitments. We also recognise that evidenced-based research in the medical profession has found formal meetings or conferences to have less value than activities such as interactive programmes and “in-house” practice learning (see *Vetscript*, December 2014, page 51). For these reasons, VCNZ is considering removing the requirement for veterinarians to achieve a minimum of 15 CPD points in the continuing veterinary education (CVE) area.

In some cases, where a veterinarian has restricted their practice to a limited area, a solution may be for them to talk to

VCNZ and voluntarily have a condition placed on their practice. VCNZ takes this into account when looking at their CPD requirements and does not require a veterinarian in this situation to achieve the full CPD requirements. Contact VCNZ, if you think this would help you.

The concept of what constitutes acceptable CPD is broad. In all the cases I have come across (so far!), the veterinarian and I have explored and found ways that the CPD requirements can be met. I will share two representative scenarios.

Scenario 1

A woman veterinarian who is engaged in child rearing and running an isolated sheep and beef farm with her husband

She last worked as a mixed animal vet eight years ago. She wants to continue to do the veterinary work on her farm and basic work for the farm dogs and family pets (vaccinations).

We discussed limiting her practice to her own animals. This would involve voluntarily having this condition on her practice. She was not comfortable with this concept and was developing an interest in animal welfare, wildlife and conservation, and thought limiting her practice could hinder this.

The vet is a member of NZVA and took advantage of the reduced fees for part-time vets available to those who work less than 30 hours a week. We discussed VetScholar online courses. These are assessed and appropriate for CVE points. Participation in the online forums is also appropriate for collegial learning activity (CLA) points.

We discussed the advantages of joining the Food Safety, Animal Welfare and Biosecurity special interest branch and also the Wildlife branch of NZVA. We talked about recording CPD points from reading

articles in *Vetscript* and the Wildlife branch newsletter. This would be recorded as self-directed learning (SDL) points. She was concerned about verification of SDL. We discussed how to record CPD using reflective statements.

We discussed the farmer group seminars that she and her husband contribute to. These cover things like feed budgeting, soils and animal health. These are appropriate for CPD, both when the veterinarian is present as an attendee (CLA or SDL) and when they make a presentation on animal health (CVE or CLA).

We discussed her engagement in external farm seminars. Some of these are on topics such as financial planning for profit, being a good employer and so on. These are appropriate for CPD (CVE, CLA or SDL).

Going away to an NZVA conference was not possible with her family situation but she was excited about the possibility of attending a wildlife conference. This would give her CVE points.

We discussed her relationship with her local veterinary practice. It was too far from her farm for her to get involved in such opportunities as vet meetings. However, I suggested she request getting on the practice email list for such activities as supplier company free online webinars.

We discussed online vet forums. She had once belonged to the Veterinary Information Network but this was cost prohibitive with her current situation. I informed her of the recent New Zealand initiative, Vet2Vet. She was enthusiastic about joining and using this as a vehicle to re-engage with the veterinary community from her own living room. The time spent contributing to online forums can count towards CLA or SDL points and can be recorded using reflective statements.



We discussed another new CPD opportunity: *Research Review*. This service has been available to medical professionals for several years. Veterinarians now have access to *Dairy Research Review*, *Sheep and Beef Research Review* and *Companion Animal Research Review*, thanks to sponsorship by MSD Animal Health (see *Vetscript*, March 2015, page 28). The service is free and would allow this veterinarian to keep up to date by reading relevant research papers. SDL points can be claimed for this activity. Verification would be by reflective note in the veterinarian's CPD record.

By the time we had finished talking, she was confident that achieving the CPD requirements was no big deal. I encouraged her to write down her goals as a CPD plan.

Scenario 2

A semi-retired vet who has had a long and fulfilling clinical career and now does limited work as an animal welfare consultant

We discussed his needs. Did he need to be registered and have an annual practising certificate (APC) to do this role? Yes, he needed to be a veterinarian to do the role and was recognised as a veterinarian in his capacity as a consultant. This means he needed an APC.

Would limiting his practice to this role be a solution? Yes, he had no desire to get involved in other aspects of veterinary practice. This means that his CPD requirements are reduced and are reviewed on an individual basis.

We discussed how he could provide appropriate CPD records. The meetings he attended and presented on animal welfare issues could be claimed as CPD. He could claim CVE as a presenter or CLA (and SDL) as an attendee. He could supply the meeting agendas (if appropriate) or create reflective statements as verification for these meetings.

He did a lot of reading on animal welfare and ethics issues and at times discussed

and debated issues with colleagues. The reading could be recorded as SDL and the discussions as CLA. He could write reflective statements as verification of his reading and of the discussions.

He had initially thought that the VCNZ CPD requirements would mean he could no longer contribute to the veterinary profession but was happy that this was not the case. His experience and wisdom could continue to be valued. ■

i If you have concerns about meeting your CPD requirements, first have a good read of the VCNZ CPD Information for Veterinarians: <http://tinyurl.com/lusx8j8> This may tell you what you need to know.

To discuss your particular situation, email or call the VCNZ office: vet@vetcouncil.org.nz, (04) 473 9600.