



# Ruminating on a very big year

**Wayne Ricketts**, VCNZ, looks back on a busy and productive 2016.

**OUR LAST ARTICLE** for the year is a recap of what we've been up to in 2016. We appreciate the enquiries from veterinarians and the NZVA about the issues and challenges you face. A lot of our projects arise from your questions.

## ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

VCNZ has reviewed its AMR guidance as part of a review of the Veterinary Medicines section of the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians*. Individual veterinarians' prescribing behaviours collectively have an impact on the global issue of AMR.

We unveiled our AMR poster in November and hope it will be put up on clinic walls around the country! We want the poster to remind you about the profession's lead role in product stewardship. We're also taking a fresh look at our DCT statement.

## AGE OF CONSENT AND INFORMED CONSENT

This can be challenging, especially in after-hours situations. We get questions from veterinarians and owners about this, so we've put new information in the Client Relationships section of the Code. This is also covered in an NZVA FAQ.

The essential points to remember are that a contract with anyone under 18 is not legally binding, and that the consent process should be treated as a two-step process. You must first obtain informed consent (and document it) and then obtain a separate agreement for payment for the provision of the treatment or procedure.

## CLINICAL TRIALS

During the year, the NZVA sought NZVA's endorsement of its revised clinical trials policy. The policy refers to the Animal Welfare Act allowing veterinarians to carry out clinical trials involving manipulations of animals in certain situations. The policy was reviewed by NZVA's Professional Standards Committee (PSC), which sought legal advice and referred the policy back to the NZVA, suggesting some amendments. The PSC will consider the policy again at its first meeting next year.

## ANAESTHETIC AND HEAVY SEDATION MONITORING

We've reviewed our guidelines on anaesthetic monitoring. We decided to strengthen the guidelines into a statement, and consulted CAV and IVABS. The statement sets out the expected standards for veterinarians managing patients under general anaesthesia or heavy sedation.

We've used a new format based on the MPI Codes of Welfare, with the minimum standards clearly laid out. We hope this will make it easier for veterinarians to identify the minimum standards quickly.

## NEW REGISTRANTS PROGRAMME UPDATE

We know that the first couple of years for a new graduate are crucial in developing their competence and confidence. Employers play an important role in this. We've started work on our New Registrants Programme. The programme will be based loosely on the Royal College of Veterinary

Surgeons' scheme for new graduates. It will take into account the VCNZ competency standards, Massey's Day One competencies, and programmes that we know are already operating in New Zealand veterinary practices. This work is in its early stages, but the programme is intended to be an online system for graduates to track their progress, with a veterinary advisor (contracted to VCNZ) to help participants stay on track.

## MINIMUM PRACTISING STANDARDS CHECKLISTS

Minimum practising standards checklists were introduced for the first time this year for clinicians. For the 2017-18 APC renewal, you'll be asked to review two checklists and confirm that you're meeting the standard.

We've worked closely with the NZVA to develop the standards. They reflect what is in the Code and are intended to help make it easy for veterinarians to comply. Initially they will be aimed at veterinarians in clinical practice, but will be extended to reflect the breadth of veterinary practice.

## NEW ZEALAND VETERINARY NURSING ASSOCIATION

NZVNA introduced voluntary registration for veterinary nurses this year. VCNZ supports NZVNA's commitment to allied veterinary professional registration.

NZVNA representative Jennifer Hamlin attended VCNZ and PSC meetings during the year to observe and learn about the regulatory role.

## ONLINE COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Electronic voting was introduced for the 2016 election of the three elected VCNZ veterinary positions. We hoped that this would make voting easier and encourage more veterinarians to vote.

It seems to have worked! At the time of writing the number of veterinarians who had voted was well in advance of that at the same time in the previous (2013) election.

Best wishes for a restful break. 🍷