



# Roadshow report

VCNZ's **Wayne Ricketts** summarises the feedback from recent regional branch meetings.

**AT THE TIME** of writing, we have nearly finished the NZVA/Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)/VCNZ regional branch meetings. I think they have been an amazing success. We've had great attendance – some of the branches have said the best ever – and the feedback has been brilliant. Veterinarians have been very appreciative of the visits and the opportunity to engage in a number of issues – as we have too. Many meetings ran late as veterinarians stayed behind to continue the dialogue. Thanks to all of you who managed to attend.

## VETERINARY MEDICINES

It's fair to say everyone is concerned about antimicrobial resistance, and that we need to tighten up on the use of antibiotics. There were no challenges to limiting the period of supply to four months for the critically important antibiotics (CIAs). However, based on the feedback we received, we have decided to scrap the proposed eight-month period of supply for 'non-CIA antibiotics' for production animals and stay with 12 months. Inventories for antibiotics will remain, as will monthly reconciliations of controlled drugs. Reconciling fewer of the Class C controlled drugs was well received. Advertising of antibiotics by veterinarians to end-users will no longer be permitted.

## AFTER-HOURS

While most of you don't like doing after-hours, all of you believe that it's an ethical responsibility. We all recognise the significant strain it places on veterinarians, and that it's a contributing factor to veterinarians exiting the profession. There was also an acknowledgement of the health and

safety aspect of after-hours work. You talked about the challenge of sometimes establishing whether it's an emergency or not, that we now live in a time of 24/7 access and that that applies to an expectation for round-the-clock veterinary services, and the frustration that some veterinarians don't pull their weight in providing after-hours care. Clearly, there are wide variations in after-hours arrangements. Some of you are using answering phones, as well as non-veterinary 'after-hours personnel' to 'triage' the bona fide emergencies. Some of you are charging significantly more for after-hours calls, and some have a cost differential for those clients who purchase their drugs elsewhere. The need for after-hours care will remain, but we need to continue the conversation on this subject.

## LONG-DISTANCE VETERINARY CARE

There was a great deal of discussion on this topic, and generally there was widespread dissatisfaction. There were diverse views on what long-distance veterinary care means. Both the *Code of Professional Conduct* and the ACVM 'Requirements for Authorising Veterinarians' allow for the authorisation of restricted veterinary medicines from a distance, but with a number of provisos. We agreed that in some types of animal production this is the only way that animal health and welfare services can be provided. At this stage VCNZ has chosen to delay any formal discussion until after the current complaint has been processed, to prevent prejudicing the complaint process. We will, however, pick this up again with the profession.

## REPORTING ANIMAL WELFARE ISSUES

It's noted that we under-report potential offences under the Animal Welfare Act 1999, and we can struggle with general animal welfare issues from lameness and overwintering to the artificial insemination of brachycephalic dogs. In the context of the roadshows, we discussed reporting dogs with docked tails following 1 October 2018. Reporting can be a challenge for veterinarians, and while the actual investigations are carried out by MPI or the SPCA, being identified as a whistleblower can be confronting. The Animal Welfare section of the code has a flow chart of potential actions when you identify an animal welfare issue. It was adapted from a veterinary practice's standard operating procedures. We did identify working with industry bodies for some species as a way of dealing with welfare cases, but in some instances (eg, broken tails in dairy cows) they have to be reported. As the code says, "Veterinarians have a special duty to protect animal welfare and alleviate animal suffering".

## SUPPORTING NEW GRADUATES

There was good support for our intended programme to support new graduates. Clearly this is another reason for the departure of veterinarians from the profession. There is some great work occurring in the medical profession that we could mimic. The need for mentors or guardians has clearly been demonstrated in our profession and others.

A number of you said, "Come back soon!" So we hope to see you again next year. Thanks again. 