



Board Update

December 2014

Veterinary Practitioners
Registration Board of Victoria

President's Message

Welcome to the final issue of the Board Update for 2014.

Staff Appointments

The Board has recently welcomed two new staff members.

Ms Louisa King has been appointed to the role of Registrar. Louisa's background is in tertiary education; she is experienced in teaching, leadership, operations, and policy management. Louisa has extensive administrative experience complemented by her postgraduate qualification in Agribusiness from the University of Melbourne.

Louisa has made significant contributions in her first months including producing the 2014 Annual Report, development of a Human Resource Policy Manual for the administrative staff, and overseeing the computer software upgrade of iMIS, which operates the Veterinary Register.

Ms Annie Salerni has been appointed to the role of Registration Officer. Annie has worked in varied administrative roles for IBM, and brings to the Board the experience and knowledge gained from working for such a large and respected organisation. Annie also has extensive experience as a dance teacher, and ran her own dance studio for many years.

Annie has enthusiastically taken on the role of Registration Officer and is enjoying the challenge of this new role.

I extend a warm welcome to the new team members and hope they enjoy their roles with the Board.

End of year office closure

The Board's office will be closed from 24 December 2014 to 4 January 2015 inclusive.

On behalf of the Board and office staff, I take this opportunity to wish you, your clinic support team, and your families a happy and safe festive season.

Roslyn Nichol
President



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2015 Renewal of Registration



The 2015 renewal of registration opened on **1 December 2014**. Practitioners are able to renew their registration online via the Board's practitioner's console or download the relevant renewal form from the website. All renewal payments must be received by **31 December 2014**. Any late renewal payments after **5 January 2015** will incur a \$150 late fee.

Provide Your Preferred Email

All practitioners will have received their renewal notices with their logon and password via email during the first week of December 2014. It is essential that you provide your preferred email address to ensure you receive your renewal notice with your logon and password. To update your email address, please email communications@vetboard.vic.gov.au

Renewal Certificate

This year, the Board will not be issuing registration cards. Instead, upon renewal, registrants will receive a renewal certificate/ receipt as proof of registration.

Roadshow Webinar - 17 December 2014

The final session of the Board's 2014 roadshow will be in the form of a webinar, which will take place on Wednesday 17 December at 6pm.

For those who were unable to attend a roadshow event, this is an opportunity to participate in the Board's presentation of Professional Conduct: Privileges and Responsibilities.

Further detail to come.



Correction - Mr John Dillon OAM

In the last issue of the Board Update we mistakenly stated that Mr John Dillon was awarded a Queen's Birthday Honour for his service to the banking and finance sector. This is incorrect. Mr Dillon was awarded the honour for his service to law, and to the community. We apologise for the error, and once again congratulate John on this significant and well deserved award.



Endorsement Specialist

The Board congratulates the following practitioner who recently received specialist endorsement.

Dr Deborah Simpson V5702

Veterinary Dermatology

Case Study – Dr P

Blood samples were taken from dogs at an interstate kennel and submitted for testing. On receiving the blood test results, which were determined to be satisfactory, the owner of the kennel requested a second opinion from a veterinary practitioner in Victoria. The Victorian veterinary practitioner Dr P advised that the tests indicated the possibility of a viral infection and suggested a treatment plan involving the use of levamisole. A detailed document was faxed to the owner.

The owner commenced treatment of the dogs. A week later the owner observed that several of the dogs had diarrhoea and a few days later, the dogs were showing signs of being unwell and having seizures. In the space of a week, six of the dogs treated had either died or been euthanased, having suffered from severe illness and seizures.



After a preliminary investigation, the matter was referred to an informal hearing into the professional conduct of Dr P. It was alleged that:

Dr P provided veterinary advice to the owners of the dogs involving the use of a medication, levamisole, without the due care and attention expected of a registered veterinary practitioner.

Dr P was found to have engaged in unprofessional conduct, and the Panel determined that Dr P be counselled.

Counselling is one of the determinations that may be made following a finding of unprofessional conduct. It is a formal process during which the veterinary practitioner is informed of how his/her conduct failed to meet the minimum required standard and how that standard might be met in future. The Panel may counsel in any way they see fit. The counselling may be oral, written, given immediately or with 28 days of the determination. It becomes a matter of permanent record on the veterinary practitioner's file and may be referred to in any future Hearing or action taken by the Board. In this case the counselling was provided during the hearing procedure.

The Panel made its findings based upon the following reasons.

The Panel considered that the main concerns in this case were the communication and professional advice that Dr P provided.

After reviewing the blood test report that the owner sent to him/her, Dr P stated to the Panel that he/she suspected the dogs may have been suffering from an immuno-deficient condition/viral infection and he/she provided the owner with a treatment plan document used by the veterinary clinic for treatment of such cases.

Dr P advised the Panel that the owner was not charged for this advice as the clinic has a special interest in dogs. It is common and accepted practice for the clinic to provide advice to clients, at no charge, with information regarding the best care and the most appropriate medication for their dogs and then refer the client back to their current treating veterinary practitioner with this information.

The Panel reviewed the treatment protocol given to the owner by Dr P and noted that amongst other things it included the administration of levisamole, to be given to each dog at the rate of "4ml (50mg) twice daily for fourteen days".

The Panel was concerned that levisamole is available in a variety of products containing differing formulations and concentrations of the active ingredient and that the advice regarding which form of levisamole or product that the owner should have used for the dogs was imprecise .

Dr P informed the Panel that he/she explained to the owner over the phone, the dosage of the medications listed on the treatment plan; however felt that the owner didn't understand him/her fully so he/she faxed a copy of the treatment plan document. Dr P also stated that he/she advised the owners that they needed to seek advice from their treating veterinary practitioner regarding dosage rates, and the availability of the medications listed on the plan. Dr P acknowledged that he/she did receive two phone calls from the owners, after the initial conversation, clarifying the actual name of levisamole and its dosage rate.

On both of these occasions Dr P advised the Panel that he/she was unable to answer the owner's questions about the product purchased at that time as the owner could not tell him/her the concentration levels of the product, therefore he/she advised the client not to use the product and to seek advice from his/her veterinary practitioner. In the response to the Board, the owner denied that Dr P advised that they seek veterinary guidance, and informed the owner that the products listed in the treatment plan were readily available over the counter.

Despite conflicting information from both parties, the Panel agreed that the treatment plan given to the owner contained non-specific and inadequate levels of detail and information regarding the administration of levisamole, considering the potency and potential toxicity of this medication when used "off label" i.e. not used according to manufacturer's specifications. The Panel also noted that no information was provided to the owner detailing the possible side effects and complications surrounding this medication.

The Panel considered that a veterinary practitioner, who offered written advice to a client, especially when the advice suggested the use of unregistered products, had a responsibility to ensure that an accurate and thorough explanation of the dosage, administration and potential side-effects was provided to the client.

The Panel acknowledged that the veterinary clinic has since revised the treatment information sheet for viral infection and have changed the treatment protocol when a recommendation for medication is made. They now will only speak to the treating veterinary practitioner.

