

Vetboard Victoria newsletter

June 2019



The Eighth Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board commenced its term on Tuesday 18 June 2019. This issue of the Board's newsletter reflects on the achievements of the Seventh Board and introduces the members of the Eighth Board. The newsletter also contains some guidance on handover of cases between veterinary practitioners and some items from Agriculture Victoria including information about monitoring of supply and use of veterinary chemicals.

MESSAGE FROM OUTGOING PRESIDENT

After a busy and productive term, the outgoing Seventh Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria has passed the baton to the incoming Eighth Board. The new Board commenced its term on 18 June 2019. With new President Professor Ted Whitem at the helm and a number of new appointments with a range of skills, the Board is in good hands and well-placed to build on the achievements of recent years.

From March 2016 to June 2019, the Seventh Board managed in excess of 240 investigations, 48 Informal Hearings, 3 Formal Hearings and 3 prosecutions. More than 1,200 veterinary practitioners (including 17 endorsed specialists) were added to the Register and over 3000 veterinary practitioners had their registration renewed each year.

In addition to fulfilling its core regulatory functions, the Seventh Board set itself an ambitious agenda to strengthen the delivery of its regulatory functions and achieve its mission 'to protect the public and health and welfare of animals'. In implementing this agenda, the Board was mindful of the Minister for Agriculture's Statement of Expectations for the Board, requiring greater efficiency and effectiveness in the administration and enforcement of regulation.

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QUEENS BIRTHDAY HONOURS

The Board extends congratulations to **Professor Paul Hamilton Hemsworth**, who was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to agricultural science and to animal welfare in the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours list.

FAREWELL TO OUTGOING CVO

The Board extends good wishes to outgoing Chief Veterinary Officer for Victoria, **Dr Charles Milne**. An article from Agriculture Victoria on page 7 of this issue reviews Dr Milne's contributions during his term as CVO.

OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

The Seventh Board implemented risk assessment tools and process protocols to ensure that the Board continues to act promptly in circumstances where there appears to be a serious risk to the public, or where the health and welfare of animals is endangered. It also monitored unregistered persons making unjustified claims as to veterinary registration, and prosecuted 3 persons in relation to such matters.

The Board set up a legislative review working group and identified areas for reform of the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997*. A major review of the Board's Guidelines has also been undertaken, with a draft soon to be issued for stakeholder consultation. Explanatory notes and FAQs will provide context to the new Guidelines, and it is hoped that this additional information will assist veterinary practitioners to comply with the expectations of the Board and the broader community.

Within the last 12 months, the Board has relocated to better office space in Queen Street. The new address provides improved facilities for Board functionality and is a considerable improvement for veterinary practitioners attending for disciplinary hearings and other matters. A suite of training and induction resources for new Board members and Approved Persons has also been produced. The Board's mission statement has been reviewed and a Service Charter published. Other strategy documents produced include a Statement of Intent 2018-2021 and Corporate Plan 2019-2022.

The Board has implemented a range of digital and systems improvements to enhance accessibility and simplify interaction with the Board. The Board now has a dedicated software system for managing complaints. Other improvements include refreshing the Board's website, redesigning the VetConsole, introducing electronically fillable forms, and introducing SMS reminders in renewal communications.

A rebranding initiative resulted in a new Board logo and improved communication templates. Importantly, the Board recently undertook a review of its communications and engagement with stakeholders, identifying the potential for further enhancements to communications.

I am proud of the achievements of the Seventh Board. I extend my thanks to all Board members for their dedication and commitment to the work of the Board during the past three years, especially to those members who are not returning to the new Board – Dr David Beggs, Ms Kerren Clark, Dr Andrew Giddy, Mr Owen Mahoney, and Dr Stacey Sullivan; as well as Dr Rachel Peacock and Dr Allison Stewart who served on the Board from 2016 to 2017.



Seventh Board members – Mar 2016 to Jun 2019

Back left to right: Ms Kerren Clark, Dr Andrew Giddy, Professor Peter Mansell, Dr David Beggs and Mr Owen Mahoney

Front left to right: Dr Stacey Sullivan (from Oct 2017), Dr David Colson (from Oct 2017), Dr Tracey Bradley and Ms Kathryn Johns

I would also like to thank all the Board staff, who have ably supported Board initiatives under the direction of the General Manager, Dr Glenice Fox.

I leave the Board with my very best wishes for the future.

Professor Peter Mansell
**President, Seventh Veterinary Practitioners
 Registration Board of Victoria**

MEMBERS OF THE EIGHTH BOARD

A very warm welcome to the Eighth Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria:

- **Professor Ted Whittem** – veterinary practitioner and University of Melbourne appointment, appointed by Governor-in-Council as President of the Board
- **Dr David Colson** – veterinary practitioner first appointed to the Board in October 2017, appointed by Governor-in-Council as Deputy President of the Board
- **Dr Charlie Blackwood** – veterinary practitioner
- **Dr Tracey Bradley** – veterinary practitioner and Crown appointment, first appointed to the Board in August 2013
- **Dr Kate Clarke** – veterinary practitioner
- **Ms Raelene Harrison** – lawyer
- **Dr Fiona Hendrie** – veterinary practitioner
- **Ms Kathryn Johns** – non-veterinary member, first appointed to the Board in March 2016, and
- **Ms Ellen Kittson** – non-veterinary member

View more information about the Board at www.vetboard.vic.gov.au > About > [Board Members](#)

MESSAGE FROM NEW PRESIDENT

As incoming President, I am delighted to welcome my fellow Board members to the Eighth Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria.

The Eighth Board began its term on Tuesday 18 June 2019. The Board will sit from 2019 to 2022, with the first meeting of the full Eighth Board to be held on Wednesday 3 July 2019.

The eighth Board is fortunate to have 3 of our 9 members continuing from their previous appointments as Board members. Their experience will support the 6 new Board members who have a wide variety of skills. These collective skills and experience will help to ensure continuity in application of our core regulatory functions.

Aided by Board staff, the Seventh Board initiated and achieved major strategic and operational changes which will have lasting benefits for the community and its interaction with the veterinary profession.

We now set out to carry the baton forward for the next three years.

Professor Ted Whittem
President, Eighth Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria

REGISTRATION RENEWAL CONTINUES

Over three quarters of veterinary practitioners have renewed their registration for the 2019-2020 year.

From 1 July 2019, practitioners who renew their registration will be charged a late fee equivalent to half their registration fee.

Practitioners have until 31 July 2019 to renew their registration. Those registrants who do not renew by 31 July 2019 will be removed from the Register of Veterinary Practitioners.

Update your contact information

The Board requires all veterinary practitioners to enter their Victorian residential address, personal email and mobile number in their VetConsole record.

Your CPD obligations

The Board reminds all veterinary practitioners with general registration that they must participate in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs sufficient to maintain competency in their chosen field of veterinary practice.

Board Guideline 13 outlines current CPD requirements in Victoria. Veterinary practitioners are invited to direct any questions about their CPD obligations to the Board on 9620 7444 or by email to communications@vetboard.vic.gov.au

Retiring practitioners and CPD

Veterinary practitioners who have retired may wish to consider non-practising registration as an alternative to general registration.

While there are conditions on non-practising registration which prohibit veterinary treatment of animals (including a person's own animals) and any acts of veterinary science that may only be performed by veterinary practitioners, persons with non-practising registration do not have to meet CPD obligations.

Individuals with non-practising registration retain the ability to sign statutory declarations and witness documents, and their names remain on the Register of Veterinary Practitioners in Victoria.

AVBC CONSULTATION ON COMPETENCIES OF GRADUATING STUDENTS

The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) is consulting the veterinary profession on how veterinary education providers might communicate with veterinary registration bodies.

Australian and New Zealand veterinary registration bodies currently require applicants for registration to disclose any condition likely to affect their ability to practise, plus any record of misconduct or disciplinary action, but evidence exists that some graduates are not disclosing such information to registration bodies when applying for registration.

In the medicine and allied human health professions, there are clearly legislated communication channels by which universities can share information with registration bodies about student disability or a student's conduct during their undergraduate studies.

However, currently there is no such communication channel between veterinary educators and veterinary registration bodies in Australian and New Zealand.

As this issue has the potential to impact the veterinary profession and broader community, it has been proposed that a system be developed for university educators to communicate to registration bodies any legitimate concerns which may affect a graduating student's ability to practise veterinary science. Any such process would necessarily have to balance confidentiality, equity, and the public interest in veterinary education and registration.

The AVBC is inviting stakeholders to provide their input on appropriate communication between veterinary educational providers and Australian and New Zealand veterinary registration bodies via an online survey.

The anonymous survey has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee at Charles Sturt University (H19082).

Survey link: www.surveymonkey.com/r/AVBC-disability-disclosure

Survey closure: 11 July 2019

More information: email admin@avbc.asn.au

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA GAINS NEW VET CHEMICAL ROLE

From Agriculture Victoria

Agriculture Victoria's Chemical Standards Officers will be playing a more active role in monitoring the supply and use of veterinary chemicals from now on.

Under an agreement reached between the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Agriculture Victoria, Chemical Standards Officers have been authorised under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* (DPCS Act).

As these officers already administer the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992*, authorisation under the DPCS Act allows for a more coordinated and comprehensive response to issues involving the inappropriate supply and use of veterinary chemicals.

Agriculture Victoria Statewide Specialist Chemicals Mr Steven Field said Chemical Standards Officers currently regulate a wide range of chemical users, ranging from backyard gardeners or pet owners, through to intensive horticultural producers, and are looking forward to working more closely with veterinary practitioners.

'There is a recognition within Agriculture Victoria that many veterinary practitioners are operating at a high standard and in accordance with their responsibilities. It is also important that we address any potential risks.'

'These changes also enable Chemical Standards Officers to work more closely on the supply of 'Schedule 7 Poisons' by agvet chemical retailers and the use of poison baits on roadsides.'

All regulators rely on reports from the public regarding allegations of inappropriate reports, specifically including photographs or other potential evidence. Anyone can contact our customer service centre and ask to speak to their local Chemical Standards Officer or email us a report.'

Report inappropriate prescribing practices to Agriculture Victoria:

- Call **136 186** (Agriculture Victoria's Customer Service Centre) and ask to speak to your local Chemical Standards Officer, or
- Email chemicals.standards@ecodev.vic.gov.au
- More information: steven.field@ecodev.vic.gov.au

GUIDANCE ON CASE HANDOVER

The Board frequently sees complaints involving issues relating to handover between veterinary practitioners in multi-vet practices where patients have been hospitalised for a period of time.

Often in such cases, multiple veterinary practitioners have been involved in the care of the animal. Board investigations of such matters generally involve all veterinary practitioners who engaged in the care.

Keep good records

While the Board's Guidelines are currently under review, the revised Guidelines are likely to contain a statement along the following lines:

A veterinary practitioner must ensure that veterinary records contain sufficient information to clearly identify the animal(s), justify their clinical management and treatment, and allow another veterinary practitioner to continue care if needed.

The clinical record should include any relevant interpretation of changes in an animal's condition and any revisions to the treatment plan.

A clinical record should stand alone, so the next rostered veterinary practitioner can continue the care of the animal.

Importantly, the clinical record should clearly identify the practitioner who made the entry.

In a number of recent complaints to the Board, important clinical information was only written on 'cage cards' that were not retained by the clinic, making it very difficult for the practitioner to provide supporting evidence of the care given to the animal. It is good practice to ensure that any key information on cage cards is also included in the clinical record.

Handover during rounds

Ideally, when veterinary practitioners complete a shift there should be a verbal handover (or "rounds") of animals in ongoing care. Verbal updates should summarise the information that will also be documented in more detail in the clinical record. If a practitioner is unable to undertake a verbal clinical handover, the clinical record should convey all salient information.

Client communication

Complaints also arise when owners receive differing advice from different veterinary practitioners, particularly when there is a change in treatment plans or prognosis.

Handover notes should include details of communication with the client, so the next practitioner is made aware of any update provided, including whether additional treatments were discussed with the client and any necessary further consent was obtained from them.

NEW PET EXCHANGE REGISTER TO IMPROVE DOG AND CAT TRACEABILITY

From Agriculture Victoria

Victorians will soon be able to find out where their pet comes from with the introduction of a new online database called the **Pet Exchange Register**.



From 1 July 2019, any person or business who is advertising to sell or give away a dog, cat, puppy or kitten will need to obtain a source

number from the Pet Exchange Register (PER) at <https://per.animalwelfare.vic.gov.au>.

From 1 July 2019, it will be an offence to advertise a dog or cat without a microchip number and PER source number. This offence would apply to both the advertiser and the publisher of the non-compliant advertisement.

As veterinary practitioners, you play a vital role in promoting responsible dog and cat breeding and can support this important new initiative by:

- advising people who sell or rehome animals to register on the Pet Exchange Register and quote their source number alongside the microchip number on all dog or cat adverts, and
- encouraging anyone who is choosing a new pet to check the validity of the advertiser by searching for the quoted source number on the Pet Exchange Register.

View more information about the Pet Exchange Register at <http://animalwelfare.vic.gov.au>.

You can request flyers and other promotional materials by emailing per@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE RESOURCES

From Agriculture Victoria

Veterinary practitioners have an important role to play in the fight against antimicrobial resistance. Appropriate antimicrobial use is essential for good animal health and welfare, public health, and trade market outcomes. As part of our commitment to the implementation of the National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019, Agriculture Victoria has created education materials about antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and antimicrobial stewardship (AMS).



We recently surveyed Victorian veterinary practitioners about the resources that would best assist them to improve their AMS and better educate their clients on AMR.

We then developed new materials, in collaboration with The University of Melbourne, aiming to provide practical resources for veterinary practitioners to guide appropriate prescribing, as well as engaging materials to help start conversations about AMR with clients.

We presented these materials at the annual Australian Veterinary Association conference in Perth recently. You will also see Agriculture Victoria at Victorian AVA events this year.

Free resources available from Agriculture Victoria for veterinary practitioners include: antibiotic prescribing category cards for dogs and cats, horses, cattle and sheep, prescribing pads and leaflets explaining why antibiotics have or have not been prescribed (to give to clients), waiting room posters (pictured left) and sticker sheets for kids. We also have free AMR-branded stainless-steel mugs and squeezey animal toys to use and display in clinics. To order any of these new materials, email animal.biosecurity@djpr.vic.gov.au.

Agriculture Victoria has also recently partnered with the **Antibiotic Guardian** website and added an Australian page to the platform. You can go online and pledge your support today at antibioticguardian.com/au. Email your details to animal.biosecurity@djpr.vic.gov.au after you have pledged, and we will send you a lapel pin (pictured right) to wear at work and stimulate discussion with staff and clients.



To learn more about what antimicrobial stewardship means for you and your clinic, visit our newly updated AMR webpage at agriculture.vic.gov.au/amr.

SURVEY ON KNOWLEDGE OF ZONOOSES

Victorian veterinary practitioners are invited to complete a 10- to 15-minute online survey investigating knowledge, attitudes and practices relating to zoonotic diseases.

Worldwide, seventy-five percent of emerging infectious diseases are zoonoses, with a number of these being unique to Australia. These growing threats, along with other local endemic zoonotic infections, have the potential to present unique challenges to medical and veterinary practitioners both now and in the future.

The survey of veterinary practitioners and GPs is part of a research project conducted by a cross-disciplinary team in medicine, public health, veterinary science, veterinary public health and epidemiology, from the University of Sydney.

The team aims to use the information collected in this survey and other research to develop education modules to build capacity in relation to zoonoses and investigate pathways for useful One Health communication and collaboration.

The anonymous survey has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Sydney (Approval number: 2018/980).

Survey link:

<https://redcap.sydney.edu.au/surveys/?s=HWMT9WMNPF> – on completion, you can enter a draw for one of 10 x \$100 direct debit cards.

SURVEY ON VETERINARY BURNOUT AND WELLBEING

Victorian veterinary practitioners are invited to complete a 15- to 20-minute online questionnaire investigating how personal and work-related factors predict burnout within the veterinary profession.

This aim of this survey by Charles Sturt University Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) student Ella Fyfe is to gather information to inform possible future development of strategies to minimise the occurrence of burnout, which can have a significant impact on individuals and the profession.

The anonymous survey has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee at Charles Sturt University (Approval number: H19134).

Survey link:

https://csufobjbs.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0ANezTaBAqHc78F

FAREWELL TO CHARLES MILNE, VICTORIAN CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER

From Agriculture Victoria

On 10 May 2019, Dr Charles Milne called it a day after 5 years serving as the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) for Victoria. Dr Milne will be returning to Scotland, where he will be spending more time with his family.

During his time as CVO, Charles led Victoria's responses to numerous animal disease outbreaks, including anthrax detections and the blue-tongue virus.

Thanks to Charles and his professional experience with foot-and-mouth disease, Agriculture Victoria has made significant advances in its preparedness for outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease.

The CVO played a leading role in the introduction of mandatory electronic identification for sheep and goats in Victoria, a highly significant reform which will improve traceability and the State's ability to respond more rapidly to disease incursions and food safety issues.

Dr Milne also worked to help many Victoria farmers recover from natural disasters including floods and bushfires.

Thanks to Charles's efforts, Victoria is much better equipped overall to respond to animal health and biosecurity emergencies.

Charles led important work to review Victoria's greyhound industry following incidents of live baiting; and he acted as the Minister's delegate to authorise seizures of animals whose welfare was jeopardised.

Charles has been very generous with his time and expertise and worked in close partnership with stakeholders from across the spectrum of animal industries and all levels of government.

Dr Milne is thanked for his efforts and contributions to the Victorian veterinary profession over the last 5 years.

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA CONTACTS

Disease Watch Hotline

Call 1800 675 888 immediately if you suspect an emergency animal disease. This hotline is staffed by veterinary practitioners 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Talk to local animal health staff

Call 136 186 to be put in touch with Agriculture Victoria District Veterinary Officers and Animal Health Officers located throughout Victoria.

Antimicrobial resistance and stewardship

www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/amr - includes scientific background, refresher videos, and prescribing guidelines

General information and contacts

- www.agriculture.vic.gov.au
- Email legislation or policy queries or feedback to animal.biosecurity@ecodev.vic.gov.au
- Customer service line 136 186