

Vetboard Victoria newsletter

June 2020



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I write this message for the Board's first newsletter of 2020 reflecting on what has been a year of emergencies – commencing with massive bushfires across Victoria, closely followed by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

These events have had a significant impact on the Victorian public and animal welfare, and on the workplaces, workloads, and welfare of Victorian veterinary practitioners.

Earlier in the year, we arranged fast-track registration of a number of veterinarians who sought to be registered to assist in the bushfire crisis. I extend thanks to all registered practitioners who donated their time to animal welfare at this time, and to the Vetboard staff who facilitated registration of new practitioners.

Almost immediately following the bushfire crisis, Victorian veterinary practitioners have had to respond to the COVID pandemic and implement changes to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission to the public and themselves, while continuing to meet the needs of animal patients.

Through this time, the Board has paid close attention to government announcements and changing rules and recommendations, and their impact on registered veterinary practitioners.

Our focus has been to provide practitioners with information, tools and guidance so they can continue to practise safely and with confidence. We have developed [temporary guidance on remote consultations](#), recognising the need for a flexible approach in the face of COVID-19.

We have also produced [COVID-19 FAQs](#), which we continue to update as the situation changes. The Board encourages all practitioners to refresh their knowledge of government rules for businesses around physical distancing and hygiene ([see our FAQs for info](#)).

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|---|
| President's message | 1 |
| Queens birthday honours | 1 |
| New specialists in Victoria | 2 |
| Registration renewal on now | 3 |
| APVMA product recalls and adverse experience reporting program | 3 |
| CPD and COVID-19..... | 3 |
| New POCTA Regulations 2019 | 4 |
| Microchipping updates | 4 |
| Reuniting lost pets review | 5 |
| Support and information for veterinary practitioners | 6 |

President's message continued

Looking forward, the Board is mindful of the students who are due to graduate in 2020. Many final year students have not been able to complete their usual work placements, and they will need to be well supported by experienced colleagues as they transition to practice and establish themselves in the profession.

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QUEENS BIRTHDAY HONOURS

The Board extends its warmest congratulations to the three veterinary practitioners who were recognised on the Queen's Birthday 2020 Honours List:

- **Dr Denis Vincent Napthine** – appointed Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to the people and Parliament of Victoria, particularly as Premier, to veterinary science, and to the community.
- **Professor Elizabeth McIntyre Tudor** – named a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to veterinary science, to tertiary education, and to animal welfare.
- **Dr Ray Gwynne Ferguson** – awarded Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for service to veterinary science.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONT.

Staffing and revenue update

Since January, Vetboard Victoria's operations have been overseen by our new Registrar & General Manager, Michelle Cunningham.

Michelle joins the team with a background in business management and leading teams in the not-for-profit and commercial sectors.

Having hit the ground running this year, Michelle looks forward to working together with the Board and her team to build a culture of continuous improvement and deliver fair and effective regulation for the Victorian public and veterinary profession.

The Board is currently recruiting a Finance & Business Systems Manager who will replace interim Finance Manager Rita Davis.

Compared with 12 months ago, the number of complaints received each month about veterinary practitioners from members of the public has approximately doubled. This increase in complaint numbers is not just a Victorian trend; it has also been observed in some other States. It is possible that the public is expecting an increased quality of professional veterinary care, or that the public is more ready to formally complain, or both.

The increase in complaints has resulted in expenditure above and beyond our current revenue, with a negative bottom line forecast for our year-end balance sheet. Going forward, strategies the Board is considering to raise the required revenue include increasing registration fees for the 2021-2022 year.

Guidelines focus group

The Board has been considering your feedback in the 178 submissions received on the Board's draft Guidelines.

The Board has identified a number of issues that merit further attention to ensure the Guidelines reflect the scope and challenges of today's professional environment. One such topic is expectations of communications and care where specialist services are provided pursuant to an agreement with a general veterinary practitioner. The Board is calling for expressions of interest from Victorian practitioners to participate in a focus group on GP-referral communications to be held in late July.

Express your interest in GP-referral focus group

For information on how to express your interest in participating in a focus group on GP-referral communications in late July 2020, go to:

www.vetboard.vic.gov.au/VPRBV/VPRBV/News/EoI_GP-referral_communications.aspx.

To reduce delays, the Board has decided to publish each new Guideline individually as it is finalised, with the first Guideline scheduled to be finalised in July.

Animal welfare legislative reform

In my view, the veterinary profession is the primary professional body with ownership and responsibility for animal welfare standards. Efforts are beginning around revision of the animal welfare legislation in Victoria – the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (POCTA) Act – and the Board is engaging in this process. When legislative proposals are ready for public comment, we will bring this to the attention of all Victorian veterinarians.

On a related note, the current POCTA Act stipulates that all Animal Ethics Committees must have registered veterinarians as Category A members. Sometimes, universities and industry have difficulty finding veterinarians to fill empty roles on their ethics committees. Taking up such roles is a way to provide professional leadership and service to our constituents, and I encourage you to apply for them.

Wishing you all good health through the next months.

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President

NEW SPECIALISTS IN VICTORIA

Congratulations to the two veterinary practitioners the Board recently endorsed as specialists:

- Dr Rebekah Liffman, endorsed as a specialist in Veterinary Clinical Pathology on 10 October 2019
- Dr Hamish Baron, endorsed as a specialist in Avian Medicine on 4 March 2020.

The Board was saddened to recently learn of the death of Dr Patricia Stewart, former President of the Victorian Division of the Australian Veterinary Association, an Approved Person on Board hearing panels between 2013 and 2016, and a mentor to a great many students through her teaching at the Box Hill Institute. *Vale, Dr Stewart.*

REGISTRATION RENEWAL

Registration renewal for the 2020-2021 year began on 27 May, with emails and text reminders sent to all veterinary practitioners registered in Victoria.

To date, approximately two thirds of Victorian vets have renewed their registration.

If you have not yet renewed, sign into the VetConsole at www.vetboard.vic.gov.au/vetconsole using the sign in details previously provided to you.

You have until Wednesday 30 June 2020 to renew your registration without incurring late charges.

Late fees will accrue on non-paid charges for renewal during the period 1 July to 31 July 2020.

The last day of the renewal period is 31 July 2020.

After 1 August 2020, the Board will remove the names of veterinary practitioners who have not renewed their registration from the Register of Veterinary Practitioners.

APVMA PRODUCT RECALLS AND ADVERSE EXPERIENCE REPORTING PROGRAM

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is the Australian Government Statutory Authority responsible for assessing, registering and regulating agricultural and veterinary chemical products, from importation to point of sale.

The APVMA is responsible for the recall of veterinary medicines from the market, such as a recent recall of unregistered veterinary chemical products bearing the [HAMPL trademark](#) (PDF).

The APVMA also runs an Adverse Experience Reporting Program, which receives and assesses reports of adverse experiences associated with the use of a registered veterinary medicine or agricultural chemical product.

Australian veterinary practitioners play a key role in helping the APVMA ensure the supply of safe and effective veterinary medicines. The APVMA encourages veterinarians to report any observed adverse effects of these products, including those where a product has been used off-label. The APVMA also strongly encourages vets to highlight concerns with products of particular pharmacological significance, such as antimicrobials.

More information:

- [About APVMA](#)
- [See list of recalls and subscribe to recall notices](#)
- [Adverse Experience Reporting Program](#)

CPD AND COVID-19



STOP PRESS! Structured CPD for AVA VetFest

The Board has agreed that veterinary practitioners can get structured CPD points (1 hour = 1 structured CPD point) for proven attendance at the Australian Veterinary Association's virtual conference, VetFest 2020.

The AVA's VetFest 2020 will be held online from 5 to 23 July. The conference will feature over 100 half-hour talks from over 12 special interest groups. There will be live Q & A for all sessions, and lectures will be recorded and available to delegates for 6 months. Recorded sessions can also be purchased if you cannot make it to the conference.

Registration at the conference is open to all veterinary practitioners in Victoria.

More information: vetfest.ava.com.au

Q Do I have to do all my CPD this year?

The Board has been asked about Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements, given restrictions on in-class learning during the COVID-19 emergency.

The Board's view is that veterinary practitioners should still be able to undertake all required CPD activities this year, in the form of online assessed courses (which count as structured CPD units) and reading and other informal activities (which count as unstructured CPD).

Board Guideline 13.1.2 specifies that over each three years (a triennium) at least fifteen (15) units of structured activities and at least forty-five (45) units of unstructured activities should be undertaken.

The Board encourages you to look at your CPD record and determine how much CPD activity you need to complete to make up the three-year requirement – you might have enough CPD accumulated from last year and the year before. More information: [Fillable CPD form](#)

Q Can UK or US online courses count as CPD?

Yes. Online courses approved by an appropriate US or UK authority can count towards CPD, e.g. courses on the American Association of State Veterinary Boards' Registry of Approved Continuing Education (RACE®) program.

NEW PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS REGULATIONS 2019

FROM ANIMAL WELFARE VICTORIA, DEPARTMENT OF JOBS, PRECINCTS AND REGIONS

New Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (POCTA) Regulations 2019 commenced on 14 December 2019, replacing the previous POCTA Regulations 2008.

The POCTA Regulations 2019 protect the welfare of animals in Victoria by supporting the state's primary animal welfare legislation to prevent or minimise harm through regulation of specific activities.

The new regulations make improvements on important animal welfare issues, including new requirements for:

- Animals left unattended in motor vehicles when the temperature is at, or exceeds, 28 degrees Celsius [Regulation 6(2)].
- Dogs secured to metal trays when the temperature is at, or exceeds, 28 degrees Celsius require access to an area insulated from the hot metal surface [Regulation 6(4)].
- Time off-water when transporting livestock or farm animals must not exceed times in the

Land Transport Standards and Guidelines [Regulation 6(5)].

- Transportation of livestock if not able to walk on its own by bearing weight on all legs [Regulations 6(6) and 6(7)].
- Sheep with overgrown wool [Regulation 8(1)].
- Administration of a pain relief product when mulesing sheep [Regulation 8(2)].
- Sale and use of electronic devices and collars [Regulations 14-29].

For a summary of the consultation process, feedback received and changes made to the regulations, visit: engage.vic.gov.au/prevention-cruelty-animals-draft-regulations-2019.

The full POCTA Regulations 2019 are available at www.legislation.vic.gov.au. Further information on the regulations and what is required can be obtained at animalwelfare.vic.gov.au or by emailing animal.welfare@agriculture.vic.gov.au

MICROCHIPPING UPDATES

FROM ANIMAL WELFARE VICTORIA, DEPARTMENT OF JOBS, PRECINCTS AND REGIONS

New microchipping information to be recorded from 1 July 2020

As Victoria now has a Pet Exchange Register, from 1 July 2020 the Pet Exchange Register source number of the breeder of any dog or cat, or the source number of the council pound, animal shelter, pet shop or foster carer that owns the animal, will be required when a microchip is implanted into a dog or cat born after 1 July.

The source number forms part of the animal's prescribed identifying information under the Domestic Animals Regulations 2015, and a failure to include it may incur penalties. If an animal is presented and the person presenting the animal cannot provide a source number, we encourage advising the person at the time of making an appointment to apply for one online via the Pet Exchange Register and have it ready for the consultation.

More information about new requirements: <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/pets/registration-legislation-and-permits/microchipping-of-dogs-cats-and-horses/microchipping-information-for-authorised-implanters> or email pet.welfare@agriculture.vic.gov.au.

Microchip technical specifications

Microchips are the cornerstone for traceability of dogs, cats and horses.

Only prescribed microchips can be implanted in dogs, cats and horses.

Recently, the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions has detected the use of non-prescribed microchips which do not uniquely identify an animal and are unlawful for use in Victoria.

More information on the types of microchips that can be implanted:

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/pets/registration-legislation-and-permits/microchipping-of-dogs-cats-and-horses/permanent-identification-technology>

Changes to who can implant microchips

Registered veterinary practitioners should familiarise themselves with recent changes to the prerequisite qualifications to implant microchips into cats and dogs.

Persons who are not veterinary practitioners who wish to implant microchips into cats and dogs must hold a qualification approved by the Secretary of the

Changes to who can implant microchips cont.

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions under section 63T of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* before they can complete the unit of competency, 'Implant microchip in cats and dogs'.

In late 2019, the following three new prerequisite qualifications were added to the list of approved prerequisite qualifications for implanting microchips in cats and dogs:

- Diploma in Animal Technology
- Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing, and
- Associate Degree in Veterinary Nursing.

Any previously approved implanters maintain their authorisations.

View the full list of approved prerequisite qualifications for persons who are not veterinary practitioners at

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/pets/registration-legislation-and-permits/microchipping-of-dogs-cats-and-horses/microchipping-information-for-authorised-implanters>

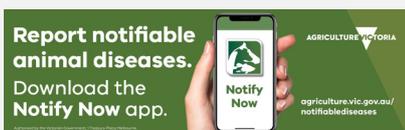
Email your questions to Animal Welfare Victoria at pet.welfare@agriculture.vic.gov.au

DOWNLOAD AGVIC'S NOTIFY NOW APP

From Victoria's Chief Veterinary Officer

Early recognition of serious or exotic animal disease is one of the most important factors influencing the chance of controlling the disease and reducing its economic and social impact on the whole community.

Government addresses this issue by defining some animal



diseases as 'notifiable diseases'. When these animal diseases are suspected by owners, vets or laboratories, they must be reported to the Chief Veterinary Officer in that jurisdiction within a defined timeframe.

Notifiable diseases can now be reported through Agriculture Victoria's mobile app called **Notify Now**. The app allows users to send high quality geo-located photographs of the affected animals, with the owner's details and Property Identification Code, directly to Victoria's Chief Veterinary Officer. Users can also use the app to call the 1800 Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline (1800 675 888) or look up the current list of notifiable diseases.

The app is available and free to download now on the Apple App Store and Google Play.

REUNITING LOST PETS REVIEW

Before the 2018 election, the Labor Government released a Plan for Pets and Animal Welfare. One of the commitments in this plan is to support 'reforms to allow vets and animal shelters to legally reunite lost pets with their owners'.



As the law currently stands, all lost cats and dogs must be delivered to a local council authorised officer, or an organisation holding an 84Y agreement, to establish if the owner can be found.

Some members of the public are unaware of this requirement and often find it more convenient to leave a lost pet at their local vet clinic or animal shelter.

Animal Welfare Victoria is conducting the **Reuniting Lost Pets Review** to consult community and industry stakeholders about proposed reforms that will allow lost cats and dogs dropped off at vet clinics or animal shelters to be reunited with their owners as soon as possible.

The purpose of the Reuniting Lost Pets Review is to explore the main issues relating to reuniting lost pets with their owners for cats and dogs dropped off at vet clinics and animal shelters.

Veterinary practitioners who support or have opinions or concerns on proposed reforms are encouraged to make submissions to the Reuniting Lost Pets Review on the Engage Victoria website. This consultation is yet to go live, so please keep an eye on engage.vic.gov.au in the coming weeks to have your say.

More information: email pet.welfare@agriculture.vic.gov.au

SUPPORT AND INFORMATION FOR VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS

Personal support during COVID-19

If you or someone you know needs assistance or support, you may find the links below to be helpful.

Physical health:

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) interactive self-assessment](#) (Victorian Government)
- [Symptom checker](#) (also on the Coronavirus Australia app) or call the coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398 (Australian Government)

General support:

- AVA [Worker wellbeing and COVID-19 notice](#) and [telephone counselling service](#) 1300 687 327 (Australian Veterinary Association)
- [Head to Health](#) (Australian Government)
- [Mental Health Resources – coronavirus](#) (Victorian Government)
- Lifeline Australia [Mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak](#) 131 114
- Beyond Blue [Coronavirus mental wellbeing support service](#) - 1300 224 636
- [Sane Australia](#) 1800 187 263

Vetboard Victoria resources

- [VetConsole for renewing registration](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQs](#) and [telemedicine](#)
- [Registration](#)
- [Complaints](#)
- [The Board's Statutory Guidelines](#)
- The [Veterinary Practice Act 1997](#), and other laws relating to veterinary practice including the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*
- [About the Board & Board members](#)
- [Annual reports](#)

Disclaimer: Some links in items in this newsletter direct you to the websites of third party organisations which are responsible for and/or may be able to assist you with the subject matter of an item. The Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria has no control over and is not responsible or liable for the content of any third-party website.

Medicines, microchipping, radiation

- [Office of Medicines and Poisons Regulation](#) within the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.
- Prescribing guidelines and resources:
 - the University of Melbourne [veterinary prescribing guidelines for companion animals, equines and bovines](#)
 - the AVA's [AMR resources including AIDAP small animal prescribing guidelines](#)
- Obtain microchipping authorisation by taking the [authorised implanter course for veterinarians](#) (Victorian Division AVA)
- Obtain a [licence to use radiation sources](#) from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

Agriculture Victoria information

Emergency Disease Hotline

Call 1800 675 888 to report suspected emergency diseases. This hotline is staffed by vets 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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.

General contacts

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

General information

- www.agriculture.vic.gov.au
- [Emergencies](#) and [biosecurity](#) (including [notifiable diseases](#)).
- [VetWatch newsletter](#) – information about animal disease surveillance
- [Animal health and welfare](#)
- [Livestock care](#)
- [Pet care](#)
- [Resources for fighting antimicrobial resistance](#)