



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

With the progressive easing of COVID restrictions, it has been a busy first quarter for the veterinary profession in Victoria.

The Board's focus in these last months has been on finalising and releasing revised Board guidelines, and continuing work on developing a compliance strategy.

### Revised guidelines to take effect 1 May 2021

On 1 March, we released a preview version of the Board's revised guidelines for veterinary practice and veterinary facilities, which will be applied to all veterinary practitioners in Victoria from 1 May 2021.

We were delighted that 164 vets and members of the public were able to attend an introductory webinar on the guidelines on 25 March. Several attendees commented in their feedback that they appreciated the opportunity to meet the Board members in an informal and relaxed setting. We received thoughtful questions from participants on the night, some of which will be addressed in FAQs to be published as a supplement to the guidelines over the coming months.

The next webinar, on guidelines covering administrative and technical aspects of veterinary practice, will be held at **7:30 pm on 15 April 2021**. Veterinary practitioners can claim one point of structured CPD if they attend on the night and complete a post-webinar quiz. You can [register for the webinar here](#) and [preview the revised guidelines here](#).

The guidelines are a living document which the Board may amend in response to feedback. We welcome questions and comments to be emailed to [guidelines@vetboard.vic.gov.au](mailto:guidelines@vetboard.vic.gov.au)

### Registration renewal

Preparation for the upcoming annual registration renewal, which is set to commence in late May, is well underway. Veterinary practitioners can expect to receive notice of 2021-2022 registration fees in mid-May.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONT.

### Rest and support

The Board is aware that the last year has been immensely disruptive in many ways. While COVID restrictions may have relaxed, Victorians are still contending with the effects of the pandemic.

If you feel you need extra support during this time, the Board refers you to the resources listed on our website at [Support for veterinary practitioners](#).

We hope you all get a chance to take a breather during the upcoming Easter break.

Professor Ted Whitem

President

Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria

## VETERINARY MEDICAL RECORDS REQUIREMENTS

The Board has recently considered several matters where records of an animal's consultation and treatment, including communication with the owner, were either incomplete or not made at all.

While this issue has previously been raised in relation to small animal practice, the Board has noted that this issue is occurring more frequently in large animal practice, in particular equine practice.

A record of matters discussed with the owner is essential – for example, treatment options offered, potential side effects and possible prognosis. Without such records, the Board is unable to assess what discussions with the owner have occurred and what evidence to rely on when considering professional conduct matters.

On 1 May 2021, incoming **Guideline 7 – Veterinary medical records** will take effect. Item 7.1 in this Guideline will require veterinary practitioners to 'ensure that the veterinary medical record contains sufficient information to:

1. clearly identify the animal
2. list and justify alternative treatments/procedures or management approaches
3. record discussion with the owner on the risks associated with each recommended treatment/management option
4. record the clinical management of the animal, and
5. enable a professional peer to continue the care and treatment of that animal (if needed).'

Under Guideline 7, veterinary practitioners will also be required to take 'reasonable steps to ensure their entries to a veterinary medical record are completed at the time they provide veterinary services.'

While the Board appreciates that many large animals may be treated away from a practice at an owner's premises, it is important that a veterinary practitioner completes a comprehensive medical record while consultation and treatment of the animal are fresh in the practitioner's mind, either on site (using electronic aids) or as soon as possible after returning to the practice. Mobile veterinary practices are subject to the same requirements and should have record-keeping systems in place which will allow them to comply with Guideline 7.

Guideline 7.4 sets out the information that the Board expects to be included in a veterinary medical record (from 1 May 2021). Note that anaesthetic records form part of expected clinical records. In several cases the Board has considered recently, anaesthetic records have either not been kept or have been inadequate.

For the period up to 1 May, current Board guideline 11.1.2 applies, 'Veterinary practitioners must ensure that veterinary records contain sufficient information to clearly identify the animal(s) and justify the clinical management and treatment.' See Guideline 11.1.3 for the information the Board currently expects to be included in a record.

### More information:

- Incoming [Guideline 7 – Veterinary Medical Records](#) (to take effect on 1 May 2021)
- Current [Guideline 11 – Veterinary Medical records](#) (current until 30 April 2021)

## NEW MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

On 22 December 2020, Mary-Anne Thomas MP was sworn in as the new Minister for Agriculture, taking on this portfolio from Jaclyn Symes MP.

Read more about [The Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas here](#).



## VETBOARD VICTORIA RECRUITING TECHNICAL OFFICER (VETERINARY)

An exciting new role is now available for a registered veterinary practitioner to join the Vetboard team as our Technical Officer (Veterinary).

The role will offer the opportunity to use your up-to-date clinical knowledge, experience, and well-developed communications skills to enhance the veterinary profession by guiding the technical focus of staff responsible for investigations and crafting meaningful, relatable information to assist the public and the veterinary profession.

For more information about this role, go to [www.vetboard.vic.gov.au](http://www.vetboard.vic.gov.au) > [About](#) > [Careers](#)

## WEBINAR AND UPDATE FOLLOWING DETECTIONS OF EHRlichIA CANIS

### REGISTER FOR E. CANIS WEBINAR 7 APRIL

#### Ehrlichia canis – an emerging concern

Victorian veterinary practitioners are invited to attend a free webinar organised by the Australian Small Animal Veterinarians group (Australian Veterinary Association).

*Ehrlichia canis* – an emerging concern will be presented by Professor Peter Irwin – international expert in vector-borne disease.

The webinar will be held at 8pm AEDT on Wednesday, 7 April. [Click here to register for the webinar](#) (1 CPD point).

#### Background to the webinar

Canine monocytic ehrlichiosis has been discovered in Australia and it is here to stay. This presentation will focus on the aetiology, pathophysiology, clinical signs, treatment and prognosis *Ehrlichia canis* infections.

*Ehrlichia canis*, an intracellular bacterium transmitted by the brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*), causes significant morbidity (lethargy, anorexia, fever, bleeding diatheses and lymphadenopathy) in the acute and subacute phases of canine monocytic ehrlichiosis (CME), and a high mortality in its chronic manifestation.

Laboratory findings include a range of haematological abnormalities, notably thrombocytopenia, organ pathologies, and hyperglobulinaemia (associated with non-protective antibody production). Immune-complex disease and bone marrow failure occurs in untreated cases. In recognition of the widespread presence in Australia of the vector tick, pre-import testing has maintained freedom from CME for many years. Index cases of an outbreak of CME were discovered in northern Western Australia in May 2020 and investigations are ongoing into the source and distribution of this serious disease.

Canine monocytic ehrlichiosis currently remains a notifiable disease.

#### About Professor Peter Irwin

Emeritus professor at Murdoch University, Professor Irwin is a registered specialist in canine medicine and Fellow of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists. An internationally recognised expert in vector-borne diseases, Professor Irwin's recent research focus is on tick-borne infections of companion animals, wildlife and humans in Australia.

### E. CANIS UPDATE AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

Following detections of ehrlichiosis in New South Wales and Queensland, and the brown dog tick in South Australia, Victorian veterinary practitioners are

- URGED TO LOOK OUT for dogs showing symptoms of the disease, and
- RETAIN any ticks found on dogs so they can be identified.

In February 2021, Vetboard Victoria distributed a biosecurity advisory from the Chief Veterinary Officer with details of the disease, and Agriculture Victoria covered the disease in the December issue of VetWatch newsletter.

Canine monocytic ehrlichiosis, or infection with *Ehrlichia canis*, is a notifiable disease in Victoria. Veterinary Practitioners and other persons who suspect the disease in an animal must report it immediately to the all-hours **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888**.

You can discuss a suspected case with the duty officer and receive further instructions about submitting canine blood and/or tick samples.

There is no cost to submit samples for testing for *E. canis* or for the identification of ticks.

Please collect at least two blood samples (one plain tube and one EDTA), preferably prior to administering any antimicrobial treatment, and freeze any ticks (including those found by owners) in a sealed bag or sample container.

#### More information on Agriculture Victoria website:

- [Ehrlichiosis](#)
- Biosecurity advisory: [E. canis infection and vector now detected in additional jurisdictions](#)
- VetWatch newsletters

### MORE GUIDELINES WEBINARS

A reminder that the Board is holding two webinars on its incoming revised guidelines on 15 and 29 April 2021. If you attend these webinars on the night then complete a quiz, you can obtain one structured CPD point:

- [Register for Webinar 2](#) on guidelines about administrative and technical aspects of veterinary practice.
- [Register for Webinar 3](#) on guidelines about veterinary practitioner competency and fitness to practise and inter-practitioner relationships.

## HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED RODENTICIDE POISONINGS

As parts of Australia are experiencing the worst mouse plague in decades, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is seeking information about suspected poisoning of companion animals with rodenticides.

The APVMA encourages veterinary practitioners to report incidences of primary and secondary poisoning through the Adverse Experience Reporting Program. You can submit reports via:

**Reporting form:** <https://portal.apvma.gov.au/aerp>

**Email:** [AERP@apvma.gov.au](mailto:AERP@apvma.gov.au)

**Phone:** 1800 700 583

### Relevant information to submit with reports::

- Location (postcode level)
- Number of animals affected
- Type of exposure (primary vs secondary poisoning)
- Details of the chemicals suspected or confirmed to be involved
- Outcomes in affected animals.

Providing the above information will help the APVMA to assess the risks associated with rodenticides. It will also facilitate continued monitoring of the safety, efficacy and suitability of label directions for end-users.

## SURVEY ON FIELD GUIDE FOR EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASES

### Have you used the Field Guide for Emergency Animal Diseases?

What are the clinical signs of an emergency animal disease? And who do you contact if you suspect an emergency animal disease?

Whether tending poultry or pampered mini-pigs, Australian veterinary practitioners need to know how to take appropriate action if presented with signs of emergency animal diseases, which are often overlooked during diagnosis because they are exotic or rare to Australia.

To help vets identify, diagnose and control the spread of emergency animal diseases, animal health authorities published a new veterinary field guide in 2019.

The free resource was developed by the Department of Agriculture, Water Resources and the Environment, in collaboration with the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness.

Developed with expert animal health advice from government veterinarians, laboratory and research staff, the updated Emergency Animal Disease Field Guide for Veterinarians is Australia's most authoritative guide on the subject.

The 270-page field guide provides information on 26 important animal diseases and several syndromes which are not found, or are rarely found, in Australia.

It also provides over 50 colour photographs of clinical signs of emergency animal disease and common post-mortem findings.

As a year has now passed since the publication of the field guide, the Department would like to know if you have used the guide and how it could be improved.

The field guide covers many emergency animal diseases, but more will be added, along with additional images and descriptions to help vets identify priority risk diseases to Australia.

'We know vets play a critical role in biosecurity by protecting the environment and human health from problems associated with pests and diseases of animals,' said Narelle Clegg from the Department of Agriculture, Water Resources and the Environment.

'That's why we're keen to find out how well the guide is serving the needs of vets when it comes to identifying emergency animal diseases in the field. Does the guide help them to consider priority diseases when conducting diagnosis? Or to take appropriate action when an emergency animal disease is suspected?'

### GIVE FEEDBACK ON THE FIELD GUIDE

Victorian vets are invited to provide feedback on the **Field Guide for Emergency Animal Diseases** to the Department of Agriculture, Water Resources and the Environment.

You can take the survey even if you have never heard of or used the guide.

All feedback will help ensure the field guide remains a useful and relevant resource for veterinarians.

The survey will be open until 1 May 2021 at this link: [EAD Field Guide for Veterinarians Survey](#)

View the field guide on the Outbreak website at [outbreak.gov.au/for-vets-and-scientists/emergency-animal-diseases-guide](https://outbreak.gov.au/for-vets-and-scientists/emergency-animal-diseases-guide).

## ANIMAL WELFARE UPDATES

### TASKFORCE ON REHOMING PETS

On Monday 30 March, Victorian Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas announced a new **Taskforce on Rehoming Pets**. This taskforce will provide recommendations to the Victorian Government on how to improve and better support the rehoming of pets and research animals in Victoria.

The taskforce will recommend regulatory options to improve the welfare and survival rates of dogs and cats that need rehoming, and to establish ways to make the movement of animals between shelters, pounds and rescue groups more transparent.

When announcing the taskforce, the Minister said, 'Hard data and facts will guide our ongoing efforts to improve the welfare of domestic animals that need to find a new home – the establishment of this taskforce is an important part of this process.'

Working with industry and community stakeholders, the taskforce will ensure that a range of perspectives are considered and will provide its final report and recommendations to the Government by end 2021.

#### More information:

- [Helping pets find a loving home](#)
- Email: [pet.taskforce@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:pet.taskforce@agriculture.vic.gov.au)

### SURVEY ON ASSISTANCE ANIMALS

The Commonwealth Government is working with States and Territory Governments to develop options for a nationally consistent approach to the regulation and accreditation of assistance animals.

The Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) wants to hear the views of organisations and individuals involved with assistance animals.

Information and insights provided via the survey will inform options for developing a nationally consistent approach to the regulation and accreditation of assistance animals.

The survey will be open until 23 April 2021 at <https://engage.dss.gov.au/assistance-animals-a-nationally-consistent-approach>

### REUNITING LOST PETS UPDATE

The Victorian Government is reviewing the existing laws and processes relating to reuniting lost cats and dogs with their owners directly via vet clinics and registered animal shelters.

In August 2020, Animal Welfare Victoria surveyed the community and interested groups about improving the current reunification process. Over 1,000 people took part, with the overwhelming majority of submissions supporting reforms to streamline lost pet reunification.

The Government is now finalising reforms which will improve animal welfare while maintaining relevant public safety, privacy, compliance and enforcement safeguards.

To view the consultation summary report and stay informed on this project's progress, visit [engage.vic.gov.au/reuniting-lost-pets-review](https://engage.vic.gov.au/reuniting-lost-pets-review).

### PET DESEXING/EQUINE REHAB GRANTS

Online applications for Animal Welfare Victoria's Round 1 funding of **Pet Desexing and Equine Rehabilitation Grants** are now open – closing 11:59pm Sunday 11 April 2021.

Animal Welfare Victoria encourages eligible organisations wishing to invest in infrastructure, programs and activities that align with the areas listed below and demonstrate a benefit to companion animal welfare in Victoria, to apply for funding:

- Free or low-cost cat and/or dog desexing programs for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged Victorians, including the purchase of necessary equipment.
- Services, systems or equipment which improve the efficiency and effectiveness of not-for-profit equine rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming for eligible species.
- Upgrade or extension of existing equine rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming facilities to improve the welfare of animals in care.

More information: [Animal Welfare Fund Grants Program](#)

## CATTLE VET ANTIBIOTICS SURVEY

Victorian cattle veterinarians are invited to take a survey seeking to gauge the perceptions and attitudes of dairy cattle veterinarians towards antibiotics.

Part of a larger study to provide information related to the risk of antibiotic resistance in animals and humans, the survey is being conducted by Michele Tree (Murdoch PhD candidate), Dr Josh Aleri (Murdoch University), Prof. Ian Robertson (Murdoch University), Dr. David Beggs (The University of Melbourne), Prof. Scott McDougall (Massey University) and Prof. Theo Lam (Utrecht University).

Survey link: [Perception and attitude of dairy cattle veterinarians towards antibiotics](#)

Murdoch University Human Ethics Committee approval: 2021/004.

## KNOW YOUR “ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE” GUIDELINE!

All veterinary practitioners in Victoria are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the content of incoming [Board Guideline 15 – Responsible supply and use of antibiotics](#).

This guideline will take effect on 1 May 2021.

## NEW SPECIALISTS IN VICTORIA

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

- **Dr Ashley Phipps** – endorsed as a specialist in Dairy Cattle Medicine and Management on 10 February 2021.
- **Dr Alessandra Santamaria** – endorsed as a specialist in Small Animal Surgery on 11 January 2021.

## AVBC SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED

The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) recently established a **Sustainable Practice Committee**.

Through this committee’s terms of reference, the AVBC has set itself new goals to strengthen the profession as it faces current and emerging challenges in serving the community. The committee aims to improve standards for practice after a veterinary practitioner is registered and in the workforce. For regulation, sustainable practice is about preventing incidents requiring a veterinary board’s attention before they happen.

Proposed committee initiatives include:

- working towards an agreed approach on how mental health issues and substance dependence is handled across all jurisdictions
- considering collaboration with the work of Mind Matters International.

**More information:**

- [AVBC media release on Sustainable Practice Committee](#) - 26 November 2020
- [Mind Matters International joint statement](#) from veterinary groups on mental health and wellbeing

### About the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council

The AVBC’s core functions are to:

- provide a forum for discussion, advice and cooperation among the veterinary boards in Australia and New Zealand
- encourage the standardisation and quality assurance of veterinary services to the community, and
- assure and promote uniform education standards.

The Council’s voting members include all State and Territory veterinary boards of Australia (except the Veterinary Surgeons Board of South Australia) and the Veterinary Council of New Zealand.

The Australian Veterinary Association and New Zealand Veterinary Association are non-voting members of the Council.

## REGISTRATION IN VICTORIA

Vets with current registration in the ACT, New South Wales, the Northern Territory or Tasmania whose principal residence is now in Victoria must **apply for registration before end May 2021** to be registered in Victoria before 1 July 2021. Please check with any new employees or colleagues that they have taken steps to register here before their interstate registration expires.

A reminder if you are considering employing a vet from New Zealand. They must be registered in an Australian State or Territory before they can start practising here.

## PREPARE FOR RENEWAL

A reminder to all veterinary practitioners registered in Victoria to ensure your mobile numbers and email addresses are up-to-date, ready for us to contact you about registration renewal. [Sign in to the VetConsole to check and make changes.](#)

If you are planning to change to non-practising registration, you cannot make this change as part of your renewal. You will need to apply separately before 1 July 2021. If you have any questions about a change in registration, contact the Board at [communications@vetboard.vic.gov.au](mailto:communications@vetboard.vic.gov.au)

Renewal information: [Registration Renewal 2021-2022](#)

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**SEE NEXT PAGE FOR  
SUPPORT RESOURCES &  
GENERAL CONTACT INFORMATION  
FOR VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS  
IN VICTORIA**

## SUPPORT AND INFORMATION FOR VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS

### VETBOARD VICTORIA RESOURCES

- [Download proof of registration or update your contact details via the VetConsole](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQs](#) and [telemedicine guidance](#)
- [Registration](#)
- [Complaints](#)
- [The Board's 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](#) and [Board members](#)
- [Annual reports](#)

### PERSONAL SUPPORT DURING COVID-19

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

#### 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

#### Workplace support:

- [Victoria's restriction levels](#) (includes Workplace Directions)
- [Sector guidance FAQs](#) (Business Victoria)
- Business Victoria: call 13 22 15 or view [Coronavirus business information](#)
- Fair Work Ombudsman: [Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws](#)

### 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](mailto:animal.biosecurity@ecodev.vic.gov.au)
- Email animal welfare queries to [pet.welfare@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:pet.welfare@agriculture.vic.gov.au)

#### General information

- [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://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](#)

### MEDICINES, MICROCHIPPING, RADIATION

- [Medicines and Poisons Regulation](#) office, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).
- **Prescribing guidelines and resources:**
  - [Veterinary prescribing guidelines for companion animals, equines and bovines](#) the University of Melbourne
  - [Small animal prescribing guidelines](#) AIDAP per AVA
- **Microchipping:** [authorised implanter course for veterinarians](#) (Victorian Division AVA)
- **Radiation:** individual and management [licences to use radiation sources](#), DHHS.

**Disclaimer:** Some links 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.