

Vetboard Victoria newsletter

DECEMBER 2020



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As the year draws to a close, I welcome the class of 2020 to the veterinary profession. Many graduands will be awarded their degrees and will start their clinical careers before the New Year. Please extend your support to your new employees or colleagues. Although they may not have had the same placement opportunities as in other years, their preparation for practice has been tailored for and by the times.

This edition of the Board's newsletter presents a summary of the Board's Annual Report 2019-20.

The numbers of veterinary practitioners registered in Victoria continued to increase, but only slightly compared with last year.

With increasing veterinary services, we again saw a year-on-year increase in the numbers of complaints brought to the Board. We recognise that complaints brought to the Board form a very small percentage of the numbers of animals seen by vets in Victoria each year. Nevertheless, this has caused an increase in our compliance activity. In response to the sustained increased compliance activity involving complaints, there will be an increase in the registration fees payable in 2021 to enable the Board to effectively carry out its regulatory duties.

Early in 2021, the Board will release a compliance strategy which we are developing to improve our managerial efficiency and constrain the costs of our regulatory functions.

The Board also has a new communications project planned for 2021, aiming to guide veterinarians through the regulatory complaint process, with the aim of reducing the stress and anxiety the process may cause.

At its December meeting, the Board approved a final version of new and revised Guidelines for veterinary professional conduct. The new Guidelines will be published on the Board's website on 1 March 2021 and will take effect on 1 May 2021. In March and April 2021, the Board will hold a series of webinars introducing the new Guidelines.

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President's message continued...

As Victoria enters a COVIDSafe Summer, the Board commends the agility *and* composure with which veterinarians have adapted their practice to the frequently changing circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic in Victoria. Your dedication to your clients and their animals has remained constant throughout these changes.

The members of the Board wish you a peaceful conclusion to 2020, and all the best for 2021.

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President

Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria

VETBOARD VICTORIA HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

Vetboard Victoria will be operating with reduced staffing from 24 December to 4 January 2021.

VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS WHO HAVE RELOCATED FROM OTHER STATES MUST REGISTER IN VICTORIA

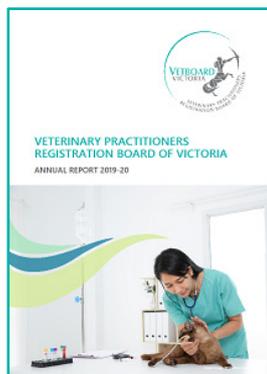
Vets with current registration in Queensland, South Australia or Western Australia whose principal residence is now in Victoria must **apply for registration immediately** to be registered in Victoria before 1 January 2021.

VETBOARD VICTORIA 2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT

The annual report of the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria was presented to the Parliament of Victoria on 10 December 2020.

The report contains an overview of the Board's operations and finances for the 2019-20 financial year.

At 30 June 2020, there were 3,621 veterinary practitioners on the Register of Veterinary Practitioners, an increase of 3.2% on the previous year. During the year, the Board granted general, specific or specialist registration to 348 veterinary practitioners and managed the registration renewal of over 3,352 practitioners.



Vetboard Victoria's nine-member Board managed 127 investigation matters and held 19 disciplinary hearings.

During the year, the Board provided regular information to veterinary practitioners, first in the bushfire crisis then through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Board held a public consultation on revised Guidelines on appropriate standards of veterinary practice and veterinary facilities and held several workshops and focus groups to help finalise the new Guidelines.

The Board also continued its work on the improvement tasks and objectives set out in Vetboard Victoria's 2019-2022 Corporate Plan and the Minister for Agriculture's Statement of Expectations (SOE) for improving the administration and enforcement of the Board's core regulatory functions.

[View Vetboard Victoria's 2019-20 Annual Report](#)

THE AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY EXAMINATION: AN ALTERNATIVE PATHWAY TO GENERAL REGISTRATION IN VICTORIA

The veterinary degrees recognised by the Board as providing an individual with eligibility to apply for registration as a veterinary practitioner in Victoria are listed on the website of the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) at:

<https://avbc.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/documents/public/VetScienceQualsRecognised.pdf>

Individuals with veterinary degrees that are not recognised by the Board can qualify for general registration if they pass the **Australasian Veterinary Examination** or another non-degree qualification such as the Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (US) or the Statutory Membership Examination of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (UK).

The AVBC administers the Australasian Veterinary Examination (AVE). The AVE is a two-part examination: the first part is a two-paper written examination, the Preliminary (MCQ) Examination. The second part is a nine-part oral and practical Final (Clinical) Examination.

Comprehensive information about AVE enrolment requirements and examinations can be found at:

<https://avbc.asn.au/nve/>

You can also watch an overview of the AVE process presented by Professor Leo Jeffcott (AVE Committee Chair) and Ms Louise Flynn (AVE Coordinator) here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doPziad7wJs&feature=youtu.be>

DO YOU OR DOES YOUR EMPLOYEE HOLD SPECIFIC REGISTRATION UNDER SECTIONS 7(1)(B) AND SECTION 7(1)(D) OF THE VETERINARY PRACTICE ACT 1997 (VPA)?

The Board strongly recommends the Australasian Veterinary Examination pathway to veterinary practitioners who currently hold specific registration in Victoria to either:

- work at the University of Melbourne (registered under 7(1)(b) of the VPA), or
- work in an area of identified need (registered under 7(1)(d) of the VPA).

Specific registration is subject to any conditions, limitations or restrictions imposed by the Board including a period of registration which must not exceed 12 months.

The Australasian Veterinary Examination (AVE) certificate or equivalent non-degree qualification will allow registrants who currently hold specific registration to gain general registration in Victoria and work without conditions on their registration.

The AVE Certificate is an internationally recognised qualification which allows holders to work in many other countries including Canada, the UK, and the US.

2020-21 STATE BUDGET OUTCOMES FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

From Animal Welfare Victoria (Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions)

Pet welfare remains a priority for the Victorian Government, with the 2020-21 State Budget announcing \$19.1 million over 4 years support for pets and animal welfare:

- grants to support animal rehoming services meet the costs of veterinary treatments, the purchase of specific equipment and/or services to deliver training or rehabilitation for an animal
- grants to enable delivery of free or low-cost desexing programs for cats and dogs owned by vulnerable and/or disadvantaged Victorians
- grants to support horse and pony rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming

- funding to the RSPCA Victoria Inspectorate and Animal Welfare Victoria for compliance and enforcement activities and for the operation of the Pet Exchange Register, and
- funding to establish a Taskforce to make findings and recommendations to Government on best practice models for the operation of the pet foster care and rescue sector and rehoming animals utilised in medical research.

Access the relevant media release:

www.premier.vic.gov.au/backing-recovery-made-regional-victoria

MEET VICTORIA'S NEW CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER



In the December 2020 issue of VetWatch newsletter, Victoria's Chief Veterinary Officer Dr Graeme Cooke introduces himself to the Victorian veterinary profession.

Dr Cooke discusses the recent avian influenza outbreak and the actions taken to contain that outbreak, 'We have not seen three virus strains affecting three different domestic bird species in such widely separated locations before. For the first time in Australia, we felt the risk was uncertain enough to impose a housing order that required

owners of poultry in the Golden Plains Shire to keep their birds well separated from wild birds.'

As well as updates on avian influenza and Ehrlichia canis, the December issue of VetWatch includes articles on the following:

- New Zealand Mycoplasma bovis response
- Increased risk of Hendra virus
- Cysticercosis case in an Australian woman
- Benign theileriosis in Victoria
- Climate change and animal disease.

Read more: [VetWatch December 2020 edition](#)

GIVE YOUR FEEDBACK ON PROPOSED NEW ANIMAL WELFARE ACT

Monday, 14 December 2020 is the last day to provide feedback on Victorian Government proposals for a new animal welfare Act which would replace the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (POCTA Act).

The proposals for a new Act aim to improve existing provisions under the POCTA Act and introduce new features into Victoria's main animal welfare legislation. The Government has published a Directions Paper presenting 12 high-level proposals grouped into 3 themes: safeguarding animal welfare; a simplified and flexible legislation; a better compliance and enforcement model.

The proposals relating to the first theme – safeguarding animal welfare, include:

- adopting an approach to animal sentience
- introducing a requirement for people to provide a minimum standard of care for animals

- introducing a set of general escalating offence categories covering things a person must not do to animals, and
- providing a single regulatory framework for performing controlled procedures on animals. In relation to this, it is proposed that some procedures would be restricted to registered veterinarians only, as covered by restricted acts of veterinary science in other jurisdictions.

Feedback on the proposals will inform the development of a draft Bill for a new animal welfare Act. The draft Bill is intended to be released for public feedback before its introduction into Parliament.

Read the Directions Paper and complete a survey or upload a submission at: [A new Animal Welfare Act for Victoria](#)

IMPROVING TRACEABILITY THROUGH THE PET EXCHANGE REGISTER AND PRESCRIBED IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

From Animal Welfare Victoria (Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions)

The Pet Exchange Register is an online database where individuals and businesses can register for a source number. It improves the traceability of dogs and cats in Victoria and can also be used to report advertisements without a source number or the individual animal's microchip number.

From 1 July 2020, a dog or cat breeder's Pet Exchange Register source number, or the source number of the council pound, animal shelter, pet shop or foster carer that owns the animal, is required as part of the Prescribed Identifying Information (PII), which is a legal requirement for the register of dogs and cats on an animal registry database.

An authorised implanter must collect and include a source number as part of the microchip registration form when implanting a new microchip into a dog or cat born after 1 July 2020.

Authorised microchip implanters are responsible for:

- Ensuring the owner completes all the PII (including the source number) on the microchip registration form prior to implantation
- Scanning the animal for microchips that may already be implanted
- Ensuring the microchip to be implanted is operational prior to implanting and after to confirm it is present and operational
- Sending the PII to an animal registry service licensed to provide a service in Victoria within two days of implantation

- Keeping a copy of the microchip registration form until you confirm the microchip has been registered on an animal registry service database.

Failure to comply with the PII requirements may incur penalties under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and *Domestic Animals Regulations 2015*.



Remember my source number!

More information on PII and veterinarian's obligations when implanting microchips in

dogs, cats and horses in Victoria:

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/domestic-animals-act/registration-legislation-and-permits/microchipping-of-dogs-cats-and-horses>

More information on Pet Exchange register:

- <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/animal-welfare/pet-exchange-register>, or
- Contact the Domestic Animal Services team at das@agriculture.vic.gov.au or on 136 186.

PETFAST

In October 2020, the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) [communicated a precautionary alert](#) to AVA members that several megaesophagus cases were reported on PetFAST. No definitive causal link between megaesophagus and pet food has been identified.

Veterinary practitioners suspecting health problems associated with pet food in their cats and dogs patients should continue to report these on PetFAST,

which is a tracking system for such adverse incidents and designed to identify possible patterns that might point to a cause. A [checklist](#) is available and all Australian veterinary practitioners can [lodge a report](#) regardless of whether they are an AVA member.

Pet owners can find information on the RSPCA website at: www.rspca.org.au/blog/2020/what-do-if-theres-problem-your-pets-food.

NEW SIGNIFICANT DISEASE INVESTIGATION FIELD GUIDE ON PIGS

Agriculture Victoria has released a Significant Disease Investigation (SDI) guide on pigs aimed at assisting veterinarians in the recognition of emergency pig diseases, the investigation procedure and the requirements for sample collection and laboratory submission.

For a free copy of this new guide or previously released SDI guides on horses and cattle and sheep, contact your local AgVic veterinarian or Karen Moore at karen.moore@agriculture.vic.gov.au

EHRlichia CANIS

From Victoria's Chief Veterinary Officer (Agriculture Victoria, DJPR)

On 9 June 2020, the Board provided a biosecurity advisory from the Victorian Chief Veterinary Officer about the detection of *Ehrlichia canis* (*E. canis*) in Western Australian dogs in May 2020.

Since then, the Northern Territory has also detected *E. canis* in dogs within its jurisdiction.

Given the reopening of interjurisdictional borders and that owners may travel with their animals, it is especially important to consider diseases exotic to Victoria as differentials when veterinary practitioners are presented with pets that have become unwell after travelling.

Canine monocytic ehrlichiosis (CME) from infection with *E. canis* is a [nationally notifiable disease](#). Veterinary practitioners in Victoria who suspect CME must report it immediately. The easiest ways to do this are to:

- contact your local Agriculture Victoria District Veterinary Officer
- ring the all-hours **Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline** on 1800 675 888 or
- use the [Agriculture Victoria](#) Notify Now [smart phone app](#).

In Victoria, the *Livestock Disease Control Act* 1994 covers all animal species, including companion animals, so that movement into Victoria of dogs infected or suspected to be infected with CME requires approval prior to entry.

Please contact Victoria's Chief Veterinary Officer at cvo.victoria@agriculture.vic.gov.au for more information.

The following webpages contain more detailed information about Canine monocytic ehrlichiosis:

- <https://www.outbreak.gov.au/current-responses-to-outbreaks/ehrlichiosis-dogs>
- <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-diseases/general-livestock-diseases/ehrlichiosis>
- <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/ehrlichiosis>
- <https://nt.gov.au/industry/agriculture/livestock/animal-health-and-diseases/ehrlichiosis-disease-dogs>
- <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/humans/ehrlichia-canis>
- https://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal_health/ehrlichiosis_disease_in_dogs
- <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/service-industries-professionals/service-industries/veterinary-surgeons/ehrlichia-canis>
- <https://dpipwe.tas.gov.au/biosecurity-tasmania/animal-biosecurity/animal-health/ehrlichiosis>

CHECK YOUR WEBSITE FOR INCORRECT SPECIALIST CLAIMS

The Board asks all Victorian veterinary practitioners to check their practice website and other advertising materials to ensure that any claims made about your or your team members' registration are correct.

Under the *Veterinary Practice Act* 1997 (VPA), the title 'specialist' and any variants of that title may only be used to describe veterinary practitioners who have been endorsed as specialists by the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria.

If you are not an endorsed specialist, your website and other materials must not state or imply that you have specialist skills in a field of veterinary medicine or surgery, even if you have many years' experience in treating particular animals or performing particular procedures.

While the Board understands that enthusiastic content developers and website managers may not necessarily understand the legalities, incorrect claims as to registration may attract penalties and are prosecutable offences.

NEW SPECIALISTS IN VICTORIA

Congratulations to the three veterinary practitioners the Board has recently endorsed as specialists:

- **Dr Seng Wai Yap** – endorsed as a specialist in Veterinary Radiology on 7 October 2020.
- **Dr Robert Menzies** – endorsed as a specialist in Veterinary Dentistry on 4 November 2020
- **Dr Benjamin Kaye** – endorsed as a specialist in Small Animal Surgery on 2 December 2020.

BUDDING PHOTOGRAPHERS! The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council is calling on veterinary practitioners to submit photos for use on its website, capturing its mission, "to ensure the quality of the veterinary profession in Australia and New Zealand." Submit your photographs to comms@avbc.asn.au

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 FOR VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS

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

- [Australian Veterinary Association \(AVA\) Vet Health portal](#), including:
 - [telephone counselling service](#) 1300 687 327 (for AVA members and their employees)
 - [AVA mental health factsheets and other resources](#)
- Beyond Blue 1300 224 636 or [I need support now](#) and free [NewAccess program](#) for anyone feeling stressed, anxious or overwhelmed about everyday life issues
- Lifeline Australia 131 114 or [Get help](#)
- [Sane Australia](#) 1800 187 263 or [Phone, online counselling & peer support](#)
- 1800RESPECT – 1800 737 732 [National sexual assault, domestic family violence counselling service](#)
- [Head to Health](#) – Australian Government support resources
- [Mental Health](#) – Victorian Government support resources

Coronavirus support and information:

- Vetboard Victoria FAQ: [Where can I get personal support during the COVID-19 pandemic?](#)
- [Victoria's restriction levels](#) (Workplace Directions)
- [Sector guidance FAQs](#) (Business Victoria)
- 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
- 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
- [VetSource](#) – Information for vets
- [Animal health and welfare](#)
- [Livestock health and welfare](#)
- [Pet care](#)
- [Resources for fighting antimicrobial resistance](#)

OTHER RESOURCES

- [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.