



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our winter newsletter sees Victoria emerging from another COVID-19 lockdown during which the veterinary profession has continued to deliver services to the Victorian public.

Current matters to which I draw the attention of veterinary practitioners include:

- The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions is seeking expressions of interest for the position of member of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC). AWAC is a non-statutory ministerial advisory committee whose primary role and function is to advise the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas MP, on matters concerned with animal welfare in Victoria. See the item in this newsletter for application information – the closing date for applications is **Monday 28 June 2021**.
- On 23 June, Chief Veterinary Officer Graeme Cooke issued a **Biosecurity Advisory**, announcing that a dog in Horsham has tested positive for canine monocytic ehrlichiosis (CME) – a dog disease spread by brown ticks. Dr Cooke is urging all veterinary practitioners to be alert for signs of this new disease. CME is a nationally notifiable disease, and practitioners who suspect this condition must report it immediately. The advisory has been published in full in this newsletter and on the Board's website.

### Guidelines effective 1 May 2021

On 1 May, the Board's revised [Guidelines on appropriate standards for veterinary practice and veterinary facilities](#) came into effect.

Leading up to their publication, the Board held three webinars which were attended by several hundred veterinary practitioners. The webinars were well received, and a general theme in feedback was that practitioners appreciated the opportunity to meet the Board members, finding them approachable

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### President's message continued...

and informative. Since publication, we have received several useful questions about the Guidelines which will help to form Frequently Asked Questions to be published on a continuous basis.

### Registration

Veterinary practitioners in Victoria have been able to renew their registration since 1 June 2021. To date, close to 2,500 veterinary practitioners have applied to renew. Practitioners are encouraged to renew before **30 June 2021** to avoid late fees.

In May, the Australian Government added the occupation of Veterinarian to the Priority Migration Skilled Occupation List acknowledging a high demand for veterinary services in Australia.

The Board is aware that there have been call-outs to those who have taken career breaks or recently retired to return to the profession at this time. Individuals who are contemplating re-joining the profession must apply to re-register in Victoria. An item in this newsletter explains the Board's approach to such applications.

## President's message continued...

### Animal welfare

Some items of note relating to animal welfare covered in this newsletter include:

- advice of a report summarising feedback on proposals for a new animal welfare law for Victoria, and
- a new guidance document to improve accessibility of section 84Y agreements relating to reuniting pets with their owners.

## NEW VETERINARY SPECIALISTS IN VICTORIA

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

- **Dr Mara Francine Schier**, endorsed as a specialist in Veterinary Anaesthesia & Analgesia on 12 May 2021.
- **Dr Salih Eminaga**, endorsed as a specialist in Veterinary Neurology on 17 May 2021.

### Change to the Office of Board President

The *Veterinary Practice Act 1997* requires one member of the Board to be a veterinary practitioner who is an employee of the University of Melbourne.

Because I will soon no longer be at the University, I am required to resign from the Board.

From 6 July 2021, Dr David Colson, as Deputy President, will preside over meetings of the Board until a new President is appointed.

It has been an honour for me to serve both the public of Victoria and the veterinary profession as President of the Board.

Professor Ted Whittem  
President, VPRBV

First round submissions to the Victorian Government's Taskforce on Rehoming Pets are being accepted until 31 July 2021.  
**More information:** [Taskforce on Rehoming Pets](#)

## BIOSECURITY ADVISORY: FIRST CASE OF CANINE MONOCYTTIC EHRLICHIOSIS (INFECTION WITH EHRLICHIA CANIS) DETECTED IN VICTORIA

### The Chief Veterinary Officer of Victoria issued the following Biosecurity Advisory on 23 June

On 18 June 2021, the first case of canine monocytic ehrlichiosis (infection with *Ehrlichia canis* bacteria) was detected in an Australian-born dog in Victoria.

The disease has now spread across Australia since initial cases were detected in Western Australia in May 2020, with the ACT now the only State or Territory not having recorded a case in an Australian dog.

The infected dog originated from the Northern Territory, where the disease is established, and was rehomed to north-west Victoria in mid-2020. The dog is showing no clinical signs but returned positive results on both the TagMan Assay polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and immunofluorescence antibody (IFA) tests. The PCR test detected the disease agent and the IFA test detected antibodies (non-protective).

**Canine monocytic ehrlichiosis (CME) is a nationally notifiable disease, so veterinarians who suspect this condition must report it immediately.**

The easiest ways to do this are to contact your local Agriculture Victoria Senior Veterinary Officer directly, through the Customer Contact Centre on telephone 136 186, or by ringing the all-hours **Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline** on 1800 675 888.

Please be reminded to consider ehrlichiosis as a differential disease for dogs presenting with the following clinical signs:

- fever
- lethargy
- corneal oedema
- conjunctivitis
- haemorrhagic ocular changes
- epistaxis and bleeding disorders, and
- limb and body oedema.

This is especially important when the dog (such as an adopted dog) originated from and/or has recently travelled to high risks areas – being the Northern Territory, northern Western Australia, and northern South Australia.

Be vigilant when dog owners are grey nomads, holiday makers or workers returning home to Victoria.

Acute, sub-clinical and chronic phases of ehrlichiosis are recognised.

Less common but recognised clinical signs include anorexia and weight loss, muscle pain and stiffness, polyarthritis, splenomegaly, lymphadenomegaly, vestibular disease and seizures.

### Investigating suspected *E. canis* cases

Suspected cases are those where a dog is showing clinical signs consistent with ehrlichiosis **and** either originated from a jurisdiction outside of Victoria or had travelled from/to one since 1 January 2020. Veterinary practitioners can also discuss submitting samples from cases that present differently with their senior veterinary officer.

It is important to note that, at this time, there will be no test cost to the veterinary practitioner, the veterinary practice or the client (dog owner or carer) to submit blood samples for *E. canis* infection testing and tick identification (if found) for suspected cases.

Samples required:

- from the affected dog – a whole blood sample in a plain (red top) or clot tube (gold top), **and** a blood sample in an EDTA tube.
- if ticks are found on the dog and/or its surroundings, collect these in a clean resealable bag or sample container and freeze prior to submission.

Agriculture Victoria will advise on sample transport requirements to the Veterinary Diagnostic Services at AgriBio and any additional activities required.

Dogs are currently not included in the [Victorian Significant Disease Investigation \(SDI\) Program](#), so private veterinary practitioners will not receive a subsidy for *E. canis* investigation.

#### LATEST VETWATCH NEWSLETTER

The May 2021 issue of [VetWatch newsletter](#) from the Victorian Chief Veterinary Officer reports on Animal Health Surveillance for the period 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021, and includes articles on:

- an overview of the outbreak of avian influenza, an emergency disease from which Australia is now officially free
- recent detections of Ross River virus in Victorian horses
- canine ehrlichiosis
- infectious laryngotracheitis in Victorian broilers
- training for veterinarians on anthrax and animal disease investigation.

### Treatment and prevention

- The antibiotic doxycycline is the recommended treatment for ehrlichiosis and supportive treatment may be considered as indicated.
- There is no vaccine for ehrlichiosis.
- Infection can occur within hours of brown dog tick bites. Tick collars and spot-on products that kill and repel ticks can provide primary protection, in combination with tablets and chews registered for tick control.
- Dog owners or carers are encouraged to seek veterinary advice for their dogs' general care and wellbeing but particularly when their dogs are unwell.

The Northern Territory Government has produced comprehensive [guidelines for veterinarians](#).

### *E. canis* is potentially a zoonotic agent on rare occasions.

The disease cannot be directly passed from infected dogs to humans. On rare occasions, humans can become infected through the bite of an infected tick. People should seek medical advice if they feel unwell after being exposed to ticks.

#### MORE READING AND INFORMATION ON EHRlichiosis AND CME

For further information please see the Agriculture Victoria website – [Ehrlichiosis](#)

- National pest and disease outbreaks – [Ehrlichiosis in dogs](#)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA) – [Ehrlichiosis in dogs](#)
- Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT) – [Ehrlichiosis disease in dogs](#)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions (SA) – [Ehrlichiosis disease in dogs](#)
- Department of Primary Industries (NSW) – [Ehrlichia canis](#)
- Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS) – [Ehrlichiosis in dogs](#)
- AMMRIC education video – [Tick Sickness animation](#).

## SUBSCRIBE TO EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASE BULLETINS

The Australian Government's **Emergency Animal Disease Bulletin** provides information which may assist vets with emergency animal disease (EAD) recognition.

These bulletins are an important resource to help vets recognise and respond appropriately to signs of emergency animal diseases (EADs). Each bulletin covers the aetiology, distribution and spread, transmission, clinical disease presentation, diagnosis and control methods of an EAD (either aquatic or terrestrial).

Most bulletins also provide clinical or post-mortem images to assist with recognition of the disease.

Bulletins also advise on the risk of the disease to Australia, what is being done to prevent an incursion to Australia, and what Australian vets can do to help.

It is important to note that the bulletins only provide information which may assist vets with emergency animal disease recognition and are not outbreak notifications.

Subscribing to and reading the Emergency Animal Disease Bulletins is one of the simplest ways vets and others can increase their awareness of and knowledge about emergency animal disease threats.

Subscribe at: [Subscription Centre](#) by:

1. providing your details
2. scrolling to the heading, **Biosecurity**
3. selecting **Emergency Animal Disease Bulletin** and any other bulletins that interest you.

Access all past bulletins at [Emergency Animal Disease Bulletin](#)

To provide feedback on a bulletin, submit images or other content, or assist with drafting a bulletin, please contact [adpr@awe.gov.au](mailto:adpr@awe.gov.au).

Access information on active outbreaks and how Australia prepares for and responds to disease outbreaks at [Outbreak.gov.au](#)

Download a field guide and access training about emergency animal diseases at [Emergency animal diseases – A field guide for Australian veterinarians](#).

## VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SEEKING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST AS A MEMBER OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

On behalf of the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas MP, the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) is seeking expressions of interest for the position of member of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC), for a term of up to three years.

AWAC is a non-statutory ministerial advisory committee, whose primary role and function is to advise the Minister for Agriculture on matters concerned with animal welfare in Victoria.

### Who should apply?

Applicants are required to have knowledge and expertise in animal welfare in at least one or more of the following categories:

- Agricultural, animal or veterinary science
- Commercial, recreational, display and scientific use of animals
- Care, breeding and management of companion animals
- Ethical standards and conduct in respect to animals
- Animal welfare expertise
- Wildlife and conservation management
- Public policy
- Any other area that the minister considers relevant to fulfil the role of AWAC.

A working knowledge of animal welfare legislation, associated regulations and other policies and guidelines relevant to the business of the AWAC, or the possession of a higher degree in animal welfare policy or research or veterinary science or equivalent experience, is also desirable.

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring its public entity boards and committees reflect the diversity of Victoria's community. Suitably qualified women, Indigenous Australians and people with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as trans and gender diverse people, are strongly encouraged to apply.

### Apply before midnight Monday, 28 June 2021

Further information on the role and how to submit an application can be found by visiting [www.getonboard.vic.gov.au](http://www.getonboard.vic.gov.au) and searching for "Animal Welfare Advisory Committee Member".

Additional enquiries can be directed to Ms Monica Bird, Acting Assistant Director Governance, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions on 0431 936 182.

## FEEDBACK ON CONSULTATION ON A NEW ANIMAL WELFARE ACT

An Engagement Report summarising feedback received on proposals for a new animal welfare Act shows support for modernising Victoria's legislation.

The Engagement Report is available on the Engage Victoria website at [engage.vic.gov.au/new-animal-welfare-act-victoria](https://engage.vic.gov.au/new-animal-welfare-act-victoria)

More than 1,200 responses on the proposals were received from individuals and organisations representing different involvement and interests in animals.

All feedback is being reviewed and is informing work to develop draft legislation for a Bill to be considered by the Victorian Parliament.

An Exposure Draft of the legislation is planned for release for stakeholder and public feedback in 2022. Consultation will also occur as Regulations and other subordinate instruments of the new Act are developed.

For more information, contact the legislation reform team at [legislationreform@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:legislationreform@agriculture.vic.gov.au)

## REUNITING PETS – 84Y AGREEMENTS GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

In response to feedback received during last years' Reuniting Pets consultation process, Animal Welfare Victoria (AWV) has developed a guidance document and agreement template to improve the accessibility of section 84Y agreements and better facilitate the reuniting of pets with their owners.

Section 84Y of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) enables local councils to make written agreements with a 'person or body', namely shelters, veterinary practices, Community Foster Care Networks (CFCN) and foster carers, to support the capture, holding, rehoming or disposal of dogs and cats. That is, 84Y agreements allow certain people and organisations other than local councils to receive and manage lost pets and/or stray animals. As such, 84Y agreements are a valuable tool for local councils, with benefits for animal management and welfare in the community.

AWV's 84Y Agreements Guidance Document clearly details how, with who, and why local councils may make written agreements for dogs and cats to be captured, held and disposed of.

The document also details the benefits of 84Y agreements and provides advice to agreement holders about their responsibilities when holding and disposing of captured dogs and cats.

**Access guidance document:** [Animal Welfare Victoria > Animal Rescue > Section 84Y agreements](#)

**Assistance with developing 84Y agreements:** Animal Welfare Victoria remains available to assist and support development of 84Y agreements.

If you are interested in establishing an 84Y agreement or would like further information about domestic animal management, please contact:

- the relevant local council, or
- AWV's Domestic Animals Policy team via [pet.welfare@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:pet.welfare@agriculture.vic.gov.au).

It is also strongly recommended that councils and agreement holders seek independent legal advice when entering contractual arrangements.

## RE-REGISTRATION IN VICTORIA

The Board is aware that in response to a high demand for veterinary services in Victoria, former veterinarians who have taken career breaks or recently retired are being encouraged to return to the profession.

Persons who wish to re-join the veterinary profession must apply to re-register and cannot practise in Victoria until granted registration by the Board.

When the Board considers applications for re-registration, the Board's purpose is always top of mind – **to protect the public and the health and welfare of animals.**

Any decision the Board makes will always depend on the information supplied by the applicant and their individual circumstances.

The provisions of the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997* allow the Board to take any of the following decisions when it receives a re-registration application :

1. **The Board may grant general registration without conditions**, specifying that the practitioner adheres to the expectations in Board [Guideline 9 – Practising within areas of technical competence](#).

## RE-REGISTRATION IN VICTORIA CONTINUED...

In recent cases where the Board has taken this approach, applicants had not been out of the workforce for many years, had kept up their Continuing Professional Development (CPD), or retained a connection with the veterinary profession in some way. For example, completing the Australian Veterinary Association's [Return to Work Program](#).

### 2. The Board may grant registration with conditions imposed on that registration.

Conditions might include requiring the veterinary practitioner to practise (in a voluntary or paid capacity) under the direct supervision of a registered veterinary practitioner, undertake specific CPD, keep case logs, and provide reports after a specified time. The purpose of such conditions is to assist a veterinary practitioner to strengthen their competencies in general veterinary practice. If at the end of a set period the Board is satisfied that the practitioner has sufficiently strengthened their general competencies in veterinary practice, those conditions would likely be revoked.

In recent cases where the Board has taken this approach, some applicants had not practised for many years but had accumulated a considerable amount of experience before they left the profession and had retained a connection to the veterinary profession.

## OPTIONS FOR CHANGING REGISTRATION

While some are considering returning to the veterinary workforce, others may be considering taking a career break – to try something different, go on parental leave, travel, etc.

Veterinary practitioners who are considering a change have several options:

- **You can keep up your general registration**, which would mean you could step back into practising at any time to take locum shifts etc. This also means you can continue treating your own animals.
- **You can let your registration lapse then re-register** a month or so before you return to practising in Victoria. Fees to re-register include an application fee as well as registration fees.  
**More information:** [Re-registration](#).
- 3. **The Board may require a person to undertake further training before granting registration.**  
The relevant provision of the *Veterinary Practice Act* is sub-section 5(2), '... if the Board is satisfied that an applicant would not be able to provide the standard of veterinary services ordinarily required in Victoria because the applicant has not practised as a veterinary practitioner within the 3 years preceding the application it may refuse to grant general registration unless the applicant undertakes further training approved by the Board.'  
The Board might make such a decision if the information provided suggested that the applicant had nowhere near the competencies of a current veterinary graduate.  
As can be seen, there are several pathways to practice that allow persons to be supported and practise safely on their return to the veterinary workforce, and the Board encourages anyone considering returning to practice to contact Board staff to discuss their options.

### NEW CPD PAGE ON VETBOARD VICTORIA WEBSITE

To accompany Board revised Guideline 10 – Continuing Professional Development (CPD), the Board has posted a new page on its website including:

- a points allocation table covering the many types of activities that can be undertaken as CPD
- a fillable CPD record form.

View the page at: [www.vetboard.vic.gov.au > Vets > CPD](http://www.vetboard.vic.gov.au > Vets > CPD)

- **You can apply to change to non-practising registration**, which would mean your name would remain on the Register of Veterinary Practitioners and you would continue to receive communications from Vetboard Victoria. As with Option 2, you would need to re-register a month or so before you return to practising in Victoria. Fees to re-register include an application fee as well as registration fees. **More information:** [Apply for non-practising registration](#) and [Re-registration](#).

## SUPPORT AND INFORMATION FOR VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS

### VETBOARD VICTORIA RESOURCES

- [Download proof of registration or update your contact details via your account](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQs](#)
- [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](#)
- 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)
- [Biosecurity](#) (including [animal diseases](#)).
- [VetWatch newsletter](#) – information about animal disease surveillance
- [Animal welfare](#)
- [Livestock and animals](#)
- [Pet care](#)
- [Antibiotic resistance](#) – portal to vet resources

### MEDICINES, MICROCHIPPING, RADIATION

- [Medicines and Poisons Regulation office](#), Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and [resources for vets](#).
- **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.

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