



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to your newsletter. It is the time of year for graduations and celebration as one year ends and we have the promise of a fresh new year.

I was recently fortunate to join the 50-year celebration of our local veterinary practice. It was an honour to see four generations of staff, owners and vets celebrate the special place and position of trust that this practice holds in our local community. It was also a pleasant reminder that our role at the Vetboard is to ensure that our profession has the trust of the communities we serve, our fellow veterinary professionals and the government.



In this newsletter, we present our Annual Report for 2023-24. With over 4,000 vets in Victoria, we had a total of 132 complaints, meaning less than 3.5% of registered vets had a complaint against them. Without being complacent, this reflects the quality of veterinary training in Victoria and the competencies, professionalism and engagement of the veterinary profession. The Board is continuing its work to improve the speed of complaint resolution without compromising quality.

We welcome 2024 graduates to our profession and recognise the importance of good supervision and a supportive environment as our fellow professionals embark on practice. In this newsletter, we address supervision requirements and the expectations we have of supervisors.

The arrival of warmer days brings more sightings of snakes and we include a timely reminder of how to prepare for animals presenting with snake bites.

Private vets working in either large or mixed animal practice in rural and peri-urban areas of Victoria are

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President's message continued...

invited to attend one of Agriculture Victoria's intensive free 2-day courses in animal disease investigation, to be held in different regional locations in February and March 2025 (see page 5).

In January, the Victorian Government will begin advertising for members of the 10th Board, with its 3-year term commencing in June 2025.

Information sessions for potential candidates will be held on 3 February (online) and 11 February (in-person). We welcome applications from across the profession.

Vetboard Victoria's office will be closed from 5pm on Friday 20 December 2024 until 9am on Monday 6 January 2025. During this time, you can still email queries via our [contact form](#) or call and leave a telephone message on +61 3 9620 7444. We will respond to your contact as soon as possible after the office re-opens.

The Board hopes you enjoy some time to rest, recharge and spend quality time with loved ones as we come to the end of the year.

Dr John Harte
President

SUPERVISION OF VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS

The Board has received some complaints this year about vets whose supervisors appear to have been minimally engaged with the vet's practice or absent from the premises and uncontactable at the time of the complaint events.

If concerns about the quality of supervision are raised in a complaint about a vet, the Board can conduct an investigation into the professional conduct of the supervising practitioner.

Board-imposed supervision

In most of the cases seen, the Board had imposed conditions on the vets' registration requiring direct supervision, for example because they were preparing to take the clinical proficiency examination of the Australasian Veterinary Examination or because they were returning to practice after many years out of the veterinary workforce.

Expectations around Board-imposed supervision are set out in Board Policy [Supervision of veterinary practitioners](#) (PDF).

If a vet has a condition on their registration requiring direct supervision, their supervisor must:

- be on the premises when the vet is practising, though they do not have to be in the same room
- ensure the vet is only assigned tasks which they are capable of undertaking
- be approachable, open and available to answer questions and assist the vet.

Many vets with conditions on their registration may not have practised in Australia before or may not have practised in Victoria for a long time. As covered in the article on registration pathways in our [October 2024 newsletter](#) (PDF), employers should be prepared to provide additional support at induction to help such vets settle into practice in Victoria. The registered veterinary practitioner appointed as supervisor plays an important part here, but the whole veterinary team can assist.

Continued next column.../

New graduates

Some complaints to the Board involving recently graduated vets suggest that they may not have been receiving sufficient support from their employer. (In these cases, there was no Board-imposed supervision requirement.)

While graduate veterinary practitioners have [Day One knowledge and competencies](#), they consolidate and strengthen these skills after they start practising as a vet.

Board Guideline 9.1 states, 'A veterinary practitioner works within their areas of technical competence or under appropriate supervision in the delivery of the range of veterinary services they offer.' The Board expects that experienced, competent veterinary practitioners should provide graduates with sufficient support and supervision to enable them to strengthen their competencies in all areas, including clinical reasoning and decision-making, communication and collaboration.

Vets returning to practice

Similarly, vets recommencing professional practice after periods away from delivering veterinary services may require support and supervision from experienced, competent veterinary practitioners as they re-familiarise themselves with current approaches and standards. Sometimes the Board imposes a supervision condition on such vets requiring a report from the supervising veterinary practitioner after several months.

More information

VPRBV Policy: [Supervision of veterinary practitioners](#)

VPRBV Guidelines:

- [8 - Veterinary practitioner and veterinary team wellbeing](#)
- [9 - Practising within areas of technical competence](#)
- [10 - Continuing Professional Development](#)

[AVBC Day One Competencies](#) outlining expectations of veterinary graduates on "Day One" of their professional careers.

SNAKE BITE CASE CONSIDERATIONS

Summer is here and it has been reported that snakes are out earlier and in greater numbers than last year because of the warmer weather.

Each year, the Board receives complaints about the treatment of snake bite in dogs, cats and horses, as previously discussed in our [October 2019 newsletter](#). The complaints have highlighted the importance of clearly communicating with clients, rapidly diagnosing snake bite, and ensuring appropriate clinical management of the animal - including anti-venom where there is the prospect of saving the animal. Some issues to consider are listed below. Thinking about these issues before a case is presented may help to achieve better outcomes.

Focus on the patient

- Provide first aid and/or pain relief per POCTA Act s9(1)(c).
- Assess the condition of the patient. Look for signs of envenomation.
- Determine the probable outcome.
- Evaluate and decide on appropriate clinical management options.

Local conditions

- Know what type of snakes live in the area.
- Identify what type of snake may have bitten the patient.
- Assess if a diagnostic test is practical or available.

Client communication

- Inform clients in advance about your practice's approach to snake bites.
- Be clear and concise about:
 - patient condition and probable outcome
 - all and recommended options
 - costs of testing, anti-venom, hospitalisation
 - payment options
 - euthanasia per POCTA 24D(1)(b).
- Prepare written communication such as a handout.

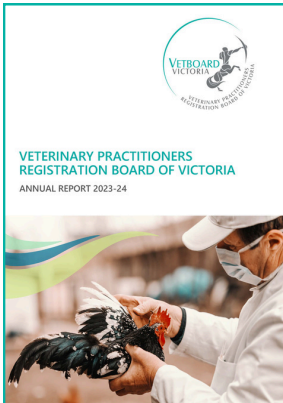
Logistics

- Determine if the patient needs acute care, 24/7 care or high-level monitoring.
- Assess if your practice can provide this level of care.
- Consider immediate referral if necessary.

EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASE (EAD) UPDATES

- Notify all suspected EAD cases to the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on **1800 675 888**.
- Prepare for [H5N1 avian influenza](#) - Victorian Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO).
- Consider [Japanese Encephalitis \(JE\)](#) in cases of pig reproductive failure and horse neurological conditions. JE is a sporadic seasonally endemic disease in mainland eastern Australia. See [Current situation of JE in livestock in Victoria](#) - Agriculture Victoria.
- Read [how local vets can help in Emergency Animal Disease outbreaks](#) - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) & enrol in an [Animal Disease Investigation training course](#) (see page 4).
- Subscribe to EAD updates [VetWatch newsletter](#) - Victorian CVO and [Biosecurity Matters](#) - DAFF.

VPRBV ANNUAL REPORT



Minister for Agriculture
Ros Spence reported receipt of the Board's annual report to the Parliament of Victoria on 31 October 2024.

The report contains an overview of the Board's operations and finances for the 2023-24 financial year.

At 30 June 2024, there were 4,091 veterinary practitioners on the Register of Veterinary Practitioners, an increase of 4.7% from the previous year. During the year, the Board granted general, specific or specialist registration to 300 veterinary practitioners.

The 9-member Board managed 53 investigation matters and held 4 disciplinary hearings. Triage and investigation of complaints continued to be a focus for the Board during the reporting period. The Board consolidated changes arising from a review of complaint handling processes during the previous reporting period. A review of the process for delegating and conducting preliminary investigations saw an improvement in determination times.

Other activities undertaken in the reporting year included:

- a consultation with veterinary practitioners and the general public to build understanding of the future direction of the profession and inform the Board's strategic plan
- publication of the Board's Strategic Plan and Compliance and Enforcement Policy for 2024-27
- digitisation initiatives to improve registration processes in line with licensing best practice.

During the reporting period, the Board continued to rebuild our finances and maintain careful cost control.

[DOWNLOAD VPRBV Annual Report 2023-24](#)

REGISTRATION HOUSEKEEPING

When to register in Victoria

Veterinary employers, please check that vets working in your practice are registered in Victoria via [Search for a Vet](#).

Vets cannot renew their registration in another State or Territory if they have moved here and their permanent place of residence is now Victoria (section 4(1A) *Veterinary Practice Act 1997* (VPA))

Vets who have relocated from Queensland must apply for registration immediately to be registered from 1 January 2025. Vets whose registration in other jurisdictions expires mid-2025 must apply in May 2025.

Application forms: [General registration](#) or [Re-registration](#)

Update your address information

Registered veterinary practitioners are required to notify the Board of any change of register address (s19 VPA).

Please sign into your account and ensure that your practice address is correctly recorded. Your residential address, email address and mobile number are also required (not made public).

For your practice address:

- if you are a locum practitioner, record the name and address of the agency you work for
- if you are not working in clinical practice but your work requires you to be registered as a veterinary practitioner, provide the name and address of your workplace
- if you are a mobile vet without a physical veterinary premises, put your business name in the practice name field and write, 'Practising from residential address' in street address line 1
- if you are treating your own animals, write 'Treating own animals' in the practice name field and put 'Practising from residential address' in street address line 1.

Congratulations to the veterinary practitioners newly endorsed as specialists from November 2024:

- Dr Abigail Brough, Specialist in Small Animal Medicine
- Dr Adrian Bryce, Specialist in Veterinary Radiology
- Dr Massimo Delli-Rocili, Specialist in Equine Surgery
- Dr Benjamin Mielke, Specialist in Small Animal Surgery
- Dr Francesca Worsman, Specialist in Equine Medicine
- Dr Aisha Young, Specialist in Veterinary Radiology

ANIMAL DISEASE INVESTIGATION TRAINING COURSE FROM AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

Each year, Agriculture Victoria offers a 2-day course in animal disease investigation for private veterinary practitioners.

The course aims to enable participants to investigate animal disease events confidently and competently through a combination of theory and practice.

The theory sessions are highly interactive involving animal disease case studies, set tasks and short presentations. The practical sessions focus on the conduct of a safe, systematic, comprehensive ruminant necropsy. This course is designed for veterinary practitioners who work in either large or mixed animal practice in both rural and peri-urban areas in Victoria. Practitioners working in peri-urban areas of Melbourne and regional centres, who see livestock infrequently, are encouraged to apply.

The courses will be held in regional Victoria from late February through March 2025.

Dates and locations are as follows:

- Ellinbank: Tuesday 25 to Wednesday 26 February 2025
- Rutherglen: Tuesday 4 to Wednesday 5 March 2025
- Bendigo/Elmore: Tuesday 18 to Wednesday 19 March 2025
- Hamilton: Tuesday 25 to Wednesday 26 March 2025

The training costs will be met by Agriculture Victoria. All meals and accommodation associated with course delivery will also be met by Agriculture Victoria. Participants who successfully complete the course will be awarded a certificate of completion and will be eligible to claim 15 structured activity CPD units.

To apply, download and complete the [application form](#) (WORD - 142.0 KB).

More information:

gill.holland@agriculture.vic.gov.au

UNAUTHORISED USE OF PHOTOS AND PERSONAL DETAILS

Some registered veterinary practitioners have recently reported to the Board that their photos and other information were used without their permission to promote products on a pet pharmacy website.

The identifying details were used to create a false profile, claiming that the veterinarian was an expert reviewer who endorsed the accuracy of information about products sold through the site.

Unauthorised use of an image may be in breach of several laws including:

- Copyright law
- The Australian Consumer Law (and equivalent State Fair Trading Acts).

For advice on how to respond to use of your image and other details, contact [Consumer Affairs Victoria](#) and/or seek legal advice.

If you believe your identity to be at risk, visit the [IDCARE website](#) for more information.

For more information on how to protect yourself from scams and identity theft, visit:

www.cyber.gov.au/scams

VETBOARD SHUTDOWN

The Board will be closed for a short break from 5pm, Friday 20 December 2024 until Monday, 6 January 2025.

We will respond to all queries as soon as possible after the office re-opens.

Email general queries to communications@vetboard.vic.gov.au or via our [contact form](#), or call and leave a message on +61 3 9620 7444.

Matters relating to an animal emergency should be handled by a veterinary practitioner or an animal emergency service.

Unresolved concerns about a veterinary practitioner can be submitted via the [complaint form on our website](#).

Registration applications submitted during the closure period will be processed after 6 January 2025. More information: [Registration information](#)

**Wishing all a safe and happy
holiday season!**

SUPPORT AND INFORMATION FOR VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS

VETBOARD VICTORIA RESOURCES

- [Videos and factsheets about veterinary boards, how they handle complaints and how you can respond to or prevent complaints](#)
- [Download proof of registration or update your contact details via My Account](#)
- [Registration](#)
- [Complaints](#)
- [Guidelines for appropriate standards of veterinary practice and veterinary facilities](#)
- [Veterinary Practice Act 1997](#)
- [Other laws relating to veterinary practice including Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981](#)
- [About the Board and Board members](#)
- [Annual reports](#)

MEDICINES, MICROCHIPPING, RADIATION

Medicines & Poisons Regulation (MPR) Branch, Victorian Department of Health

- [Medicines and Poisons Regulation](#)
- [Legislative requirements for vets](#)
- [Factsheet – Key requirements for vets](#)
- [MPR Enquiry form](#)

Prescribing guidelines and resources:

- [AMR Vet Collective antimicrobial guidelines](#)

Microchipping

- [Authorised implanter course for veterinarians](#) - Victorian Division AVA
- [Greyhound Microchip Registry 8329 1139](#)

Radiation Safety Unit, Vic Health:

- [Individual use licences](#)
- [Management licences](#)

COVID-19 INFORMATION

- National hotline: **1800 020 080**
- [COVIDSafe Plan](#)

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 item's subject matter. 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.

SUPPORT FOR VETS

- **Australian Veterinary Association:** [telephone counselling service 1300 687 327](#) **both** for AVA members **and** the vet professionals who work for them
- **AVA THRIVE** [veterinary wellness portal](#)
- **Lifeline** 13 1114 & [Get help](#)
- **Beyond Blue:** 1800 512 348 & [Get mental health support](#)
- **SANE** 1800 187 263 & [SANE services](#)
- **1800RESPECT** 1800 737 732 & [website](#)
- **Mensline Australia** 1300 789 978 & [website](#) (delivered by Lifeline)
- **Head to Health** [Australian Gov resources](#)
- **Mental health support** [Victorian Gov resources](#)

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA INFORMATION Emergency Disease Hotline

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

Local animal health staff

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

Avian flu

- EAD hotline 1800 675 888

General contacts

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

General information

- www.agriculture.vic.gov.au
- [Biosecurity and animal diseases](#)
- [National biosecurity training hub](#)
- [VetWatch newsletter](#) – information about animal disease surveillance
- [Antibiotic resistant infections and information for veterinarians and veterinary staff](#)
- [Animal Welfare Victoria](#)
- [Livestock and animals](#)
- [Pet care](#)