



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Welcome to the mid-year newsletter. The most significant event for the Board since the end of 2012 has been the proclamation of the *Veterinary Surgeons Amendment Act 2011* which occurred on the 12th December, 2012. Since that day, whether you knew it or not, we have all been working subject to the new laws and regulations. If interested, please refer to the December 2012 newsletter posted on the Board website for a summary of the main amendments. After a few years of solid work on the amendments and a sigh of relief, we have unfortunately found a couple of shortcomings in the Act. As a result, the Board has submitted a request to the Minister for further consideration. During drafting of the new Act there was an unintended error which has meant the Board is currently unable to deal with a complaint against a registered vet by way of an informal proceeding. This means that the only option available to the Board in this situation is to proceed directly to a formal inquiry. An inquiry is a more serious step and would normally be used for more serious allegations of misconduct. The net effect is that the Board can still carry out complaint investigation but without the option of a less dramatic process for all involved. Hopefully, this will be resolved soon. The Board has also asked that a couple of other useful procedural and practical amendments be made at the same time. One of these is the establishment of a new 'non-practising' registration which would apply to retirees, those working in a non-veterinary occupation, those on maternity leave or full time child rearing or those travelling overseas for a year or more. This category of registration would impose conditions, restrictions or limitations on the vet services that could be provided by this category of registrants but would allow them to maintain their registration at a reduced fee.

So far this year, the Board has hosted two meetings with the profession, one in Hobart in March and the most recent in Launceston in May. The turn-out in Hobart was quite pleasing but many Launceston vets obviously had prior social engagements that evening. It was pleasing however, to see at least 4 vets representing the DPIPWE in attendance. A third meeting, to be held in the north-west is planned for later this year.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, all southern practices were inspected in 2012, and the plan is that all northern practices will be visited over the next few months. Two of the Board's inspectors, Barrie Wells and Geoff Baxter attended the Hobart meeting and were asked for their comments. It was very pleasing to note that they were both impressed by the overall high standard of the southern clinics, so congratulations to all. The only real deficiency showing up with any consistency was around storage and recording of S8's. The Board has a couple of information sheets on the website and Jim Galloway or Mary Sharpe from Pharmaceutical Services Branch (DHHS) are only too happy to answer any queries you may have. I know the Board labours the point on S8's but it is imperative that we as vets meet our obligations under the Poisons Act.

The Board will be having a review of its published Standards of Veterinary Practice over the next 12 months. It is important that the standards stay contemporary and that new standards are considered as veterinary practice changes. If anyone has comments on the current standards or suggestions for additional ones, please feel free to contact the Board. In any event, the Board will keep you informed of any proposed changes.

For those vets who do not currently use Consent for Treatment forms, the example 'Consent for Treatment' form posted on the website is being reviewed at present. If you don't use them, you are doing yourselves and your clients a disservice, and there is no excuse. With the growing practice of writing prescriptions for clients to fill at pharmacies, an example prescription is also being developed with assistance from Pharmaceutical Services Branch.

As always, if you have any queries please feel free to contact the registrar, Anne Horner or any of the Board members.

Neil Leighton Chair
6 June 2013

Review of the Standard: Record Keeping in Veterinary Practices

Enclosed with this newsletter is a consultation draft of the updated Standard "Record Keeping in Veterinary Practices". Comments may be sent to the registrar at vbt@netspace.net.au by Monday 5 August 2013.

Advertising, Specialists and Use of Social Media

Vets are reminded to be careful when advertising their services to the public that they do not mislead the public by advertising services for which they are not competent or for which they do not have adequate facilities.

Vets should also not advertise that they are specialists in a field, or offer 'specialist services' unless they are a registered veterinary specialist. There are no veterinary specialists based permanently in Tasmania, so the '*specialist*' word should not be used in any context unless it is advertising the services of a visiting interstate registered veterinary specialist.

Please note it is an offence under the Act to do anything that is likely to cause another person to reasonably believe that a vet is a veterinary specialist, unless in fact they hold specialist registration. It is therefore advisable not to use the words '*specialist*', '*specialise*', '*special*' or even '*expert*', in the context of services offered.

Many vets now use Facebook as a way of advertising their services and posting information of general interest about animals to the community. While this form of communication can be a useful way of conveying information, vets are reminded that it is inappropriate to use social media for the purposes of making adverse comments about or denigrating the competence of other vets and such actions may be regarded as a breach of professional ethics.

Equine 'dentists' and the use of S4 drugs

The Board has received a number of inquiries about equine 'dentists' who are believed to be using and supplying scheduled drugs, and in particular s4s, when providing dental services to horses.

Equine dentists are NOT authorised to possess or supply S4s to animals and to do so is an offence under the *Poisons Act*. If any vets have information about this happening, it is recommended they contact the Chief Pharmacist at Pharmaceutical Services DHHS ph: 6233 2064 or pharm.services@dhhs.tas.gov.au

Congratulations to Dr James Harris OAM of Sandy Bay who was awarded the Order of Australia (OAM) for services to veterinary science and animal welfare in the Australia Day honours list 26th January 2013.

Sample Forms available on the VBT website

As foreshadowed in the Chair's comments, the Board has prepared some sample forms for practitioner reference. The forms are: Consent for Treatment Form; Hospital Chart – Daily Observation Sheet; and Anaesthetic Chart. The forms are for guidance only, but it is recommended that if vets do not already use similar forms in their daily practice, they develop their own incorporating the suggested content. The forms may be viewed on the VBT website under the Standards heading.

AVA National Workforce Survey 2013

The 2013 survey is now underway and vets are again invited to participate: 2013 survey link:

<http://ava.informz.net/survistapro/s.asp?id=2134>

The purpose of the annual survey is to examine the current profile of the veterinary profession and anticipate future trends and changes. If you have any comments about the 2012 report or the 2013 survey, please forward them directly to the AVA

marcia.balzer@ava.com.au www.ava.com.au

Ticks Wanted!

With tick season fast approaching in eastern Australia, and with an all-year round tick season in the north, a team of researchers at **Murdoch University** is investigating potentially pathogenic microorganisms in the ticks that bite companion animals. Whilst some pathogens like *Babesia* and *Anaplasma* are well documented in certain regions of Australia, our research aims to investigate the diversity and distribution of a wider range of bacterial and protozoal organisms including *Bartonella* spp., *Borrelia* spp., *Coxiella* spp., *Ehrlichia* spp., *Francisella* spp., *Rickettsia* spp. and *Theileria* spp., using the latest molecular diagnostic tools.

Murdoch would welcome your assistance with this research by collecting ticks for us off your patients. If you would like to be involved, please contact Associate Professor Peter Irwin by email at P.Irwin@murdoch.edu.au or by phone on (08) 9360 2590. We will send you a tick collection kit together with instructions on how to remove, preserve and transport the little critters to Murdoch!

2014 Registration Renewals

In accordance with changes to the Act, this is (very) advance notice that the 2014 renewal fees will be due by **31 December 2013**. Renewal notices will be sent out in early November. Please advise the registrar of any changes to your postal address or if you do not intend to renew in 2014.