

Veterinary Board of Tasmania



Annual Report
2010-11



Annual Report of the Veterinary Board of Tasmania submitted in accordance with section 6 of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987*.

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Veterinary Board of Tasmania

Annual Report 2010-2011

Preamble

The *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987* provides for the registration of veterinary surgeons, the regulation of the practice of veterinary surgery and incidental matters.

The Veterinary Board of Tasmania constituted under the Act consists of five members appointed by the Minister for Primary Industries and Water. One member is nominated by the Minister, another is a registered veterinary surgeon employed in the Department Of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) and nominated by the Secretary. The remaining three members are appointed from a panel of five registered veterinary surgeons nominated by the Australian Veterinary Association (Tasmanian Division).

Primary functions of the Board are:-

- to maintain and review standards for registration of veterinary surgeons, veterinary specialists, and veterinary service companies;
- to approve degrees, diplomas, qualifications, and training as qualifications for persons seeking to become registered;
- to approve courses for the training of persons seeking to become registered;
- to arrange, where it thinks necessary and in such manner as it thinks appropriate, for the examination of persons seeking to become registered;
- to ensure that registered veterinary surgeons, registered veterinary specialists and veterinary service companies provide veterinary services in a competent manner;
- to arrange, where it thinks necessary, for the inspection of veterinary establishments; and
- to hear and determine any inquiry under Part VI (Disciplinary Proceedings) of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987*.

The Board is provided with a contracted secretariat service which includes the services of the Registrar appointed by the Board.

The Board

During 2010-11 the Board consisted of the following members -

Dr N L Leighton (Chairman)	Nominees of the Australian Veterinary Association (Tasmanian Division)
Dr N J Ward (Deputy Chairman)	
Dr M Waterston	
Ms R L Collins (to 30 March 2011)	Nominee of the Minister
Dr P H Campbell (to 31 August 2010)	Nominee of the Secretary DPIPWE
Dr K Ellard (from 1 September 2010)	Nominee of the Secretary DPIPWE
Registrar : Dr R J Gillham	

In March 2011 Ms Collins resigned her position after 7 years of continuous membership on the Board. As at 30 June 2011 the vacant position had not been filled.

Meetings

During the year the Board met on the following occasions -

Meeting Number	Date	Meeting Type	Location	No. members
86	19 Aug 2010	General	Launceston	4 +1*
87	11 Nov 2010	General	Devonport	5
88	3 March 2011	General	Launceston	5
89	3 May 2011	General	Launceston	4
89A	9 June 2011	Special-Interview	Hobart	2

*Dr Ellard attended as an observer pending his appointment to replace Dr Campbell.

Registrar

In 2011 Dr R Gillham advised his intention to retire from the position of Registrar which he had held for 17 years. In April 2011 the position was advertised as a contract position and at the special meeting 89A in June, a panel of Board members interviewed a number of applicants. The position has been offered to Mrs A Horner who will commence as Registrar on 1 August 2011.

Registrations

To practice veterinary surgery in Tasmania duly qualified veterinarians must be registered with the Veterinary Board of Tasmania.

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Registered at 1 July	200	213	205	226 *	237 *	252*	259*	267*	272*	279*
New Registration	22	17	30	31	34	30	25	37	45	38
De-registrations and deaths	9	25	9	20	19	7	17	32	38	34
Registration at 30 June	213	205	226	237 *	252 *	259*	267*	272*	279*	283*

* Total registrations [Primary + secondary]

De-registrations are made under the following circumstances:

- at the request of the registrant due to retirement from practice, departure from the State, or other reason for non-practice in this state; and
- by the Board due to non-receipt of renewal applications following service of renewal advice notices, or death of the registrant.

Recognised qualifications

Qualifications recognized by the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc. (AVBC) and endorsed after consideration by the Veterinary Board of Tasmania as providing a holder with eligibility to apply for registration as a veterinary surgeon in Australia and New Zealand without further examination:

- **Accreditation Body – Veterinary Schools Accreditation Advisory Committee (VSAAC)**

Degree from University of Sydney; University of Melbourne; Murdoch University; University of Queensland
Degree from Charles Sturt University and James Cook University (December 2010)
Degree from Massey University, New Zealand

- **Accreditation Body – Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc. (AVBC)**

Australian National Veterinary Examination Certificate (ANVE)
New Zealand National Veterinary Examination Certificate (NZNVE)

Kansas State University	
The Ohio State University	
State University of Utrecht	
University of Calgary – Canada	Provisional
University of London – Royal Veterinary College	
University of Glasgow	Approved
University of Edinburgh	Approved
Massey University	Approved
Murdoch University	Approved
University of Sydney	Approved
University of Melbourne	Approved
Western University of Health Sciences	Limited

There is mutual recognition of standards between Australia and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), London, as membership of the RCVS by examination is accepted as equivalent to the Australasian National Veterinary Examination (ANVE). Previously, the RCVS did not accept the ANVE for registration in the UK. After negotiations by the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) agreement was reached with the RCVS for their acceptance of veterinarians whose primary veterinary qualification for registration in Australia is the ANVE.

The ANVE is administered by the AVBC. The purpose of the ANVE being an assessment that the Board will accept for those holders of degrees from other schools which offer at least four year courses not otherwise accepted by the AVBC. The ANVE is prepared with the assistance of academics and veterinarians in both private and public sectors and as far as possible is moving towards a cost neutral status in the budget of AVBC. A comparable examination process is also in place in New Zealand for those wishing to register to practice in New Zealand, and not holding registrable qualifications.

Upon successful completion of the ANVE a candidate is issued with a certificate as proof that they have satisfied the examination requirements. All Australian Boards have agreed to accept the certificate as proof of professional competence.

Specialist Registration

The provisions of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987* enable the Board to provide for the registration of veterinary specialists. The branches of veterinary surgery in relation to which a person may be registered on the register of specialists are as follows:

- anaesthesiology & intensive care
- avian medicine
- bovine medicine
- equine medicine
- ophthalmology
- pathobiology
- radiology
- reproduction
- small animal medicine
- animal behaviour
- surgery
- parasitology

All applications for specialist registration are forwarded to the Advisory Committee on Registration of Veterinary Specialists, a standing committee of the AVBC. This committee was established by the Australian Veterinary Boards Conference in 1985 to offer guidance as to which applicants are qualified to be registered as specialists in order to obtain National uniformity. However it is the responsibility of the Board to make the final decision in relation to each applicant.

As at 30 June 2011, the Board has 8 registered veterinary specialists, the same as at 30 June 2010. There are no resident specialists in Tasmania, all are visiting specialists. The following are the specialisations held by registered veterinary specialists-

Equine Surgery	2	Veterinary Ophthalmology	1
Surgery Small Animal	1	Veterinary Radiology	2
Pathobiology (Pathology)	1	Dermatology	1

Fees

Since 2003 the only change has been the annual CPI increase applied under the *Fee Units Act 1997*.

Since 2002 the Act has provided for a reducing scale of fees for new registration application from 100% in the first quarter of the year to 25% in the last quarter. In addition, provision was made for the granting of secondary registration to those registrants normally resident outside Tasmania and holding primary registration in another State or Territory jurisdiction. The current fee structure allows operation of the secretariat to be self-funding.

Veterinary Service Companies

Veterinary Service Companies are required by section 26 of the Act to notify the Board of their intention to provide veterinary services.

Exemption from Registration – section 13

Section 11 of the Act makes it an offence for a person to engage in the practice of veterinary surgery or render a veterinary service unless that person is a registered veterinary surgeon. There are some exceptions to the offence provision, including veterinary students acting under the direct supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon. The penalty for breach of section 11 is a fine not exceeding 50 penalty units (\$6,500).

Section 13 provides that an individual may apply to the Board for exemption from the operation of section 11 in relation to a specific veterinary service. As at 1 July 2010 there were four current exemptions, and as at 30 June 2011, only two exemptions were in place.

An exemption under s13 has been granted annually since 1994-95 to an artificial breeding operator to enable him to perform laparoscopic artificial insemination of sheep. The exemption was granted on the grounds that there were insufficient

registered veterinary surgeons providing such a service and that it was in the interest of the state that the integrated ovine artificial reproduction service from the applicant be available to Tasmanian sheep breeders.

An exemption under s13 has also been granted annually since 2006-07 to an overseas veterinarian to provide the veterinary meat inspection service on King Island for the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) in the absence of any other available registered veterinarians.

Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc.

The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc. (AVBC) is a legal entity which has authority to speak and act on behalf of all veterinary registering authorities in Australia and New Zealand. Although it has no legislative power to impose any decisions made at meetings on any participating boards, it has a valuable advisory function and makes recommendations to the boards in the areas of:

- the accreditation of veterinary schools and courses leading to a degree in veterinary science or medicine;
- assessment of suitability for practice in Australia and New Zealand of persons with foreign qualifications, including the running of the NVE (National Veterinary Examination);
- uniform criteria for recognition of qualifications for registration;
- provision of advice on matters concerning the occupational regulation of veterinarians, including general and specialist registration; and
- encouraging harmonisation of the standards, regulations and quality assurance of veterinary services provided to the community in all jurisdictions.

The state and territory Veterinary Boards of Australia, the Veterinary Council of New Zealand and the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) and the New Zealand Veterinary Association Ltd (NZVA) are members of AVBC.

The AVBC has an office based in Melbourne. It has an executive officer and three office staff, and a management, finance and communications sub-committees, which are responsible for the day to day running of the organization. AVBC members have discussions bimonthly, primarily as a teleconference, and a face-to-face meeting was held in May 2011 to consider matters relating to the above issues. The AVA and the NZVA do not contribute to the financial support of AVBC and are not entitled to vote.

The AVBC is financed by a levy on participating jurisdictions, based on the number of veterinarians holding primary registration in, and entitled to practice in that jurisdiction. The Tasmanian registrar and appointed AVBC delegate attended the annual general meeting which was held in Adelaide, South Australia in May.

Major items discussed during the year included but were not limited to:

- the continual evaluation of old and new veterinary schools and the advice given to individual Boards on the suitability of the schools' graduates for registration;
- the possible legal ramifications of a school failing to be recommended for a registrable degree;
- the continuing education requirements of current registrants and specialists in association with the Australian College of Registered

-
- Veterinary Specialists (ACRVS) and the variation of requirements between states for registration in association with National Recognition of Veterinary Registration (NRVR);
- the increased number of foreign graduates sitting the NVE, and the appointment of a new chair of the Board of Examiners (BoE);
 - discussions with the University Deans and other educators in the areas of tracking and streaming of degrees. The complex issue of regional and metropolitan veterinarian numbers;
 - the continual progression to NRVR with Victoria now recognising registration in other states and territories;
 - sharing of standards, systems and the nature of complaints against registered Veterinarians by the various Boards;
 - continued communication with international councils from Europe and America, as well as some new discussions with Asian veterinary schools and registering bodies;
 - Continued move within all states and territories to NRVR through legislation
 - strategic planning meetings with all member boards, and a draft agenda to formalise AVBC roles within the boundaries of members and other stakeholders.

With moves towards more global accreditation and new graduates from Charles Sturt University and James Cook University for the first time at the end of 2010, the AVBC has provided an increasingly important advice role for its members in areas they would not otherwise be able to cover.

Veterinary Practice Inspections

In January 2006 the Board commenced a 3-year programme of inspections of all veterinary practice establishments. The object was twofold: firstly to evaluate compliance with the Board's *Standards of Veterinary Practice*, and secondly to provide advice and guidance to practitioners where improvements in compliance were considered necessary. As a consequence of these inspections the Board has gained a better understanding of the standard of practice exercised in the State. This resulted in a review of the current published standards and the development of standards for premises.

During 2009-10 a significant number of practices received random unannounced inspections. These inspections were targeted towards the handling of restricted veterinary drugs. It was pleasing to note a high compliance rate with respect to the Board's standards on the handling of such drugs.

In 2010-11 the Board decided it would be more efficient to train its own inspectors rather than using the services of an interstate inspector as has been the case in past years. In February 2011 three retired/semi-retired veterinary surgeons underwent a training program organised by the Board and Drs B B Wells, G C Harrison and G R Baxter were empowered to act as inspectors under s10 of the Act in March 2011. The first round of inspections commenced in June 2011. The inspectors will be used as deemed necessary by the Board, including targeted inspections and a continuation of a program of inspections of all veterinary establishments as well as others where restricted medications are used.

Communication with Registrants

The main vehicle for communicating with registered veterinary surgeons is through the Board's Newsletter. This is produced annually in December and at other times when considered necessary. During this year one issue was produced. A feature of the newsletter is the publication of the policies of the Board together with the *Standards of Veterinary Practice* by which veterinarians are measured when complaints against them are considered. It is the procedure to publish a draft standard for the consideration of, and comment by registered veterinarians in one year and confirming the standard the following year. During each year amendments to existing standards as well as new standards may be developed. Standards developed a previous year joined the published standards. The *Standards* are published on the Board's web site.

Matters currently covered in the *Standards* include:

- Supply of Prescription Animal Remedy (PAR) Veterinary Drugs (S4s)
- Guide for the Dispensing and Supply of Drugs and Poisons by Veterinary Surgeons
- Code of Practice for the Supply and Use of Veterinary Chemical Products
- Record Keeping in Veterinary Practices
- Professional Ethics of the Veterinary Surgeon
- Veterinary Certificates
- *Animal Welfare Act 1993*
- *Animal Health Act 1995*
- Appendix to Standards - Sample Admission / Consent Form : Advice Note (for use when treating food producing animals)
- The Standards for Premises where Major Surgery is Undertaken.

The other means of communication is through meetings held in the three regions of the State with veterinarians. Meetings of this type are particularly valuable as they are a means of explaining the role of the Board, its procedures and its policies, together with receiving feedback from practitioners and other veterinarians. This meeting programme is undertaken approximately every two years. During 2010, meetings with the profession were held in Hobart in February, in Launceston in August and in Burnie in November.

In addition the Board maintains a website established within the website of DPIPW. The site provides a ready access for the members of the profession and the public. The following information is provided:

- Membership of the Veterinary Board
- The Board's *Standards of Veterinary Practice*
- Instruction on making complaints
- The Board's newsletters and news items
- Details of services provided by the Board
- Details regarding Veterinary Service Companies
- Registration application forms
- A list of registered veterinary surgeons.

The *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987*

The Act was last amended by the *Veterinary Surgeons Amendment Act 2002* which received Royal Assent on 25 June 2002, following the National Competition Policy regulatory review process. As a result of an action sought by the Board with respect to the provision of veterinary services without registration it became apparent that there are some deficiencies in the Act which need to be addressed. Such deficiencies relate to the definition of veterinary services. The Board therefore undertook a review of this aspect of the Act. It also took the opportunity to review the whole of the Act with the view to enhancing its operation and bringing it up to contemporary standards. Several matters that were discussed for inclusion in the 2002 amendments did not appear in the final legislation and were also part of the review.

After a detailed review of the Act, and discussion with the veterinary profession, a suite of recommendations was submitted to the Department for appropriate consideration and action. These changes, together with some others developed under a further review in 2008, were submitted to the Department to accompany the changes required to permit the operation of the National Recognition of Veterinary Registration as approved by all state governments. The Board was consulted on the first draft of an amendment Bill in June 2009. As at 30 June 2011 it is understood revisions to the Bill are being finalised and the Board anticipates receiving a further version of the Bill for consultation later in 2011.

As a result of the implementation of the National Recognition of Veterinary Registration in Victoria, Tasmanian registered veterinary surgeons who hold a current unencumbered general registration (or specialist registration) will have their registration recognised in Victoria to practice for the currency of that registration. The effect of the changes is that if a Tasmanian registrant moves to Victoria, there is no requirement to register in Victoria until the Tasmanian registration expires. Similarly, Tasmanian registrants who hold a secondary registration in Victoria will no longer need to renew that secondary registration for any practice they may undertake in Victoria.

Other Statutory Requirements

No requests for information or related matters were received under either the *Right to Information Act 2009* or the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*.

Complaints

During the year the Board considered a number of written complaints concerning the activities of veterinary surgeons. The complaints for which final determinations reached during the year are summarised below:

Complaints considered and determined in 2010-11	
Summary of Complaint	Determination Synopsis
Failure to contact owner re progress of animal's treatment (60)	No case to answer. <i>Noted: contact was attempted however mobile phone coverage in the area creates difficulties.</i>
Complaint about treatment of animal (61)	No case to answer. <i>Noted: communication between both parties was inadequate and inappropriate</i>
Advertised 24 hour service but refused to assist (62)	No case to answer. <i>Noted: Service by appointment and unable to determine if it was an emergency; and animal treated by another vet recently who had an after-hours service so appropriate to use regular vet.</i>
Inadequate examination and incorrect diagnosis (63)	No case to answer.

Although all complaints found no case to answer, arising from the informal inquiries into the complaints, the Board noted a number of matters which were brought to the respective veterinary surgeon's attention.

These included a failure to use a treatment consent form; and the supply of an S4 substance for an eye treatment without a visit by the veterinary surgeon or recent first-hand knowledge of the condition.

The Board also supports veterinarians seeking further advice from colleagues when a condition is non-responsive, the diagnosis is open and/or the response to treatment is not as expected.

Demographics of the Profession

As part of the registration process registrants are requested to provide information on their practice for the preceding year. The 2011 renewing registrants provided the following information relating to the year 2010.

Survey forms received **260** (206 Primary and 54 Secondary Registrants)
 Survey forms completed **251**
 Survey respondents **96.5.0%**

The following classifications are quoted as a percentage (%) of survey respondents:

Year of Renewal	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Work Status									
Full time	74	74	70	72	67	67	67	65	63.3
Part time	20	19	24	21	24	23	21	23	25.8
Retired	6	8	6	7	9	10	12	12	10.9
Work Location									
Tasmania	73	73	71	70	67	67	67	68	70.6
Tasmania & Interstate/overseas	15	16	18	19	20	23	26	24	21.3
Interstate/Overseas	12	11	11	11	13	10	7	8	8.1
Type of Employment									
Private Practice	73	76	76	81	82	82	80	83	80.2
University	2	3	3	1	1	1	2	1	.09
Government Service	13	14	11	9	7	10	9	8	8.1
Industry	5	2	4	5	3	2	4	3	4.1
Other	7	5	6	4	7	5	5	5	6.8
Type of Practice/Work (Major Activity)									
Large Animal	9	6	8	7	9	7	9	7	9.6
Small Animal	33	37	32	35	38	37	40	41	40.2
Mixed Practice	26	26	31	30	27	27	27	25	27.4
Equine	5	6	5	6	6	7	6	9	6.8
Aquaculture	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3.7
Regulatory/Advisory	7	6	5	4	5	5	4	4	3.2
Consultancy	4	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	1.8
Research/Laboratory	4	5	6	3	2	3	3	3	2.3
Industry	2	1	4	3	2	1	2	2	.9
Avian/Poultry	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	.9
Other/Specialist	3	3	3	4	3	4	2	3	1.8
Non-Veterinary	2	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	1.4
Hours									
Average weekly hours worked *	39.4	40.9	37.1	37.4	36.0	37.9	37.5	38.2	34.77

* Note only 54% of 2011 respondents provided an hours worked per week estimation.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. L. Leighton".

N L Leighton BVSc MACVSc
Chairman

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. P. Horner".

A P Horner LLB, BA
Registrar

2 September 2011