



Guideline for the employment of new graduates and inexperienced veterinarians

Preamble

New graduates are the future of the veterinary profession. However, new graduates need to be supported in the early years of their professional career. They may not have sufficient surgical, medical or even communication skills to provide the level of service required today by clients.

Employing a new graduate or an inexperienced veterinary surgeon carries responsibilities for the practice. (An example of an inexperienced veterinarian may be a veterinarian who has been exclusively employed in a small animal practice becoming employed in an equine practice).

Employers should not employ an inexperienced veterinarian, or new graduates unless they are capable of, and willing to provide the required level of support.

Employers

Employers of new graduates and inexperienced veterinarians should ensure that as a minimum, they provide:

- Structured supervision
- Opportunities for skill enhancement and feedback
- Reasonable rostered hours of practice
- Encourage integration with members of the practice and the profession

Supervision

Employers have an obligation to supervise the new graduate or inexperienced veterinarians until they have demonstrated a level of skill equivalent to that expected of a reasonably skilled and experienced veterinarian. The employer, or a senior veterinary practitioner with at least 5 years' experience, should be available for direct assistance (on the premises) or by call-back. If this is not possible, a second level of support should be organised. This could be by means of access to alternative back-up, such as a senior veterinary surgeon at the neighbouring practice.

The degree of supervision over the new graduate's first year will vary with the graduate, and practices should aim to build the new graduate's confidence to enable them to increasingly make their own decisions and perform procedures.

Skill Enhancement and Feedback

The employer should ensure the new graduate has access to skill enhancement sessions with a senior veterinary practitioner at regular intervals. This could be through:

- Discussion of case studies with other veterinarians in the practice
- Regular review with others in the practice of a selected number of cases handled by the new graduate – the review and feedback process should be conducted in a supportive environment
- Access to learning resources for current cases for new graduates.

Skill enhancement includes general communication skills as well as medical and surgical records.

Reasonable Practice Hours

The new graduate should not be required to attend after hour's calls without adequate support for their first 6-12 months of practice.

The new graduate should not disproportionately bear the burden of after-hours duty.

In rural practices, work may be seasonal and this may require additional commitment from all members of the practice in peak periods.

Integration with all Staff and the Profession

A formal introduction of new employees into the practice is highly recommended. Regular staff or practice meetings involving all staff or practice meetings involving all members of the practice are important. The new graduate should be included and encouraged to impart their recently acquired knowledge to discussions on recent cases and practice policies.

In rural areas, the employer or senior veterinarian should introduce the new graduate to clients when visiting properties where practicable.

New graduates should be encouraged to attend professional meetings, including seminars, conferences etc.

Employees

New graduates and inexperienced veterinarians should seek assistance from within the practice whenever they find themselves at the limit of their own experience or knowledge. They have a responsibility to continue their professional education in all aspects of veterinary practice including communications.

Conclusion

Employers should recognise that they have an obligation to provide support, guidance and assistance to new graduates and to inexperienced veterinarians. This will inevitably result in a higher standard of veterinary service, improved client relations, and the enhanced standing of the profession. Employers should not employ an inexperienced veterinarian or new graduate unless they have the capacity and are willing to provide the level of support required.

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