



# VET NEWS

## Veterinary Board of the Northern Territory Newsletter

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### Board membership

Position	Name
Acting President - ( <i>ex-officio</i> - Chief Inspector of Livestock)	Dr Anthony Kettle
Vice President (elected veterinarian)	Dr Ian Gurry
Member (elected veterinarian)	Dr Sarah VanderStelt
Member (appointed Veterinarian)	Dr Elizabeth Stedman
Public Interest Member (appointed non-veterinarian)	Marion Davey
Board Registrar	Sue Gillis

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### Resignation of President of the Veterinary Board

In December 2018 Dr Kevin De Witte, President of the Veterinary Board resigned his position of Chief Veterinary Officer of the NT and therefore the President of the Veterinary Board to take up the position of Chief Veterinary Officer in Tasmania. The Board would like to sincerely thank Kevin for all his hard work over the last 3 years and wishes him well in his new position and relocation to the eventually chilly climate of Tasmania.



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## Acting President of the Veterinary Board

On the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018 Dr Anthony Kettle was appointed as the acting Chief Veterinary Officer for DPIR and therefore the acting President for the Veterinary Board until the recruitment process for the position of Chief Veterinary Officer has been completed. The Board would like to welcome Anthony to the temporary position.




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## Veterinarians Act – review update

The Department of Primary Industry and Resources (DPIR) is refining the list of proposed changes to the *Veterinarian's Act* in readiness for forthcoming consideration by the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources. However prior to this taking place DPIR is looking for further input into the refined list of proposals with key stakeholders. It is possible that such a request for further input may take place in April 2019.

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## African swine fever

Between 21 January and 3 February the Commonwealth conducted a trial on pork products that were seized or declared by incoming passengers at Sydney and Melbourne airports and on mail arriving through the Sydney and Melbourne mail centres.

Of the 162 seizures, 283 samples were tested for African Swine Fever (ASF) with 40 samples positive for ASF viral fragments. Two samples were also positive for the Foot and Mouth Virus, with a third sample inconclusive.

These test results are a reminder that ASF is a real threat to the pig industry in Australia and we, as veterinarians need to be on the constant lookout for any signs of the disease appearing.

ASF originates in Africa and since spread to Russia from where it moved slowly eastwards into Europe and westwards into China and now down into South-east Asia. The eastwards movement into Europe has been predominantly through the feral boars and spreads at 2-5 km/month. In contrast, the spread through China has been through their extensive pig industry.

If ASF was to enter Australia we could potentially see both patterns of spread with industry affected in the south and feral pigs infected in the north, where there is no established pig industry but large numbers of feral pigs.

Clinical signs of African swine fever can be very variable. Most outbreaks are of mild to severe disease. In severe outbreaks the incubation period is 5 to 7 days and pigs rapidly



become feverish. Many die after 7 to 10 days of illness with a variety of non-specific clinical signs including haemorrhage. In "per acute" infections, the pigs die so rapidly that the only sign of disease is sudden death. Milder strains of the virus can cause less severe illness with a longer incubation period (5 to 19 days). The most serious "chronic" form is not usually seen in outbreaks - it is more likely to be found in areas where the disease is endemic.

Signs are variable but will include some or all of the following:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea (sometimes bloody)
- Reddening or darkening of the skin, particularly ears and snout
- Gummed-up eyes
- Laboured breathing and coughing
- Abortion, still births and weak litters
- Weakness and unwillingness to stand

If you see any pig that you suspect may be infected with ASF, you are required to report the case immediately to the CVO or call the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline 1800 675 888.

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## National Recognition of Veterinary Registration (NRVR)

NRVR is now in place in the ACT. Under NRVR, veterinary practitioners and veterinary specialists who are registered in any other state or territory in Australia are 'deemed' to be registered in the ACT.

Under NRVR, veterinary practitioners should register in the state or territory in which they primarily reside. If you are considering moving, veterinary practitioners are required to submit an Application for Registration to the relevant Veterinary Board within three months of relocating to that state.

The NT and WA are yet to implement NRVR. Veterinary practitioners should register in the state or territory in which they practice. As legislation does vary, the obligation is on the veterinarian to know the Acts and Regulations of the state/territory they are visiting and, if in any doubt, they should contact the local Veterinary Board.

Before working in any other jurisdiction please contact the local veterinary board to ensure you are able to comply with their legislation.

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## Research project: University of Melbourne veterinary ethics and equine welfare

Equine vets are invited to complete an online survey as part of a postgraduate research project in veterinary ethics and equine welfare at the Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences Melbourne Uni.

The purpose of the research is to investigate whether an equine veterinarian recognises an "ethical trilemma", the main factors that impact their decision and analyse the impact that decision has, or has the potential to have, on equine welfare.

An "ethical trilemma" occurs where you need to balance your own obligations and duties as a veterinarian with the welfare of your patients (the horse) and the interests of your client (the owner and/or trainer).



The research project will consider the well-being, moral stress, regulatory and insurance consequences of the “ethical trilemma” on equine veterinarians.

For more information visit the [University of Melbourne website](#).

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## Q fever – an occupational hazard for veterinarians and practices

Q fever is a bacterial disease caused by the bacterium *Coxiella burnetii* that can cause a severe flu-like illness. If not treated, up to one in ten people can develop chronic-fatigue-like illness and other ongoing health problems. While the main carriers of the disease are farm animals such as cattle, sheep and goats it is a common misconception that Q fever is only a “large animal” disease when in fact Q fever is spread to humans from a wide range of animals including domestic pets (e.g. dogs and cats) and wildlife (e.g. wallabies and kangaroos).

Veterinary staff have an increased risk of contracting zoonotic infections such as Q fever due to their level of contact with sick animals. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent Q fever, and is recommended for all veterinary practice staff including those not directly in contact with animals, animal products or equipment. This includes veterinarians, overseas graduates, veterinary nurses and assistants, university and TAFE students of animal-related disciplines, school students over 15 years on veterinary work experience, veterinary volunteers, cleaning staff and receptionists of veterinary practices.

Clinic management have a duty to ensure all clinical and ancillary staff (and volunteers) are reminded of this risk. Under work health and safety legislation, clinic management have obligations to protect people in the workplace who may be exposed to the disease.

All staff should be screened, and if needed, vaccinated against Q fever at least two weeks before starting work. While the vaccine and the skin testing is not government funded, costs are tax deductible for most at-risk occupations including the veterinary industry.

There are many resources for you to use to assist you to take care of yourself and those working with you.

[Australian Veterinary Association Guidelines for Veterinary Personal Biosecurity](#). This provides a template infection control plan that may assist superintendents to meet their obligations.

[Zoetis](#) through Vets Australia has also published very practical information in Infection Control Guidelines.

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## Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc.

The AVBC is an incorporated association whose members comprise of the state and territory veterinary registration boards of Australia and the Veterinary Council of New Zealand. The Australian Veterinary Association and the New Zealand Veterinary Association attend AVBC meetings but do not have voting rights.

A portion of veterinary registration fees funds the AVBC to perform its functions.



The AVBC provides its members with:

- a forum for communication and discussion of areas of mutual interest and policy development
- the framework for public and industry confidence in veterinary standards
- the assurance and promotion of educational standards through the accreditation of veterinary schools, the National Veterinary Examination and specialist accreditation.

AVBC's major functions are managed by its standards committees:

- Veterinary Schools Accreditation Advisory Committee (VSAAC) which is responsible for the accreditation of veterinary degrees that lead to registration
- National Veterinary Examination Board of Examiners (NVE BoE) which is responsible for conducting the National Veterinary Examination
- Advisory Committee on the Registration of Veterinary Specialists (ACRVS) which is responsible for undertaking assessment of veterinary specialist applications.

AVBC is also the body responsible for assessing the occupation *Veterinarian (ANZSCO Code 234711)* in Australia.

The AVBC is seeking expressions of interest for roles with the National Veterinary Examination Board of Examiners (NVE Board of Examiners). A number of opportunities will open up in 2019.

The National Veterinary Examination has been developed to assist veterinarians who qualified overseas to obtain registration in Australia, thus enabling them to practise their profession. Details of the examination can be found on the NVE page of the [AVBC website](#). The NVE Board of Examiners is a standing committee of AVBC Inc.

Membership is for a fixed term of up to five years and can be renewed. The Chairman and other eight members of the NVE Board of Examiners are supported by a Chief Clinical Examiner (CE) and the NVE Coordinator. For information, an outline of the role of members of the NVE Board of Examiners follows in Appendix 1; and nomination criteria, which speak to the composition of the NVE Board of Examiners, can be found in Appendix 2. Appointments will be made with effect from a date in May 2019. Importantly the make-up of NVE Board of Examiners must be representative of the discipline sections examined by the Final clinical examination.

With that in mind, applicants whose special area of interest is among the following are particularly sought: Pathology, Small animal surgery, Small animal internal medicine and large animal medicine. National Veterinary Examination graduates, with a special interest in one of these disciplines, are also encouraged to apply. Applicants should have a sound understanding of the NVE and its role in AVBC.

If your contact is interested in speaking to the selection committee about this position, they should not hesitate to contact me by email. If they wish to apply, they may send an expression of interest (a short written statement, max 300 words), with attached curriculum vitae to me at the email address below. The closing date for expressions of interest is 8 March 2019.



## Vet health

Veterinary science offers a stimulating and rewarding career, and many veterinarians find their work both satisfying and enjoyable.

But we all experience stress from time to time, and there are some common points in a veterinarian's career when stress is high, and vets need to put some extra thought into taking care of themselves.

The information in this section offers some facts about some of the threats to the health and wellbeing of veterinarians, such as stress, addictions, grief and loss, depression, anxiety and suicide.

There's also simple advice about how to take steps to stay healthy, maintain a good work-life balance, and deal positively with conflict.

### How the AVA can help

Programs and services for members to help you stay healthy and support you in your professional life.

The Employee Assistance Program focuses on your wellbeing and offers free services in a number of areas including physical and mental health, finances, work, family, etc.

\* Free telephone counselling service with qualified counsellor's available day or night. Access the [hotline number](#) here (you'll need to be logged in as a member)

- Access the [mental health fact sheets](#)
- Visit [Converge international](#) (members can access the login details here) or [find out more about the app](#)
- Information about managing staff and conflict in the workplace through the [HR Advisory Service](#)
- Opportunities to link up with other vets in your area through [divisions and branches](#)
- Sessions and services at each [Annual Conference](#) to help you stay healthy
- The [AVA Benevolent Fund](#) gives practical and financial support to veterinarians and their families in times of hardship
- Discounted meditation courses from the [Mind body Mastery program](#) - a world-class online program for learning meditation.
- The Graduate Mentoring Program also offers training for mentors to recognise depression and anxiety and support graduates through their transition into the workforce. [Watch the video](#).
- [Mental health organisations and support services](#)
- Mentally healthy workplace – [Beyondblue resources](#)

If you're distressed and you're not an AVA member, please call **Lifeline** on **13 11 14** to speak to a trained volunteer counsellor. Speaking to a close friend, family member, colleague or trusted advisor can also help.



## Australian labour market update - January 2019 - Hot topic- “Veterinarians”

In the Australian labour market, employers of Veterinarians seek applicants with a Bachelor degree or higher qualification in a highly relevant field of study. Veterinarians may also need other certifications the occupation of Veterinarian is regulated by state and territory veterinary registration boards. Requirements may vary between workplaces and according to state/territory rules and regulations.

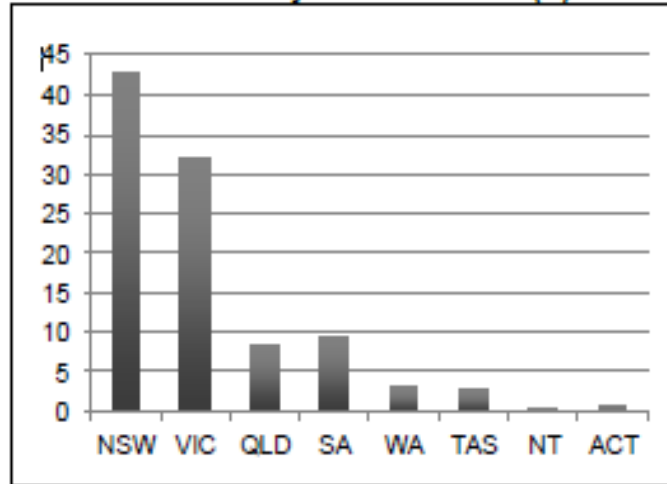
### Labour market profile

Employment growth projections by the Australian Department of Jobs and Small Business indicate that the occupation group of Veterinarians is expected to grow very strongly over the five years to May 2023. The number of job openings over the five years to May 2023 is expected to be around 7 000. The majority of Veterinarians are employed in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (77.7%), Public Administration and Safety (8.6%), and Education and Training (5.1%). Table A provides a labour market profile for Veterinarians from the Job Outlook and Labour Market Information Portal websites.

Table A: Veterinarians—Key Labour Market Indicators Key Indicator	Veterinarians
Occupation size (May 2018)	10 500
Most common level of educational attainment	Not available
Average age	38 years
Full-time share of employment	81.8%
Average weekly hours (full-time)	39.6
Median weekly earnings (full-time and before tax)	\$1 180
Unemployment rate	Average
Employment growth over past five years (to May 2018)	19.3%
Projected (to May 2023) occupation size	7000



**Figure A: Employment Distribution of Veterinarians by State/Territory to November 2018 (%)**



### Skills assessment

Overseas-qualified Veterinarians wishing to apply for skilled migration to Australia need to obtain a skills assessment from the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC).

Overseas-trained Veterinarians with qualifications not recognised by the AVBC, will be required to sit the National Veterinary Examination before undertaking the skills assessment.

A comprehensive knowledge of English is essential to practice as a Veterinarian in Australia. Non-native English speakers will need to sit an approved English language test to complete their skills assessment.

Once the skills assessment is completed, the AVBC will mail the result letter to the applicant to be submitted to the Department of Home Affairs as evidence of the applicant's migration skills assessment. Further information on the Veterinarian skills assessment process is on the [AVBC website](#).

Overseas-qualified Veterinarians should note that registration with the relevant state or territory Veterinary registration board is also necessary to be employed as a Veterinarian in Australia.

### Related occupations

Veterinary Nurses, Animal Nurses and Veterinary Assistants care for animals and assist Veterinarians in performing procedures and operations. Vocational qualifications and on-the-job training is usually needed.

Animal Attendants and Trainers maintain animals through cleaning, feeding, exercise, and the treatment of minor injuries. Animals are taught to obey commands and perform in competitions. On-the-job training is usually needed.





Life Scientists observe the anatomy, physiology and biochemistry of living organisms. Zoologist is an occupation title within Life Scientists, focusing exclusively on the study of animals. A Bachelor degree or higher qualification is usually needed.

Table B provides a labour market profile for these occupations from the [Job Outlook website](#).

Table B: Related Occupations—Key Labour Market Indicators Key Indicator	Veterinary Nurses and Assistants	Animal Attendants and Trainers	Life Scientists
Occupation size (May 2018)	11 600	15 100	9 600
Most common level of educational attainment	Certificate III/IV (48.0%)	Year 12 (47.0%)	Post Graduate vii (50.5%)
Average age	27 years	39 years	39 years
Full-time share of employment	62.5%	50.8%	82.5%
Average weekly hours (full-time)	32.2	44.7	33.1
Median weekly earnings (full-time and before tax)	\$991	\$957	\$1 645
Unemployment rate	Above average	Average	Average
Employment growth over past five years (to May 2018)	2.7%	4.1%	26.3%
Projected (to May 2023) occupation size	12 700	17 100	10 200

### Employer-sponsored migration

The Australian Government has several employer-sponsored migration programs including the Temporary Skill Shortage, the Employer Nomination Scheme and the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme. Information on these programs is on the [Department of Home Affairs website](#).



## Seeking employment in Australia

Veterinarians should note that acceptance of qualifications for a migration (visa) purpose does not assure employment in these or related occupations in Australia. Employment will depend on other factors such as the number of vacancies, skill needs in the Australian labour market, and suitability of an applicant for employment in a particular job in Australia.

The Department of Jobs and Small Business is not an employment agency and is not able to assist visa applicants or potential migrants to obtain employment in Australia. Australian employers are increasingly using the internet to advertise vacancies, and websites of relevant Australian professional bodies (which may recognise membership of affiliated overseas bodies) and industry bodies may include information on vacancies.

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## Australian Government – Department of Health - Vaccinations for people who have regular contact with animals

Check the immunisation history for anyone handling animals and give any missed vaccines.

### People working in the veterinary industry

These workers can come into contact with a range of animals, which can carry different zoonotic diseases. Only some are vaccine preventable.

Give **Q fever, influenza** and **rabies** vaccines to:

- veterinarians
- veterinary nurses
- veterinary students

### People working with poultry or swine

These workers are in contact with chickens, ducks and pigs, which can carry avian or swine influenza virus.

Give **influenza vaccine** during an outbreak of avian or swine influenza to:

- poultry workers
- those handling or culling poultry
- swine industry workers

### People working with bats or lyssaviruses

These workers are in contact with flying foxes and micro bats, or their tissues, which can carry Australian bat lyssavirus.

Give **rabies vaccine** to:

- bat handlers
- bat scientists
- wildlife officers
- zoo curators
- laboratory personnel who work with bat samples or tissues, or lyssaviruses

See the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) for more details.



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## Post mortem video

View a [NABS post mortem video](#) for producers and others who may be interested.

\*The link works best in chrome.

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## Case study

The Veterinary Board of the Northern Territory (VBNT) received eight complaints in 2018 and sustained one. All other complaints were dismissed by the Board.

### Sustained complaint

One of the vets in the practice came into the treatment room carrying a bird wrapped in a towel with quite a large area covered in blood asking for help as the bird had bitten her. The veterinarian overseeing the treatment of the bird could not see the bird but judged it to be a likely a Major Mitchell or galah by the squawking it was making.

The veterinarian started to put the bird into a box until another veterinarian was free to examine the bird, when the treating vet saw the blood on the towel she decided the bird needed to be examined immediately. There was not a nurse in the treatment area to assist at the time so she had the other vet restrain the bird while the treating vet started the examination. The head remained covered to avoid another bite. When the towel was removed from the body of the bird there were no feathers along the back or on the wings, just a few short stumps of shafts.

The distal stumps of the wings were bleeding but there were no apparent fractures. The vet made a quick diagnosis of Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease with recent trauma to the distal wing stumps. The bird was distressed and likely in pain so the veterinarian decided to euthanase the bird immediately. After euthanasia the veterinarian then uncovered the head of the bird to find a few tufts of yellow on top of the head and realised it was a sulphur crested cockatoo, not feral and therefore probably owned.

The bird was in fact owned by one of the practice's clients who was immediately advised by the practice on what had happened and subsequently the client lodged a complaint with the VBNT.

### Conclusion

The VBNT, after an investigation, was satisfied that a case for misconduct as specified in section 26(1) (a) "misconduct" was established. The VBNT issued the veterinarian with a caution and gave instructions to correct the procedural deficiencies within the veterinary practice. These included identifying wildlife and ensuring wildlife brought into the practice is given time in a quiet area to calm down prior to being assessed by a veterinarian.

