

Introduction to the Veterinary Profession

INTRODUCTION TO THE VETERINARY PROFESSION IN AUSTRALIA

LECTURER

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INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this session you should be able to:

- Describe community expectations of veterinarians
- Explain the structure and role of the Australian Veterinary Association
- Explain the main provisions of the Veterinary Practice Act (1997)
- Explain the structure and role of the Veterinary Practitioners' Registration Board of Victoria
- Describe the main functions of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists

Seminar outline

The Profession and the community

The veterinary profession in Australia is relatively small – there were 12 769 registered veterinarians in June 2018, most of whom are in private practice. Veterinarians are employed or work in various roles:

- Private practice (mixed, small animal, large animal, rural, specialty)
- Government – Department of Agriculture (biosecurity), Agriculture Victoria
- Industry – pharmaceutical, laboratory, animal health
- Other – RSPCA, non-veterinary roles

The community has high expectations of veterinarians – who are some of the most respected professionals in society – including competency, integrity, compassion and acting as an advocate for care and treatment of animals. Often regarded as “caring healers” who provide treatment for sick and injured animals, vets have a much larger role in society which includes informing and influencing community standards on animal care, treatment and welfare.

Law and Regulation

The veterinary profession is regulated by an Act of the Parliament of Victoria – the Veterinary Practice Act (1997). The Act provides for regulation of the veterinary profession by the Veterinary Practitioners Registration

Board of Victoria. The Board registers veterinarians, determines professional conduct, investigates allegations and complaints against veterinarians, and conducts formal and informal hearings. The purpose of the Act is to protect the public.

Australian Veterinary Association

The AVA is the body that represents the veterinary profession in Australia. It is organized at a national level with state divisions. Some states have smaller branches, which are geographically organised (i.e Western District AVA Branch). Membership of the AVA is voluntary and approximately one half of veterinarians are members. The AVA supports the veterinary profession in a number of ways including publishing the Australian veterinary Journal, organising the annual AVA Scientific Conference, and services to members (business, personal).

The Australian College of Veterinary Scientists

The College's role is to encourage veterinarians in all fields to improve themselves and to provide post-graduate qualifications as a means of documenting and demonstrating this improvement. The principal objectives of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists are to advance the study of veterinary science and to bring together members of the veterinary profession for their common benefit and to arrange examinations of professional proficiency for the purpose of determining qualification for Membership of the College and Fellowship of the College. Veterinarians who are Fellows of the ACVS are eligible to register as specialist veterinarians.

References

What does society expect of veterinarians? Acta Vet. Scand. 2008;50 (Suppl 1):S3
<http://www.actavetscand.com/content/50/S1/S3>

Australian Veterinary Association www.ava.com.au

Veterinary Practitioners' Registration Board of Victoria www.vetboard.vic.gov.au

Australian College of Veterinary Scientists www.acvsc.org.au/info/home