The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA®) is the professional organisation for veterinarians and the core objective of the AVA® is to advance veterinary science.
With just one phone call, you have access to free expert advice on nutritional and case management

✓ The Hill’s VCS team are highly qualified and experienced veterinarians, so you can be confident of their recommendations.

✓ We will give you detailed nutritional advice on a case by case basis.

✓ Our advice can help you enhance client relationships and compliance.

✓ Response time to veterinarians and clients is 24hrs or less and available 8.30am -5pm Monday to Friday.

“Our Hill's veterinarians can assist you in all aspects of pet patient management, nutritional counseling and product support.”

1800 800 733
Think of us as an addition to your in-hospital team!
Welcome AVA® Student Members,

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA®) is very pleased to once again provide you with the New Graduate Guide to support your progression from Student to Veterinary Professional.

The AVA® believes new graduates are at the very core of the future of the veterinary profession and understands the uncertainties of the road ahead.

In order to pave the way into veterinary practice, the AVA® has compiled a road map to guide and help you negotiate the bumps and turns. The intention of the New Graduate Guide is to assist you in making the best possible employment choices.

As a valued member of the AVA® you have many benefits at your disposal – we encourage you to examine these and use them to your full advantage. These benefits include the AVA® HR Advisory Service, AVA® Telephone Counselling Service and New Graduate Friendly Practice Scheme, all of which are outlined in this guide.

We hope you use this AVA® New Graduate Guide to ease your transition into your working life as a veterinarian. AVA® is here to support you.

With best wishes for the future,

AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION
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As a dedicated human resource and industrial relations information service, the AVA® Members HR Advisory Service enables AVA® members to access information and practical advice to improve their workplace.

Members can access information and practical advice on all facets of contemporary human resource management and industrial relations.

Professional experts can provide advice to:

- Employers in private practice
- Employees in private practice, government & industry
- Practice Management
- Specialists
- New Graduates
- Students
- Members working in corporate areas
- Academics and Researchers

Benefits

The AVA® Members HR Advisory Service has been designed to help members:

- improve staff productivity
- maximise employee/employer relationships
- facilitate teamwork
- develop management skills
- improve interview skills
- develop individual careers
- review and develop employment contracts
- managing Occupational Health & Safety
- understand complex employment legislation
- gain a competitive edge in the management of veterinary practices and employment relations.

Service

The AVA® Human Resources & Industrial Relations Reference Manual is written specifically for veterinarians. Easily readable and fully indexed it answers questions that members may ask employment related matters.

Our Continuing Education program ensures members have access to up to the minute practical training on all human resource management and industrial relations matters.

AVA® HR Hotline Service on 1300 788 977 is a dedicated help desk service supported by a team of human resource experts

Call the AVA® Members HR Advisory Service on 1300 788 977 (Free call)
Recent national surveys and conversations over many years of graduates, employers and veterinarians, with those making the transition from student to veterinarian, lead to the same conclusion, the most important first step is to select a good boss.

A good boss will be supportive and fair, will encourage you to learn and become progressively independent, will encourage a high standard of professional work, ethics and interpersonal interactions, and will be someone with whom you can develop a comfortable working relationship.

If there is more than one other veterinarian in the practice, there will be the added advantage of others to learn from and share with, after hours. These points are acknowledged by the AVA® and embraced by the criteria for AVA® New Graduate Friendly Practices, set out on the AVA® website at www.ava.com.au.

How can you find such a boss? Contacts are the best way. Contacts may be made through work, at practices or visits, through attendance at veterinary meetings and conferences, or indirectly through others. Some may be found through advertisements or agencies, but whatever the source and however personable they may seem, it is important to check up on their qualities as a boss. It is not necessary to accept the first job you are offered. Be selective. Find the best job and the best boss for you.

Talk with associates in the practice or the person whose place you would be taking. Indeed, a good boss will suggest that you talk with others in the practice and offer contact details of previous employees. If you feel uncomfortable making inquiries about a potential boss, remember that they will be inquiring about your suitability also. The outcome is likely to influence your whole veterinary career. A keen and idealistic graduate can have their enthusiasm quenched by a miserable boss. A lukewarm graduate can find that an excellent boss provides a boost that launches them on a satisfying and rewarding career.

While you are making your own assessment of the boss and the position, you will also be assessed. Your initial selection will be based on your résumé or on direct or indirect personal contact. This may lead to an invitation to attend a formal interview or to visit the practice. Find out as much as you can in advance about the practice and its staff. Be ready to be judged on your ability to relate to the clients, other veterinarians, the nurses and other staff. Remember that if you get the job these people will be central to helping you settle in and begin work. It is essential that you relate well to them.

If you are a little shy or lacking in confidence about interacting with others, don’t assume that you will be found wanting in your ability to relate to clients and colleagues. Instead, think in advance of likely situations and questions and prepare possible responses, then visualise yourself responding in a positive and confident way with a successful outcome. Also, visualise yourself in the position of the other person — potential employer or client — and think of the type of response they would find appropriate.

Remember that interviewers may also be a little nervous. They may be tentative in an interview situation and struggle to find appropriate questions to keep the interview flowing. So flesh out your responses, while at the same time avoiding verbosity. If you have access to a video camera and a willing helper, try some practice interviews in advance. It
is also useful to practice interactions with clients, especially those involving tricky situations such as fee disputes, grief and aggressive behaviour.

Most employers place less emphasis on the technical skills of diagnosis and treatment, including surgery, than on personal and interpersonal attributes. They assume that all graduates have a base level of technical skill. Although this may vary between graduates, all will need some help and support to become proficient. A willingness to learn, to ask questions and to accept constructive criticism are all regarded as important, as is an agreeable level of self-confidence. Too much confidence can give an impression of arrogance; too little suggests indecision.

As you start in the job, remember to be considerate of the feelings of others. Keep in mind that the boss must maintain the practice and keep clients happy while helping you to settle in. Nurses and other staff may well feel ambivalent or even threatened by your presence (despite the fact that they also have much to offer). Failing to clean up your own mess, or to consider the effects on others of your personal hygiene or behaviour, can lead to alienation. This can easily be avoided. You should also be careful never to underestimate the importance of an animal to its owner.

Graduates often start work in a mixed practice with a view to consolidating their skills with various species, and look forward to the experience with much enthusiasm. Three-quarters or more leave mixed practice within the first few years. Some leave to travel or to work in the UK; most do not return to mixed practice. Why is this? Surveys reveal the main reasons to be long hours of work and after hours duty, coupled with poor remuneration, especially compared with that of other young professionals in their area, or with city colleagues. Males indicate more concern with money than do females. Sexist attitudes among some farmers and colleagues are also an important issue for females, but this situation seems to be improving. Both males and females may be deterred by the professional and social isolation of work in rural areas, coupled with the shortage of possible partners. Many are also deterred by the tiring and sometimes dangerous nature of the work. These factors interact in various ways to quench the enthusiasm of many budding mixed practitioners, who migrate to the cities, in some cases after a UK detour. Some, however, continue to have satisfying and rewarding careers in rural areas.

Most of those who have stayed in rural mixed practice made a smooth transition to work after they graduated. What were the factors that helped in this transition? The evidence points to four main factors. The first is a supportive, encouraging boss. The second is reasonable working hours and conditions — the Award now covers all rural practices so hours and conditions are likely to be much more favourable than in the past. The ability to develop and maintain personal contacts for friendship and support is the third factor. The importance of staying in contact with friends from veterinary school cannot be overestimated. The mental equanimity of many new graduates is maintained by being able to discuss frustrations and real or potential disasters with others in comparable situations. The social contact and exercise provided by sporting clubs can also be of great value, and church and cultural activities are a lifeline for some.

The fourth major factor is whether the graduate grew up in a rural area. Although many veterinarians from cities make a smooth and rewarding transition to rural mixed practice, survey results indicate that veterinarians who come from farms are about twice as likely to stay in rural practice as are those from other backgrounds.

Within the first 10 years or so, most young veterinarians move between jobs and in some cases between countries, broadening their experience of veterinary work and life generally, and seeking a niche for the longer term. By the end of the first decade, about 60 to 70 per cent are likely to be still in some form of private practice, though not necessarily working full time. Many will still be finding it difficult to balance their personal lives with their careers. About three quarters now report that in general their veterinary career has lived up to their expectations and is a major source of
satisfaction in their lives. This is much higher than it was when most current bosses were learning their craft; it is clear that the efforts of the AVA® and others to improve the lot of the recent graduate are having a positive effect.

I hope your career lives up to your expectations and is a major source of satisfaction in your life.

REFERENCES


Heath TJ, Mills JN. Criteria used by employers to select new graduate employees' *Australian Veterinary Journal* 2000; 78:312–316.


THE AUTHOR

Emeritus Professor Trevor Heath OAM, BVSc, MA(Ed), MHPEd, PhD, FACVSc, FAIBio

I graduated from the University of Sydney, taught at the Melbourne School of Veterinary Science when it re-opened in the 60s, was Dean of the Queensland School from 1973 to 1980 and Professor in Veterinary Anatomy until 1998. I have a major interest in helping veterinary students and graduates to achieve their objectives and potential, and was the first recipient of the AVA® Award for Excellence in Teaching. I have undertaken many studies of factors that affect the careers of veterinarians, and have recently completed a survey on changes in the experiences and attitudes of recent graduates over the last 50 years.
Starting your veterinary career

Aligning your interests with your career choice

You are now setting out on the biggest adventure of your life, the preparation for which has taken most of you 15 years. The ball is well and truly in your court and it is now your job to serve an ace.

Successful job seekers must have both good information and well developed job-hunting skills. Three important factors for a successful job search are:

- awareness of your goals and skills
- understanding of the labour market
- a well-planned job search campaign.

You should begin an active job search six to nine months in advance of your target employment date.

WHAT SORT OF POSITION DO I WANT?

How can you seek a position if you don’t know what you want from a job and what you have to offer prospective employers?

Self-assessment may be a time-consuming process, but it can provide invaluable information to facilitate your career decisions and prepare you to market your background effectively.

Use the following steps to start you on the path of finding the job that is right for you.

Begin your job search by identifying your:

- values
- skills
- experience
- interests
- accomplishments
- goals

Values

An awareness of what you value (qualities that are important and desirable) in a career will aid you in exploring career goals and attaining satisfaction in your work.

Review the following list of values and check those most important to you, then rank them in order of priority:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant surroundings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working as part of a team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging, stimulating co-workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working independently with little supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different tasks to accomplish daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a contribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial rewards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating something</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental challenge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to advance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being appreciated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skills

A skill is something you do well, including handling problems or tasks. The key to your successful job search is recognising your skills and communicating their usefulness verbally and in writing to a prospective employer.

Use accomplishment statements to:

- describe your skills in concise, unambiguous terms
- refer to actual experiences to demonstrate your skill level
- relate your skills directly to the needs of a prospective employer

Some of the most marketable skills are those which are useful in a wide variety of work environments. These are known as transferable skills and are not necessarily those for which you have received your veterinary degree, for example, the ability to write effectively, communicate verbally or use word processing or database software. These are valued skills in the private as well as public sectors.

WHAT ARE MY CAREER OPTIONS?

The next step in the job search process is to explore the matches between your identified skills, interests and values and the demands of career fields and practices. Resource materials on occupations and employers, and informational interviews are excellent tools for this search.

One way of exploring different career options is to try out different jobs through volunteer opportunities or casual work during vacation times. By the time of graduation you should have undertaken several months of such work.

Career options available

A SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP OVERVIEW

A number AVA® Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and AVA® members have provided information on their field of specialisation to give you some insight into the range of career options available to you.

AQUACULTURE

So you’re wondering about what to do and where to go. You’ve tried cats, but decided the scratches and claws weren’t worth it. You’d love to do production, but are not sure you want to work with chickens all day — and horses can really kick!

Aquaculture is an exciting area. I manage the fish health operations of a company producing 14,000 tonnes of salmon each year. Each of our farm sites may have up to one million fish, which means at harvest time there may be 5,000 tonnes of fish in the water to look after. This is a large number of fish, and like any other animal, fish may become stressed. A considerable sum of money is invested in those fish, and the veterinarian is responsible for them.

Sound fish health management is vital to the success of the company. The job of the veterinarian does not involve merely diagnosing disease. I am involved with feeding and nutrition, smolt quality (smolt are the young fish that go from freshwater
out to sea sites), flesh quality, biosecurity, research, public relations, diving, strategic planning and more. I also have fish health technicians working for me and collectively we form a team.

‘But I know nothing about fish’, I hear you say. Well, you may not know anything about fish, but you know a great deal about production, animal health management, nutrition, feeding, feed ingredients, diagnosis of disease and treatments, and biosecurity, which is generally what being a vet in aquaculture is all about. So, you are already well ahead of many people in the industry.

There is also the ‘small animal practitioner’ of the fish world — the aquarium or ornamental fish vet. Fish owners often become very attached to their fish. Individual fish can be worth large sums of money. Some of the more elaborate aquariums involve significant financial investment. Public aquariums, such as the Melbourne Aquarium, employ a veterinarian to ensure their animals stay healthy.

As the aquaculture industry grows, vets are becoming increasingly involved in government policy development. Sound national and international regulations are essential to ensure that aquaculture remains viable and the spread of disease is minimised. Veterinarians can help answer many of the questions asked by governments about the risk of movement and importation of aquatic animals.

Vets have many skills that will help them in becoming a fish veterinarian; however, it is helpful to have some extra training and experience on a fish farm. Melbourne University students have been visiting Tasmania for the last few years to do some of the animal production practical requirements on salmon farms there, and some of the students have even spent time with me in British Columbia, Canada. A number of universities offer postgraduate courses in aquaculture, including Deakin University and James Cook University. The University of Stirling in Scotland offers an excellent aquatic veterinary studies course. This course is full time, offered every two years and is an excellent course to enable you to leapfrog into this area.

Have you thought about fish?

Aquaculture, or the farming of aquatic organisms, is probably the fastest growing form of food production in the world today. There are hundreds of species being farmed, including fin fish (such as salmon, trout and tuna), crustaceans (prawns and yabbies), molluscs (oysters and abalone) and aquatic plants such as Japanese kelp. While the need for veterinarians in the plant world is limited, there is a strong need for people with good animal health skills in the world of aquaculture.

AUSTRALIAN HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS (AHV)

The Australian Holistic Veterinarians is a Special Interest Group of the AVA®.

Our aim is to foster the holistic approach to animal health in a caring and professional manner. We encourage the veterinary profession to integrate alternative and complementary therapies with conventional veterinary knowledge. We support the study and competent use of homeopathy, herbal, acupuncture, chiropractic and other effective therapies.

Who should join the AHV?

The AHV is open to all veterinarians and students who are AVA® members. It provides a structure and network that supports veterinarians who recognise the limitations of conventional veterinary medicine.

- *Chiron*, our quarterly newsletter, is our main communication link and contains articles on the latest holistic news
- our new website has lots of interesting information and contact details (www.ahv.com.au)
- state representatives organise local events and provide support
- continuing professional development. The AHV encourages and supports courses in alternative therapies that enable the veterinarian to
practice competently in that field. Current courses include:
- homeopathy
- herbal medicine
- chiropractic
- acupuncture

AUSTRALIAN PIG VETERINARIANS (APV)

APV are “Australian Pig Veterinarians”. We are a Special Interest Group of the AVA®. APV has about 150 members from practice, industry and academia. Collectively, APV members bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the Australian pig industry.

Our Vision

APV is a pro-active group providing infrastructure, services and support to our members. We aim to meet the needs of our stakeholders and optimise the health and welfare of pigs. Our stakeholders include the veterinary profession, AVA®, APV members, the Australian pig industry, government and the general community.

Why join APV?

Ever had the need to get a second opinion or advice on an unusual pig case? As a member of APV you have the experience of fellow members to call on. There is a skills database of all members outlining their area of expertise so you will immediately know whom to contact.

Want to improve the welfare of pigs? As a member of APV you will have a chance to develop policies which will then be represented on your behalf to the AVA® policy council.

Want to know the latest on regulations covering the use of chemicals for food-producing animals? APV will keep you informed through its links with regulatory bodies & AVA® therapeutics advisory committee.

APV membership is great value for money! The annual fee is about $39 for veterinary graduates. Membership is free to veterinary students.

You will receive the APV members newsletter Pot Pourri four times a year. This contains practice tips, latest pig industry news, conferences, and the results of pig-related research from Australia and overseas.

You will have the opportunity to continue your education and gain AVA® Continuing Education Credit Points through participation in the monthly APV Quiz scheme.

You can meet and mix with people from all corners of the pig industry at the annual APV Conference, held in conjunction with the AVA® Annual Conference.

To join the APV is free, simply tick the PIG box on your AVA® Student application form.
AUSTRALIAN AVIAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (AAVMA)

The AAVMA is a Special Interest Group of the AVA® dealing with the bird industry.

Being an avian veterinarian

Avian veterinarians experience the diverse range of attitudes that clients hold toward their bird pets. For some clients, such as bird breeders, an individual bird may be less important than the breeding flock. The individual’s value may be based on its ability to reproduce. Knowledge of flock husbandry garnered from herd health management in other species is an important skill.

For other clients, their individual hand-reared cockatiel or parrot, with the intelligence of a five year old child, is a much loved and valued member of the household and needs the same time and respect as a veterinarian may give to a dog or cat. And these clients expect the same level of service. The true dollar value of the birds that are seen by avian clinicians ranges from a $20 budgie to a $10,000 macaw, but often this does not reflect the value that the client places on the bird.

Most avian veterinarians also support their local wildlife rehabilitators, and some members have achieved superb results with challenging cases such as raptor rehabilitation.

Avian medicine and surgery has come forward in leaps and bounds in the last few decades. The introduction of safer anaesthetics such as isofluroane has revolutionised how we routinely anaesthetise birds. Endoscopy is used not only for surgical sexing, but also as a minimally invasive way of evaluating and biopsying the gastrointestinal, respiratory, reproductive and renal systems. Fine detail mammography film has increased our ability to diagnose disease radiographically. Despite the difficulty of performing blood collection on very small patients, clinical pathology, protein electrophoresis and serology are becoming more routinely used in clinical practice.

For most veterinarians, birds are seen as part of their small animal or mixed practice. However, some clinics throughout the country may see a high proportion of birds in the practice. Further specialisation in this field of the profession is possible in Australia. The Postgraduate Foundation in Veterinary Science offers a Distance Education course in Avian Medicine. The Australian College of Veterinary Science holds the Membership and Fellowship examinations in Avian Health. This degree of specialisation is best pursued after a few years in veterinary practice.

Being an AAVMA member

For many of the current avian vets, a love and fascination of birds has led them to pursue this field in our profession. Membership of the AAVMA confers an invitation to join an international avian veterinary discussion forum. This is not only a valuable learning tool, but provides valuable professional support to new graduates to help them to make their way into this area. Members also receive the newsletter of the Australian Association of Avian Veterinarians. This provides information on upcoming conferences on avian medicine both here and overseas.

There are about 6 million pet birds in Australia. This outnumbers the combined sum of cats and dogs. Roughly one in eight Australian households owns a pet bird. Pet owners keep not only Australian species, but also a surprisingly large number of birds that originated overseas. Some of the more common species that might be seen in veterinary clinics include Budgerigars, Cockatoos, Galahs, Cockatiels and Indian Ringnecks. And although they may be seen to be ‘just birds’, their husbandry requirements, the diseases to which they are susceptible, and their personalities are as distinctive amongst the bird species as the various dog breeds.
EQUINE VETERINARIANS AUSTRALIA (EVA)

EVA is an AVA® Special Interest Group that caters for the needs of veterinarians who deal with horses in their professional lives.

What do veterinarians do in the horse industry?

Veterinary services to the horse industry are provided generally by mixed animal practices. The majority of employment opportunities are therefore, in mixed animal practices. However, there are also many equine only practices in each state which provide services only to the various sectors of the horse industry. Many veterinary graduates can find employment in European countries, mostly in the United Kingdom.

There are also some employment opportunities in south-east Asian countries where some are establishing and expanding their horse breeding and racing industries.

Veterinary services to the horse industry vary considerably. In metropolitan areas where racehorses predominate, services are generally provided by equine veterinary practices which concentrate only on the racing industry. In non-metropolitan areas the types of veterinary work tends to be more varied.

In some areas there are large breeding populations of horses (Hunter Valley NSW, central Victoria, south east Queensland, near Adelaide, south of Perth, and near Launceston) and in these areas study work comprises the majority of veterinary work on horses. Stud work is varied and encompasses such diverse pursuits as breeding of mares, raising of foals, and preparation of yearlings for sale. In many areas horses are used only as companion animals for riding and for competition (showjumping, pony club, eventing and dressage). All the skills learned in the undergraduate course are used when servicing the various sectors of the horse industry, though there are differences in emphasis within the different parts of the horse industry.

Much of the veterinary work done in the horse industry is seasonal, dictated by the breeding season in spring and summer, the timing of various shows and breed society events, and by the timing of racing carnivals in each state. The quiet time of the year tends to be during the winter months, except for the winter racing carnival in Queensland.

Specialisation for veterinarians in the horse industry

Advanced training specifically related to horses comes in the form of internships, residencies and formal certificate, diploma and degree courses. Many of these are offered in university clinics, but some of the larger specialised equine practices also offer opportunities for advanced training in equine veterinary practice. Many veterinary graduates look to the very formal residency training programs in surgery, medicine, reproduction, pathology and so on offered in North America to further their training.

Recognition of advanced training in equine areas can also be done through passing examinations offered for membership and fellowship of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists. Specialisation in equine practice is recognised by the various State Veterinary Authorities and requires the attainment of a Fellowship in the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists or an equivalent overseas qualification, together with contributions to scientific literature.

What is the Australian horse industry?

The horse industry is spread throughout Australia, with the majority of horses found in the eastern states in non-metropolitan areas. There is no accurate estimate of the number of horses in Australia. However, as an estimate 1 million seems reasonable, including approximately 200,000 feral horses in uncontrolled populations. Overall the horse industry is a very large employer and contributes several billion dollars annually to the Australian economy.

The Australian horse industry is composed of a diverse group of breed and use societies spread throughout the country. Many horse owners do not belong to any specific organisation.
Other employment opportunities for veterinarians interested in horses

While clinical equine practice is where most veterinarians find employment in the horse industry, other options are available.

Veterinarians are employed by the Thoroughbred and Standardbred Racing Authorities to assist with horse racing industry integrity issues and advise stewards on these. State and Federal government Departments of Primary Industry (DPI) (or equivalent) often have veterinarians on staff to oversee disease monitoring and control issues for the horse industry. Veterinarians employed in the various DPIs also have input to the development of government policies, regulations and Codes of Practice that impact on the horse industry. Many horses are imported to and exported from Australia annually (about 3000 in each category), and so there is some opportunity for horse work with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS). Some opportunities exist in the pharmaceutical and medical device industries for veterinarians interested in matters related to horses.

EVA member benefits

EVA provides for its members the following benefits:

- an opportunity to be a part of a dynamic group of veterinarians servicing the needs of the horse industry
- continuing education opportunities at State Branch meetings and at the annual Bain-Fallon Memorial Lectures held in July each year
- a quarterly refereed journal, the Australian Equine Veterinarian
- a comprehensive Members Handbook — a compilation of information that a busy equine practitioner needs on a regular basis
- an electronic library of EVA — a fully searchable electronic database of all articles in the Australian Equine Veterinarian, all proceedings of the Bain-Fallon Memorial Lectures, and proceedings of the New Zealand Equine Veterinary Association
- a comprehensive web site (www.eva.org.au) dedicated to the needs of EVA members including a ‘Find A Vet’ function for EVA members
- ability to list specific areas of practice interest or specialisation on the EVA web site
- advocacy by the EVA Executive on behalf of EVA members to AVA®, Veterinary Surgeons Boards, and various horse industry associations and regulatory authorities
- a Young Members Group to service the needs of veterinary undergraduates and those equine practitioners in the first 5 years after graduation.
- various merchandise to publicise your EVA membership.

Further information about careers in the horse industry can be obtained from your local EVA member or your state EVA representative. Please refer to www.eva.org.au for EVA contact details.
AUSTRALIAN GREYHOUND VETERINARY ASSOCIATION (AGVA)

The AGVA is a Special Interest Group of the AVA® with a focus on the greyhound industry.

Greyhound Veterinarians

Veterinary work within the racing greyhound industry is challenging and rewarding. The industry is:

• extremely well organised by the various state and national administrative bodies
• has a large annual dollar turn over
• has plenty of work opportunities for veterinarians.

Veterinarians work in various areas in the industry, such as:

• official track veterinarians at race meetings
• private veterinarians working within the industry
  - examining dogs for racing soundness
  - sports medicine for racing dogs
  - general health care of racing dogs
  - farm visits for vaccinations and health care
  - disease control and epidemiology.
• reproduction using fresh chilled and frozen semen
• administrative positions on local and state controlling bodies
• regulatory steward positions within state controlling bodies
• veterinary industry positions formulating and advising on therapeutics.

How to get in

New graduates should seek a practice that has either a special interest in greyhounds and/or carries out official track veterinarian duties. This will provide the new graduate with exposure to gain a working knowledge of the industry and the specialties of greyhound surgery and medicine.

Some time is needed to understand the intricacies of the industry. Most veterinarians need 6 to 12 months to gain a good understanding of the racing greyhound industry.

The AGVA publishes a comprehensive set of notes on greyhound surgery and medicine to assist its members to improve their knowledge of this area.

The best parts

Most trainers and owners are wonderful people who love their dogs. It is very rewarding to work with them and they are very appreciative of your efforts to help them. It is an industry largely run for profit and so each dog has a commercial value plus some ‘pet’ status.

Veterinarians who become proficient in greyhound work are able to use these skills in general canine lameness workups, surgery and medicine. A high level of competence in reproductive work is required as most greyhound veterinarians carry out a large amount of canine reproduction work.

Greyhound surgery necessitates a high level of skill. There is a large exposure to orthopaedic and soft tissue surgery. Greyhound surgery can facilitate a career in canine surgery.

The worst parts

Some trainers can be difficult to work with and the financial rewards may be lower than general practice.

Career Progression

It is very difficult to make a living solely from racing greyhounds. However, incorporating skill with them in your practice enhances your overall skill and makes you a more rounded canine clinician. Surgery and reproductive skills gained from greyhound work provide broader horizons to move into.

Veterinarians who are skilled and familiar with the racing greyhound industry can move into administrative positions within the industry.
As a companion animal veterinarian, you will have the opportunity to use and develop many of the medical, surgical and scientific skills for which you were trained. You will be a general practitioner, pharmacist, pathologist, dermatologist, surgeon, epidemiologist, ophthalmologist, gynaecologist, physiotherapist, dentist, gastroenterologist, cardiologist, paediatrician, nutritionist, counsellor and friend to your clients and patients.

Companion animal veterinarians

Companion animal practice differs from production animal practice and wildlife or zoo practice in a number of ways. The patients do not usually have an economic value to consider when planning treatment (for example, the question ‘Is it cheaper to replace than repair?’ is unlikely to arise). They do not have to be repaired to a state that enables them to be rehabilitated and released into the wild. They are used to and respond positively to close human contact, making intensive care and extended periods of rehabilitation possible.

On the down side, because pets are part of the family, clients sometimes have extreme reactions to their pets’ injuries or illnesses. The veterinarian will occasionally be blamed for problems, real or imagined, and accused of not caring enough. Fortunately, these incidents are few and far between.

In many city practices and most rural practices you will also be the local wildlife expert. In rural practices you will probably be the large animal vet as well.

For those wishing to pursue this career path, companion animal practice provides many opportunities for specialisation. You may choose your specialisation at any stage during your career. You may have made your decision in the final years of your veterinary course and pursued it immediately upon graduation via an internship. However, the decision to acquire specialist qualifications often grows out of an interest in a particular area of veterinary practice and is pursued after many years as a general practitioner.

An experienced companion animal veterinarian has opportunities to work in many situations around the world, from well paid locum positions in the UK to volunteer work in developing countries.

Many city-based companion animal practices now refer after hours work to a dedicated emergency clinic, avoiding the necessity to be on call. Rural practices do not have this luxury, but most have compensating advantages. Many clients are resourceful country people who do not call the vet after hours unless it is a genuine emergency. Most of their clients live within a few minutes drive of their place of work, so consulting late into the evening is not necessary. Also, access to specialists is limited so more cases are followed through to conclusion in the practice.

Small animal veterinarian roles and responsibilities

Appointments — ensuring that appointments and treatment of patients occur in a timely manner and are of an appropriate length to maximise treatment efficiency and satisfy the client’s needs.

Initial examination and consultation — eliciting a full history from the client and carrying out a thorough and complete clinical examination of the patient.

Clinical records and professional conduct — keeping clinical records consistent with practice protocols, compliant with legislation, the requirements and ethical standards of the profession and the AVA® Code of Practice.

Client and patient relationship — establishing an appropriate relationship with the client and rapport with the patient.

Diagnosis and treatment plan — formulating diagnosis and treatment plans based on examination of the patient and use of appropriate diagnostic tools such as pathology, imaging equipment, surgery and surgical skills.
referral specialists, and presenting an ideal treatment plan to the client. This should initiate discussion of alternative treatment options and associated fees.

Performance of treatment — treating animals medically and surgically, administering and prescribing drugs, analgesics, and anaesthetics, determining the presence and nature of abnormal conditions by physical examination and the use of diagnostic techniques including laboratory tests and X-ray examinations, performing surgery, dressing wounds, and providing obstetrical and other treatments.

Financial responsibility for patients, and follow up — explaining fees and confirming financial arrangements with the client, identifying options for management, treatment and control, and formulating and conveying tenable plans to the client. The veterinarian is responsible for providing a clear explanation of the costs of treatment and needs to be aware of the monitoring of payments.

Continuing education — participating in continuing education and developing professional competence.

AUSTRALIAN SHEEP VETERINARIANS (ASV)

The ASV is a Special Interest Group of AVA® with a focus on the Sheep Industry.

The industry

The sheep industry provides a wide range of challenging positions, that require many of the disciplines studied in the undergraduate veterinary course. In common with most of the production animal species, the sheep industry requires veterinarians who can apply skills in population management as well as the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of disease. There are many ways in which vets can make valuable contributions to this industry.

Work in the sheep industry also requires detailed knowledge of farming systems. A rural background is helpful, but interested vets can soon learn the basics of the industry. Knowledge of some of the preclinical and paraclinical subjects, that we all found of doubtful relevance as undergraduates (such as nutrition, genetics and epidemiology), will stand you in good stead.

Flock health work has traditionally been done by government veterinarians. As state departments have downsized, the number of government field vets has declined. District Veterinary Officers still play an important role in flock health monitoring, disease surveillance and extension. Government departments in all states have specialist vets involved with the sheep industry. These include parasitologists, epidemiologists and special project officers, such as Johne’s disease and footrot coordinators. These positions are frequently reached by climbing the government ladder, and generally the candidates pick up postgraduate qualifications along the way as well as extensive field experience.
Increasingly, private practitioners are taking responsibility for flock health and production programs for their clients, as well as performing traditional fire-brigade veterinary work. The most important areas of work include: parasite control, foot disease, reproductive management, nutrition and farm management advice. Regulatory disease control programs involve private vets as both monitors of disease status and advisors on sheep health if clients’ flocks are affected.

Sheep consultants

While there are few registered sheep specialists, many vets have extensive experience in sheep production and are involved in consultancy to the sheep industries.

Consultancy may include a range of services including animal health, grazing management, breeding programs, production and marketing. A number of consultants have specialised in a particular area of expertise such as parasitology, economics and farm management. Most consultants have some level of postgraduate training.

As well as the traditional wool and meat grazing industries, vets are also involved in highly specialised areas of the sheep industries such as artificial breeding services (AI, ET). Other ‘sunrise’ industries involving vets include sheep dairies, serum harvesting plants, lamb feedlots and Sharlea wool operations.

Vets with a sound knowledge of the sheep industry are also highly sought after in the chemical industry. Chemical companies have a number of technical positions where veterinarians oversee product trials, provide advice to veterinarians and producers on the use of products, investigate “product breakdowns” and assist with the marketing and promotion of the various products.

The opportunity as a postgraduate

Postgraduate opportunities for sheep vets are not abundant but there are some very useful courses such as the intern training provided by the MacKinnon Project at the University of Melbourne. Most universities have ruminant intern positions and the Post Graduate Foundation at the University of Sydney offers an excellent distance education course in ruminant nutrition. Membership of the Australian College of Veterinary Science in sheep medicine and/or epidemiology is always a good starting point. Many universities, including those without a vet faculty, offer relevant postgraduate research degrees.

One of the most important features of being involved with the relatively small group of sheep veterinarians is that one quickly becomes acquainted with other sheep veterinarians and there is always a colleague to turn to if a difficult situation is encountered.

AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ACUPUNCTURE GROUP (AVAG)

Formally known as the Australian Veterinary Acupuncture Association (AVAA), the AVAG has been recognised as a Special Interest Group of the AVA® since 1986.

AVAG membership consists of veterinarians who have an interest in the use of acupuncture in clinical practice. The AVAG is affiliated with the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society (IVAS), and the majority of members have completed the certification qualification course held by IVAS.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is based on the theory that there is a circulation of energy or ‘Qi’ which travels through well defined channels or ‘meridians’ just below the surface of the skin. These meridians are connected to the internal organs, as well as all other structures of the body. Acupuncture points are specific areas along these meridians. When a needle is inserted into a point, this regulates the flow of energy within that meridian. In healthy animals this energy flows smoothly, while in diseased animals the energy does not flow smoothly, causing pain and dysfunction. Acupuncture treatment re-establishes the normal flow of energy and thereby restores health.

Acupuncture stimulates the body’s own inherent healing abilities by the release of endogenous endorphins. The nature of this therapy appeals to...
many clients, as it is free of drug residues and drug side-effects.

Acupuncture is a highly complex healing system, and incorporates many techniques, that are interrelated. Some of these include the use of burning mugwort (moxa), implantation of tiny gold beads, cupping and herbs. Acupressure involves using pressure, usually digital, rather than needles, to stimulate points. Electro-acupuncture involves passing a low electrical current between needles to facilitate healing.

About the treatments

Treatments vary depending on the method used to stimulate the acupuncture points. Generally fine acupuncture needles are left in place for 10 to 20 minutes. Other methods are aquapuncture (injecting a solution into the point), moxibustion (heating), laser or electro-acupuncture. Patients are generally treated one to two times per week for four to six weeks. Once the condition has resolved, treatments are only needed occasionally, if at all.

Clinical improvement with acupuncture is not always immediate, as it takes time to stimulate the body’s own healing mechanism. As a general rule, if the condition is acute it responds rapidly, if the condition is chronic it may take several treatments before clinical improvement is apparent. Acupuncture is one of the safest therapies if practised by a competent acupuncturist. Side effects are rare. Because acupuncture stimulates the body’s own system of healing and no chemicals are used, complications are rare.

When is the use of acupuncture indicated?

Acupuncture can be used as a primary treatment in many cases where medications are not working or are contraindicated because of side effects, or if surgery is not possible.

The use of acupuncture is also appropriate in conjunction with western drug therapy and following surgery. Acupuncture can be used in all animal species.

In small animals acupuncture is most commonly used for:

• musculoskeletal conditions including arthritis, hip dysplasia, intervertebral disc disease and soft tissue injuries
• skin conditions including lick granulomas
• urinary tract conditions: incontinence, cystitis and feline lower urinary tract disease
• respiratory tract disorders: feline asthma, pneumonia (in conjunction with antibiotics)
• neurological disorders including nerve injury and paralysis, stroke
• gastrointestinal tract: vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation and megaesophagus
• eyes: dry eye and conjunctivitis
• ears: otitis externa
• reproduction: lactation, labour, anoestrus and infertility
• immune system to stimulate immune function
• behavioural problems, for example showing shyness.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is one of a variety of therapies that a veterinarian can use to treat animals. Acupuncture is a form of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), an ancient form of healing that has been used continually for the past four and a half thousand years, making acupuncture the oldest system of medicine still in use today.

The principle of treatment is based upon the belief that the body is a self regulating, homeostatic system, and that disease occurs when the body is out of balance. Physiological balance is influenced by the individual’s environment, the season, diet, lifestyle, and genetic constitution. The signs of disease will be unique in each individual, and treatment involves understanding the pattern of signs within the whole body of the individual to be treated. There are 365 acupuncture points on the surface of the body. The precise combination of points selected is unique for each case, and usually comprises between two and ten points.
In horses acupuncture is commonly used for:

- musculoskeletal problems such as lameness, back problems, navicular disease, laminitis and tendonitis
- nervous disorders: including nerve injury and tetanus
- respiratory system: bleeders and heaves
- gastrointestinal: colic and diarrhoea
- reproductive: infertility.

In cattle acupuncture is most commonly used for:

- musculoskeletal problems: post calving paralysis, downer cows, back problems and lameness
- reproductive problems including: infertility, dystocia and prolapses.

**Qualifications in veterinary acupuncture**

Qualified veterinarians can undertake a postgraduate certificate course offered by the IVAS. Those interested in undertaking the course, or those seeking more information are encouraged to visit the IVAS website on www.ivas.org.

**AUSTRALIAN VETERINARIANS FOR ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICS (AVAWE)**

AVAWE is an AVA® Special Interest Group that provides a forum for discussion and promotion of all aspects of animal welfare and animal ethics within the Australian veterinary profession. While every potential employment opportunity open to the graduating veterinarian involves some considerations of animal welfare and ethics, this is generally just a small component of their role.

Most veterinarians enter their profession with a strong empathy towards animals, their welfare and the ethical issues surrounding them. Animal welfare is inextricably linked with animal behaviour and the use of animals for companionship, work, food, clothing, research, teaching, recreation and sport each comes with its own set of welfare issues and some capacity to pose ethical questions. It is possible to explore these varied issues and embrace a full time career in animal welfare and ethics.

Veterinary careers available in the field of animal welfare and ethics fall primarily into three major areas of work.

**Veterinarians working for an animal welfare society (e.g. RSPCA)**

While routine desexing of animals and euthanasia are part of this role, the major job description extends to numerous other duties that contribute to improved animal welfare over a broad horizon. Education of the community in correct animal management practices and pet care has considerable impact on animal welfare. This may extend to media appearances for comment on animal welfare issues or situations and providing expert witness testimony in animal cruelty cases. Perpetrators of animal cruelty have a statistically increased likelihood of also being involved in human abuse, so veterinarians now have a significant role to play in identifying animal cruelty incidents and potential future offenders. As veterinarian for an animal welfare society there is also the opportunity to participate in the formulation of animal welfare policy — a satisfying process in itself.

**Government veterinarians in animal welfare units**

Government veterinarians within the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments have a significant role to play in topical animal welfare issues. They play a vital role on State and Territory Animal Welfare Advisory Committees (AWAC), which advise governments on a broad spectrum of issues such as urban animal management, farm animal welfare, Codes of Practice, kangaroo culling policy, feral animal control, the use of animals for scientific purposes and the use of animals in sport and recreation. They also contribute significantly to state and territory legislation on prevention of cruelty to animals and may be called as expert witnesses in animal cruelty cases.

**Veterinarians employed in an animal welfare capacity in an institution using animals for scientific purposes**

In larger institutions such as universities and biomedical research institutes these veterinarians are usually the institutional Animal Welfare Officer and/or the Executive Officer of the Animal Ethics Committee (AEC). They provide expert advice to the
AEC, ensuring the maintenance of high standards of animal welfare in the use of animals for scientific purposes. This professional advice is welfare driven and includes the use of appropriate anaesthetics and analgesics, animal housing standards, genetic implications and appropriate use and methods of euthanasia.

In the absence of a statistician and because of their training, these veterinarians can contribute to statistical evaluation of research projects minimising the number of animals used to obtain a statistically valid experimental result. They also advise the committee on alternatives to the use of animals and provide ongoing education to the AEC in animal welfare areas. Training of investigators and technical staff is an important function carried out by veterinarians, usually involving formal instruction on compliance with Codes of Practice and relevant legislation, induction on interfacing with the AEC, practical workshops in animal handling techniques, anaesthetic methods, euthanasia techniques and general or specific surgical skills and monitoring of research animals.

While the majority of veterinarians working in animal welfare are within the three categories above, there are a number of others who fulfil industry, management or research positions where animal welfare is a key aspect of their work. Animal welfare research is an exciting field and is uniquely suited to veterinarians, who bring their broad-based clinical training and scientific approach to this challenging field.

### AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY DENTAL SOCIETY (AVDS)

The AVDS is a Special Interest Group of the AVA®, formed in the early 1990s by veterinarians with a common interest in all things dental. The aim was to promote the importance of oral health in animals.

#### Being an AVDS member

The AVDS has a number of promotions throughout the year for the benefit of members. We offer a lecture and workshop program at the AVA® Annual Conference every year. Other workshops, seminars and lectures are held throughout the year.

The AVDS started the very successful Pet Dental Health Month (PDHM) promotion in 1998. This has grown steadily ever since and now involves more than 800 practices Australia wide. PDHM has become one of the key health promotions for pets on the AVA® calendar.

To keep abreast of advances in veterinary dentistry, the AVDS provides newsletters to its members. These newsletters contain updated information covering all veterinary dental disciplines, as well as case studies and helpful hints.
Members of the AVDS are encouraged to contribute to the newsletters, making them a valuable source of current information.

Our website is another source of information with up to the minute information about the activities of the AVDS and its members. A new AVDS internet forum allows members (and interested parties) to discuss matters at hand in an open and current fashion.

Members from around the world can hold internet conversations as they work together on veterinary dental topics.

The AVDS is also heavily involved in broadening the training of veterinary undergraduates to ensure a level of competency in the field of veterinary dentistry upon graduation. All undergraduate teaching hospitals now have some exposure to veterinary dentistry through the efforts of AVDS members.

The aim of the AVDS is to equip its members with the necessary skills to better serve our clients’ companions and allow them to live longer and healthier lives.

Dental opportunities

All veterinarians involved with companion animals will have a large component of dentistry in their practices. Around 80% of animals presented to a clinic will have some form of dental disease. The response from the owner and the patient to correction of these problems is almost instantaneous. With the right equipment and skills, veterinary dentistry can be very rewarding both financially and emotionally.

AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY POULTRY ASSOCIATION (AVPA)

The AVPA is a Special Interest Group of the AVA® that focuses on the chicken industry.

The industry

The Australian chicken industry is divided into:

- chicken meat
- egg production.

Around 450 million broiler chickens, and approximately 220 million dozen eggs are produced annually.

While the industry has been a leader in the use of highly efficient intensive production systems, there is also an increasing market for chicken meat and eggs produced under barn and free-range conditions. There are also smaller industries supplying turkey, duck and game bird products. Each provides common and unique challenges for the veterinarian, both in terms of disease prevention and control, and the maintenance of high standards of bird welfare, food safety, and product quality.

Poultry veterinarians

Despite the size and value of the Australian poultry industry, there are relatively few veterinarians employed directly by the industry, although there are others involved in various supporting roles, such as the pharmaceutical and biologicals industries, in diagnostic laboratories and in research. The recent establishment of the Australian Poultry CRC has provided new opportunities for veterinary graduates who may be interested in poultry research and the career opportunities that obtaining a higher qualification can provide. For more information please visit the poultry website on http://www.jcu.edu.au/school/bms/avpa/

Veterinarians working for the major broiler producers in Australia would typically control the production of 50 million broilers per year. Their activities range from overseeing the health and production of broiler breeders through to hatcheries and the grow-out and processing of broiler chickens. Experienced
veterinarians also have the opportunity to move into management roles that control important aspects of poultry production. A veterinarian with the necessary knowledge and skills can expect to earn an annual salary commencing around $50,000 and increasing to over $100,000, commensurate with the level of responsibility.

Opportunities for undergraduates

The AVPA has the purpose of fostering the application of good veterinary science in the Australian poultry industry and does this through scientific meetings and providing expert advice on poultry health and welfare issues.

Opportunities for practical field experience for under-graduates in poultry medicine are relatively limited in most veterinary curricula. To provide opportunities for students with an interest in poultry, the AVPA has established annual scholarship awards of $1,000 for each of the 5 veterinary schools in Australia and New Zealand. The aim of the scholarships is to provide students with the opportunity to obtain practical experience in poultry medicine and an understanding of the role of the veterinarian in the modern poultry industry. It is the intention that this exposure may stimulate the interest of awardees pursuing poultry medicine as a future career option.

AUSTRALIAN CATTLE VETERINARIANS (ACV)

The ACV is a Special Interest Group of the AVA® with a focus on the cattle industry.

Career opportunities in cattle practice

• mixed rural practice including a high percentage dairy and/or beef work
• dairy and/or extensive and intensive (feedlot) beef consultancy
• live export
• artificial breeding including embryo transfer, artificial insemination and semen collection
• pastoral companies
• state and Federal government agricultural departments
• owning or managing your own beef cattle or dairy enterprise
• university — research or lecturer
• industry bodies such as Meat & Livestock Australian or Dairy Research and Development Corporation
• large animal tech vet in the pharmaceutical industry.

Cattle veterinarians

Being a cattle veterinarian can be exciting, challenging and rewarding and requires you to develop and hone a range of skills, many of which are only touched on in your undergraduate course. Many veterinarians enter cattle practice from a desire to make a difference, to contribute to Australia’s biosecurity and to promote and enhance food safety within Australia and overseas.

Rural practice promotes appreciation of working outdoors and repeatedly working with practical
and friendly clients with whom you can develop an honest and open relationship.

Cattle veterinarians may be employed by their clients to solve herd problems such as poor reproductive performance, below optimum weight gains or milk yields, high mortalities, and nutritional or profitability problems. These same rural veterinarians can also be called on to treat individual animals that are valuable for emotional or financial reasons.

Cattle work can involve physically demanding cases such as calving and lameness, and routine reproductive management including pregnancy and bull testing. However, there is nothing more clinically satisfying than rescuing a cow with milk fever or down with dystocia, sorting the situation out and enabling the cow to walk away ‘fixed’; and leaving the farmer emotionally and financially satisfied. Similar satisfaction is obtained from solving a herd problem.

Rural practice provides young graduates with a unique opportunity to become a respected member of a rural community, developing strong friendships with clients and colleagues and making significant contributions to the client’s livelihood.

Cattle medicine, surgery and production is constantly evolving, with the ability for veterinarians to hone highly technical diagnostic, surgical and business consultancy skills. There are numerous opportunities to become specialists in various aspects of cattle veterinary practice.

With every profession there are up sides and down sides. For example, cattle practice can be seasonally very busy, like during calving; there may be early starts, and there is a reasonable amount of travel. The advantages may be seasonally quieter times, finishing earlier and time to think while driving.

As with any veterinary science profession, it is important for new graduates to ensure good support and feedback from senior vets in the practice on cases you have seen. Good communication with both the clients and your colleagues is essential. In most cases this is made easier with the provision of two-way radio or mobile phone contact, however the most important thing is that you find someone within your practice with whom you can discuss cases at the end of the day.

**UNUSUAL & EXOTICS PETS GROUP (UEP)**

The UEP is a Special Interest Group of the AVA®. They are a group of vets specialising and caring for truly ‘all creatures great and small’.

**The unusual, the exotic and the veterinarian**

The face of pets in our society is changing as people’s values and lifestyles change. Some of our clients might not have a back yard or time for a dog, or live in a suburb where cats are not permitted. Or they might simply want a pet that is low maintenance or a bit out of the ordinary. So they choose a rat, a ferret, a lizard or fish. Some of these clients have the same human-animal bond that we see with dogs and cats, and seek veterinary assistance for their much-loved pets when they become ill. They also actively seek information on how to improve the husbandry of their pets to prevent illness.

There have been some historic reasons for this shift in the species of animal brought to the veterinary clinic. A good example is the accidental release of calicivirus into Australia in the 1990’s. Many clinics had large numbers of rabbits present for vaccination. The challenge was then to service the extra questions of these clients for whom the child’s pet was an important member of the household, and for those clients who had found difficulty in finding correct information on feeding and husbandry. For veterinarians, it was a bit overwhelming at the time!

Nearly ten years later, we have seen the relaxation of licensing laws governing the keeping of reptiles. A few years ago, the ownership of a blue-tongue lizard was restricted to licensed herpetologists. Now lizards, snakes, turtles and tarantulas are sold in pet shops. Many of these new reptile owners are unaware of the herpetological groups, and may be given incorrect information from the internet. Veterinarians provide correct information on husbandry and disease of their reptile pets.
For those who have an interest in these unusual pets, word of mouth works effectively in the community once it is known that you will see species other than cats and dogs. The variety is certainly there. An insight into a week for a vet that sees unusual pets may result in consulting on a mouse with a lump on it, a rabbit for castration, hair loss in a ferret, anorexia in a snake and fungal skin disease in a freshwater turtle. These pets give us the opportunity to develop our skills in many areas including blood collection, cytology, radiography, endoscopy and surgery.

In this technological age, it is not necessary that all information on all species is kept in one’s own memory, but the ability to access the information you require to solve the problem at hand is important. UEP’s chat group gives members the opportunity to access professional support for a not-so-commonly seen animal visiting your clinic.

As a graduate

The undergraduate veterinary degree is unable to teach everything about every species. This is not possible or appropriate. What it has given you, as a new graduate, is a good first-principles approach — and the ability to find the information you need in texts, through colleagues and, in time, through experience.

For many of our members, unusual pets will simply be an extension of their practice — be it small, large or mixed. For some of our members, unusual pets make up a significant proportion of their client base. It may be expected that we will see Australian practice follow the American precedent of the establishment of avian and exotic clinics within a few years. We are at the beginning of the groundswell of interest in this field. Postgraduate opportunities to continue education in this field are in their initial stages in this country.

As a UEP Member

UEP aims to actively educate our members through the AVA® and its stand alone annual conferences, recommended texts, and the Yahoo! discussion list. Further postgraduate education remains offshore at this stage but this is likely to change in coming years.

UEP member benefits include: an active email discussion list providing help with clinical cases, a website with access to files, practice management notes and photos, proceedings from conferences, access to the UEP annual conference (discount rates for new graduates and students), day seminars on specific topics and species to be held in capital cities, practical advice for busy practitioners, and a listing on various websites for vets with specific interest in the species.
To work in Australia as a veterinarian, you must be registered with the Veterinary Registration Board of the State or Territory in which you will be practising. This chapter provides information about the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc., and the Service Directory includes contact details for each of the State and Territory Veterinary Boards. For further information, please contact the relevant Board.

Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc (AVBC Inc.)

BACKGROUND

AVBC Inc. was incorporated in Victoria in December 1999. It is an incorporated association by agreement of the State and Territory Veterinary Boards of Australia and the Veterinary Council of New Zealand to provide for a legal entity that has the authority to speak and act on behalf of all registering authorities and to facilitate the devolution of the National Veterinary Examination from the National Office of Overseas Skill Recognition (NOOSR).

The AVBC Inc. assumed the functions and finances of the former Australian Veterinary Boards Conference from 20 December 1999. The Conference was set up in 1985 to provide the various State and Territory Veterinary Boards the opportunity to discuss mutual problems/issues and to assist in the standardisation of acceptable veterinary practice and other issues affecting the practise of veterinary science in Australia.

As veterinarians are a fairly mobile profession and are required to register separately in each State/Territory in which they wish to practise (and adhere to the particular legislation in force in that jurisdiction), such a meeting was held on annual basis to assist in introducing nationally acceptable standards by agreement. In 1988 the then New Zealand Veterinary Surgeons Board made an application to become a participant and commenced attending meetings in 1990.

The AVBC Inc. has no legislative power to impose any decisions made at meetings on any participating Boards. The annual conferences have in the past provided a venue for general reporting and have addressed specific issues on which over time there has been Australia-wide agreement, for example the recognition of overseas qualifications.

FUNCTIONS OF AVBC INC.

AVBC Inc. has an advisory function to make recommendations to the Veterinary Surgeons Boards in Australia and New Zealand in relation to:

- 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
- uniform criteria for recognition of qualifications for registration
- advising on matters concerning the occupational regulation of veterinarians, including general and specialist registration
- encouraging harmonisation of the standards, regulations and quality assurance of veterinary services provided to the community in all jurisdictions.

For further information, please visit the AVCB Inc. website at www.avbc.asn.au.
Looking for your job

How do I plan and conduct a job search campaign – where should I start looking?

You may have found a practice that appeals to you during extramural studies so a first approach may already have been made. Comments from fellow students, networking or a university notice board may have revealed a suitable employment opportunity.

The *Australian Veterinary Journal* provides a broad exposure to positions available. The AVA® has a list of new graduate-friendly practices and, although this is not exhaustive or exclusive, the presence of the logo in an advertisement is a useful indicator.

Various pharmaceutical wholesalers advertise vacancies in their monthly or bi-monthly bulletins. Locum agencies are becoming increasingly popular, as there is often no cost to the prospective employer until an employee has been employed and found satisfactory. These costs can be lower than those for the print media and there is some form of selection procedure. National dailies may sometimes advertise for veterinary vacancies, particularly those with a research, manufacturing or sales focus, and the internet is increasingly used.

Most advertisements are fairly standard. Employers want to present their locality in the best light and usually advertise good staff, lots of benefits, plenty of time off, proximity to attractions and even well-trained clients. How do you filter this information? Listing those that appeal, and the reasons they appeal, is a good start.

Establish a target date for securing a job and decide how much time you can devote to your search.

Some individuals believe they cannot afford to take time off from their studies. Others procrastinate. Whatever the reasons, the results are the same: your search will languish and you may miss out on job opportunities. So, get organised early by setting aside a certain amount of time each week to work on your search. Use a calendar and weekly planner and work backwards from your target date.

The greater the number of contacts and interviews a job seeker has, the greater the number of job offers likely to be received. Therefore, it makes sense to use multiple strategies.

Job searching is hard work and there are times when you will feel discouraged, however, if you keep up your efforts, you will start to feel less anxious and will find that you have more energy.

If your search does not produce the results you would like, avoid blaming yourself. Try a new strategy. Do not be reluctant to submit your credentials on more than one occasion to a practice for which you would like to work. This demonstrates your enthusiasm and interest.
HOW DO I FIND THE RIGHT EMPLOYER?

After you have thoroughly researched some possible careers, several realistic and attractive options will emerge. These options should become your career or job search goals. It is probable that no single career will have the potential to utilise all your skills, allow you to develop all your interests or incorporate a value system completely compatible with yours. Therefore, try to target a career field that is likely to satisfy some of your high-priority needs. Other needs of less importance can perhaps be satisfied in your leisure time activities.

At this point, it is useful to seek feedback from others in the field to determine if your assessment is realistic.

Good research on employers will not only give you the competitive edge, but help you decide which employers you want to reach and which strategies you will use to contact them. One of the greatest advantages of being a vet is the size of the profession. Most vets know who is a good boss and who is not. Take advantage of your already established personal and professional networks to do your homework on a potential employer. Beware; there are a very small number of poor employers within the profession who could tarnish your attitude for years. Ask before you leap.

AVA® New Graduate Friendly Practice Accreditation Program

Employing a new graduate carries certain responsibilities and requires greater input from the practice than the employment of an experienced graduate. Not all practices have the resources to employ and properly support a new graduate, and some are not able to spend the time and effort necessary. Those practices that do support new graduates are providing an enormous contribution to their practice, and the profession as a whole.

The benefits that flow on from positive new graduate support are numerous and include:

- practice exposure to the newest knowledge and techniques
- better succession planning
- more positive and better skilled veterinarians
- the provision of positive role models for the next set of graduates, etc.

In recognition of the important role new graduates play in the profession, the AVA® has developed the NGFP Accreditation Program. The aim of the NGFP Program is to ease new graduates’ transition into practice and support them during their formative years in the veterinary profession.

To achieve this objective, AVA® is pursuing the following strategies:

PRACTICES

- increase awareness amongst employers of the employment needs of new graduates
- provide a logo for NGFP accredited practices to market themselves
- actively promote NGFP accredited practices to new graduates and current students
- recognise NGFP accredited practices in appropriate AVA® forums (AVA® New Graduate Guide, Australian Veterinary Journal, AVA® Online).

NEW GRADUATES

- increase awareness amongst new graduates of their employment needs and their impact on a practice
- equip new graduates with the tools to make better employment choices
- promote the value of new graduates to the veterinary profession.

It is envisioned that the AVA® NGFP Accreditation Program will assist in new graduates becoming: better skilled veterinarians who are more satisfied with their work, have a positive view of the veterinary profession, and will remain in the profession for longer.

AVA® New Graduate Friendly Accredited Practices can be found on the AVA® website www.ava.com.au
How should I design my résumé?

A résumé is a self-marketing tool, designed with the goal of obtaining a job interview. The information in a résumé is targeted at a specific career field and addresses the needs of a specific employer. Your résumé should market your relevant skills, knowledge and accomplishments.

Begin the process of writing your résumé by identifying the career field and types of employers that will be the focus of your job search. When you know how you will use the résumé, you will be able to write an effective, targeted résumé that gets results. Spend some time choosing the right words and phrases to describe your marketable skills and experiences. You may need to write several revisions before arriving at the final version.

Generally, employers spend only a few minutes reading each résumé so it’s a good idea to be concise and to the point and, if possible, include a head and shoulders image of yourself on the front page. This makes you easier to remember.

A one-page résumé is preferable for most entry-level positions. A two page résumé is acceptable if the information on both pages demonstrates the skills and/or experience relevant to your profession. Present the most important information first. Your résumé should highlight the skills and accomplishments that meet the requirements of the employer. Exclude irrelevant information and experience. A well-designed résumé should be written concisely and presented in an organised format, and be visually appealing and free from spelling, typographical, punctuation and grammatical errors. Use the following checklist to ensure your résumé meets these requirements.

RÉSUMÉ CHECKLIST

Style

- Make it inviting and easy to read, and make sure it does not include too much information.
- Use an easy-to-read font style and size (10 to 14 pt).
- Incorporate enough white space between sections to facilitate skimming.

- Align the paragraphs and ensure the margins are adequate.
- Create visual impact using bullets, boldface, italics and font sizes to emphasise key words.
- Use good quality bond paper, at least 80 gsm, and ensure good print quality.

Content

- Support the objective and demonstrate your ability or potential to do the job.
- Speaks to the employer’s needs and requirements (employer-centred not self-centred).
- Indicate your knowledge of the field, typical issues or problems and solutions.
- Omit reference to racial, religious or political affiliations unless a bona fide occupational qualification.
- Include only personal data relevant to the objective and omit reference to age, sex, marital status, national origin, health or names of referees.

Format

- Use an appropriate format and include keyword phrases of the profession.
- Present your strongest qualifications first.
- Make the length appropriate (approximately one page for every six to 10 years of work experience).

Writing style

- Begin sentences with powerful action verbs or phrases.
- Use short paragraphs (mostly under five lines) and short sentences.
- Use brief, succinct language with no unnecessary words.
- Remove grammatical, spelling, punctuation, word usage and typographical errors.

Contacts

Include the following contact information:

- address
- telephone number(s)
- email address.
Objective
Optional for chronological résumé. Required for functional résumé.
• Briefly indicate the sort of position, title and possible area of specialisation sought.
• Use specific, employer-focused language and avoid broad or vague statements.
• Include a summary of skills, accomplishments and expertise.
• Identify three to six key achievements that support the objective.
• Summarise relevant work experience and accomplishments that support the objective.

Education and training
• List the highest level of attainment first, working from the most current degree, degree in progress or most recently completed degree.
• Included information about the type of degree, name and location of the university and date or anticipated date of graduation.
• List other degrees, relevant higher education coursework, continuing professional education or training courses, study abroad and secondary school education.
• List relevant courses, papers and projects, including paper and project titles.
• List any awards and scholarships.

Employment experience
Although you’ve never worked as a qualified veterinarian before, it is still important to provide details of relevant work experience. Even part time jobs outside of the profession show the employer that you have the ability to commit to a position. Describe your accomplishments using the jargon of your profession. Include the following:
• all paid, volunteer and work experience programs relevant to your objective, with the most recent experience listed first (if using chronological format)
• position title
• practice name and location
• dates of position held (if several positions have been held with one employer, list the employer once)
• responsibilities, listed in order of the value of each to the future employer, transferable skills and adaptive abilities used on the job
• accomplishments, problems faced and solutions found
• contributions to the practice, such as ways in which your work helped to increase profit, motivation, efficiency, productivity or quality, or improve programs, communication or information flow
• quantitative or qualitative indicators of the results of your contributions or accomplishments
• learning that took place on the job, that is relevant to the current objective.

Skills
Include the following:
• technical skills relevant to being a veterinarian
• computer skills, including software applications, languages, hardware and operating systems
• language skills — describe level of fluency and ability to read and write as basic, intermediate or advanced
• other relevant skills.

Extracurricular activities, community service and professional associations
Include the following:
• significant positions of responsibility, including title, name of practice or team and dates
• leadership roles, achievements and relevant transferable skills
• relevant hobbies and personal interests.

Writing application letters
Never underestimate the power of correspondence in your job search. Your application covering letter, in particular, is an important marketing tool which highlights your most attractive qualifications as a potential employee and, if well written, will lead the employer to your résumé.

Before writing your letter, analyse your reader and think about how you want to present yourself. Put yourself in the reader’s situation and consider their requirements and needs. Plan your letter accordingly, placing the most important items first,
supported by facts. After this analysis, write your letter demonstrating how your background, training, work experience, and abilities would meet those needs. This approach will help to persuade the reader that you are a good match for the position and that they should interview you. Remember that you are responsible for explicitly communicating your value to the employer. Employers typically receive many applications for each job opening. Do not expect them to wade through a great deal of text or a poorly written, mundane or disorganised letter to figure out what you can do for them.

**PRINCIPLES OF GOOD LETTER WRITING**

**Personalise each letter**

Take the time to research each employer’s practice and personalise each letter. Indicating that you know something about the practice shows that you are careful and interested in the employer. This approach is much more effective than sending out hundreds of identical form letters.

**Highlight one or two of your most significant accomplishments or abilities**

This helps your chances of being remembered. Be brief; demonstrate that you understand the value of the reader’s time.

**Use a polite, formal style that strikes a balance between confidence in yourself and respect for the employer**

Be clear, objective and persuasive rather than simply describing your background.

**Be positive in tone, content and expectation**

Do not add details about yourself, your past experience or your preparation that may call attention to your weaknesses or raise questions about your confidence or ability to do the job.

**Use active voice and powerful action verbs in your writing to hold the reader’s interest and convey a sense of energy**

Group related items together in a paragraph, then organise paragraphs so they flow logically

Remember, it is your responsibility to organise the information for the reader.

**Back up general statements with specific facts or examples**

Documentation enhances your credibility.

**Avoid jargon and clichés**

It is tempting to use ready-made phrases such as ‘self-starter’, ‘proven leadership skills’ or ‘excellent interpersonal skills’, however, such expressions represent parroted formulas rather than original thought.

**Check the spelling and the grammar**

If you are not confident of your ability to detect grammatical, punctuation or English usage errors, or if you need help in organising your letter, take your correspondence to a professional for assistance.

**Never misrepresent yourself by overstating your experience or skills**

Even if you do not have every qualification sought by the employer, stick to the facts and tell the truth. Emphasise your strengths.

Your covering letter should be prepared on a computer with a letter quality printer. Letters should be printed on high quality bond paper and mailed in envelopes that match the stationery. Use conservative colours such as white and ivory. Make sure your letter is in a conventional business style. Using a built-in template in your word processing program is a good way to ensure that your letter is produced in an acceptable business-like format.

**TYPES OF LETTERS**

Here are some guidelines on the seven standard types of covering letters you are likely to use during your job search.

**Application letter**

The purpose of this letter is to get the employer to read your résumé and invite you for an interview. Use this type of letter to respond to job advertisements and vacancy announcements. The purpose of this letter is to show that your qualifications fit the employer’s requirements for the position. Analyse the position description carefully and pick out key phrases. Try to match your letter point by point to the requirements by emphasising key parts of your résumé.
Prospecting letter

The purpose of this letter is to search for possible vacancies in your field, to promote your résumé and to generate interviews. Prospecting letters are used for long distance searches and to uncover hidden job opportunities that are not advertised. Begin by targeting specific practices and then identifying the appropriate person to contact. Organise this letter in a similar fashion to the application letter but focus on the practice’s needs, direction, problems, products or trends and describe how your qualifications match their requirements.

Networking letter

This letter is written to generate an informational interview rather than a job interview. Your letter must express your sincere interest in meeting with a specific individual. It briefly describes who you are and the purpose of your intended visit. Usually a résumé is not attached to a networking letter, however, it may be brought to the interview to help the interviewer understand your background and respond to your questions.

Thank-you letter

Thank-you letters are used to express appreciation and strengthen your candidacy. They should be sent to everyone who has helped you in any way. When sent after an employment interview, a thank-you letter should be mailed within 24 hours to each person who interviewed you. It provides an opportunity to reaffirm your interest in the position and to cite additional qualifications you may not have cited during the interview. You may also wish to clarify information that may not have been positively conveyed.

Don’t forget to send letters to people who granted you informational interviews or provided references.

Acceptance letter

Use this letter to accept a job offer. Your letter should confirm the terms of your employment as you understand them to be, and if a written offer has not yet been received from the employer, you should request this prior to starting the position.

Withdrawal letter

A withdrawal letter may be used when you decide that you have no further interest in being considered for an employment opportunity. You may make this decision after having an interview or after deciding to accept another offer of employment. If you have decided to accept another offer, immediately notify all other employers of your decision and withdraw your application from consideration. Your withdrawal letter should thank the employer for their consideration. You may also want to indicate that your decision to withdraw was based on the fact that the other opportunity fitted better with your skills, interests and abilities at this stage of your career. Do not burn bridges by saying that you were offered a better job or more money. Keep the doors open for the future by being courteous.

Rejection letter

Occasionally you may have to decline an offer when it does not mesh with your short or long-term career goals. This letter should be written carefully. Indicate that this was a difficult decision to make and that you have given it serious consideration. Be sure to thank the employer for the offer and for their time and consideration. It is not necessary to indicate which offer of employment you decided to take or where you will be working, but you may do so if you wish.

Interview preparation

Preparation is the first key to being successful at interview.

Careful research about the job and the practice for which you are being interviewed is essential.

Talk with your contacts in the practice or organisation, or use your personal network to discover the names of employees you might call prior to the interview.

For larger organisations, request printed materials such as annual reports, or use library resources or internet sites.

Knowing about the job will help you to prepare a list of your qualifications that shows point by point why you are the best candidate.
Knowing about the employer will help you prepare an interview strategy and appropriate questions and points to emphasise.

**Effective interviewing**

The job interview is a strategic conversation with a purpose. Your goal is to persuade the employer that you have the skills, background and ability to do the job and that you can comfortably fit into the practice. At the interview you should also be gathering information about the job, the practice and future career opportunities to determine if the position and work environment are right for you.

You can strongly influence the interview outcome if you realise that an interview is not an objective process in which the employer offers the job to the best candidate based on merit alone. Rather, an interview is a subjective encounter in which the interviewer offers the job to the qualified person he or she likes best. Personality, confidence, enthusiasm, a positive outlook and good interpersonal and communication skills count heavily.

Success requires you to use every means at your disposal to develop effective interviewing skills including:

- selective presentation of your background
- thoughtful answers to interview questions
- well researched questions about the practice and
- an effective strategy to market yourself.

There is no magic involved. It is a skill that can be learned and improved with practice.

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

It is a good idea to arrive at least 10 to 15 minutes early so you can take some time to walk around the immediate neighbourhood and spend time in the waiting room. This will enable you to see how people are treated and whether or not you would like to be treated in the same way.

Receptionists are often primed before an interview. This may be a positive thing, acknowledging your importance, or it may be a way of giving you a false impression. Usually, interviews are one to one with your prospective employer. Some enlightened employers like to hear the impressions of others who would be working with you. So, if you are offered work on the premises or in the field for a few hours, seize the opportunity. It may give you the opportunity to meet those who would be mentoring you even more than the boss. By seeing how they engage you in the work of the day you will be able to assess how comfortable you would be in that environment.

Conversation in unguarded moments in the treatment room, kennel area or paddock may be very revealing. If this opportunity is not offered, ask if the boss would mind if you stayed around after your interview to meet the staff. Most practices like to be open to clients and should have no problem with such a request.

The experienced interviewer will probably have formed an impression of you on the phone or at the desk and will be on a fishing expedition to garner extra information on how you may perform. Play the fly and answer thoughtfully. Being overconfident can be as intimidating as being too shy. A controlled response is needed. Nibble at the bait. You will need to find out about how the practice works. You should be familiar with the veterinary Award and have in mind the sort of salary you expect. Do not be hesitant to state it if asked. If you have an extra degree, experience in the area or it is an unattractive environment, you should be able to command more than the base salary.

**THE OPENING**

Interviews generally follow a predictable communication pattern, with an opening, an exchange of information and a closing. During the first few minutes of the interview (the opening) the employer will be formulating a first, and perhaps lasting impression of you. How you greet the employer, the firmness of your handshake and the way you are dressed and groomed will all be a part of this initial impression. To help you feel at ease, a practiced interviewer might ask common-ground questions about shared interests or acquaintances, or about your travel to the interview.
QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT BE ASKED

• Why do you want to be a vet?
• How did you fare in your course?
• How do you intend spending your leisure time?
• What are your long term goals?

On this last point, be honest. No prospective employer in your first job would expect you to have thought more than two to five years ahead. Two years should be the minimum time you plan to stay in your first job. No employer wants to have to keep retraining staff and, as a new graduate, regardless of how competent you may be, you may not start to become a real asset to the practice for six to twelve months.

You will probably also be asked questions that will be attempting to find out information about your skills and experience event though it is limited at this stage.

You can greatly enhance your chances of success by framing your answers to provide the prospective employer with a clear indication of how you have performed in the past. Draw on your experience whilst on placement as well as in any other employment you have had over past years. For example, you can demonstrate that you understand how to provide good customer service through using an example from a part-time or casual position in hospitality. Your examples don’t always have to be specific to veterinary practice.

YOU ARE INTERVIEWING THEM TOO:
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RIGHT BOSS

The information exchange

The information exchange will be the main part of the interview. This is when you will be asked the most questions and learn the most about the employer. If you are prepared for the interview, you will be able to promote your qualifications effectively as you respond to questions. With practice, you will gain confidence and become more polished in your presentation.

Questions you might want answered

• What are the expected working hours?
• What level of assistance can the lay staff give?
• Who will be there during normal and abnormal working hours to assist?
• What holidays are offered, and what are the restrictions on when they can be taken?
• How is study leave organised and when can it be taken?
• Are bonuses payable, and when?
• Is there an after hours service?
• How does the bonus on after hours work?
• Does the practice provide a mobile phone or do you use your own?
• Is there an obligation to live in close proximity to the premises?
• What is the timing for performance reviews? (These will usually be in the first three months and thereafter every six to twelve months.)
• Are there prospects for others and yourself to buy in?
• How is the business organised with regard to a line of command and to whom will you be primarily responsible?
• Will you be expected to perform any duties that may be more management oriented?
• Is there a uniform or dress code?
• Would you have your own business cards and name badge? (Make absolutely certain that your résumé contains all relevant post-nominals, correctly punctuated.)
• What are the registration requirements?
• Does the business have any AVA® involvement and what is provided locally (Division, Branch)?
• Is there any provision for payment of registration fees or AVA® subscriptions?
• Is there a locker or space provided to put your stuff while working?
• What are the parking provisions?

THE CLOSING

Eventually the interviewer will probably ask, ‘Do you have any questions?’ This is the cue that the interview is moving to the ‘wrap-up’ stage.

Always ask questions. This demonstrates that you have done some research and have an interest in the job. Your questions might be direct, logistical questions such as, ‘When should I expect to hear from you?’ You may seek clarification of information the employer has presented through questions about the use of new technology or practices related to the career field. You may ask questions to help
you assess the culture and direction of the practice
or organisation such as, 'Where is this practice or
organisation headed in the next five years?' or 'Why
do you like working for this practice or organisation?'
It is not wise to ask specific questions about salary
or benefits unless the employer broaches the
subject first at a first interview. These details can be
discussed at subsequent interviews or at the time a
formal offer of employment is made.
The employer may also ask you if you have anything
else you would like to add. Again, it’s best to
have a response. You can use this opportunity to
thank the employer for the interview, summarise
your qualifications and reiterate your interest in
the position. If you want to add information or
emphasise a point made earlier, you can do that, too.
This last impression is almost as important as the first
impression and will add to the substance discussed
during the information exchange.
The interview may conclude with you being asked
to provide additional information. Be sure to send
this in at the earliest opportunity.

Communicating effectively

A job interview is a communication process and
your skills will become more polished over time. It is
helpful to remember the following:

Speak clearly and enthusiastically about your
experiences and skills

Be professional, but don’t be afraid to let your
personality shine through. Be yourself.

Listen carefully

You will want to remember what you learn about
the job and you will certainly want to answer all of
the questions asked.

Be positive

Employers do not want to hear a litany of excuses or
bad feelings about a negative experience. If you are
asked about a low grade, a sudden job change or a
weakness in your background, don’t be defensive.
Focus briefly on the facts and what you learned from
the experience.

Pay attention to your non-verbal behaviour

Look the interviewer in the eye, sit up straight with
both feet on the floor, control nervous habits (such
as cracking knuckles or drumming fingers) and smile
as you are greeted.

Don’t be afraid of short pauses

You may need a few seconds to formulate an
answer. The interviewer may need time to formulate
an appropriate question. It is not necessary to fill up
every second with conversation.

Evaluating the job

After the interview, review what you have learned
about the position and the practice or organisation.
If an offer of employment is made, you will then be
in a position to decide whether to accept or reject
the offer. Ask yourself the following questions.

• How does the position fit with my long term and
  short term career goals?
• Do the daily work activities appeal to me?
• Are my salary and benefit requirements satisfied?
• Is there opportunity for advancement?
• Would I be able to develop new skills and
  expand my experience?
• Would the demands of the job be compatible
  with my lifestyle?
• Could I manage the stress associated with
  relocating (if applicable)?
• Are the values of the practice or organisation
  compatible with my own?
• Would my employment in the practice or
  organisation be mutually beneficial?
THE POSITION

• Why is the position available?
• How long has the position been open?
• What happened to the previous employee?
• What would my specific responsibilities be?
• Are the goals set for the position realistic and attainable?
• Could I successfully perform the responsibilities of the position?
• What is my growth potential in this position?
• Could this position provide bridges to future opportunities?

THE PRACTICE OR ORGANISATION

• Is the practice or organisation growing or downsizing?
• Is the practice or organisation a result of an acquisition or a planned expansion?
• Has this growth affected its profitability? How will it affect me and my position?
• What is the growth potential of the practice or organisation’s products and markets?
• What is the practice or organisation’s market share?
• Who are its competitors?
• What is the tenure of its management?
• Does the management team consist of new hires or people promoted from within?
• Does the practice or organisation have a high retention rate of employees or a problem with attrition?

YOUR POTENTIAL SUPERVISOR

• How long has the person been in this position?
• To whom do they report?
• What was their previous work experience?
• How does this relate to their background?
• What is their growth potential?
• Would I be able to work well with this person?

SHOULD I ACCEPT OR REFUSE THE OFFER?

If you are offered the job at the interview, congratulations! Sleep on it. You may be over the moon about it but the counsel of family or friends can often help you make a more sober assessment. Most employers would consider it reasonable to make a response within 24 hours to six days. If you have a series of interviews lined up, you may need to ask them to wait a little longer, in which case you may have to be prepared to miss out.

If you are not offered the position, try to find out why. You may learn more about the practice that could let you off the hook. Then again, it may encourage you to reapply later if you are really angling to be employed there. Ask if you can stay in touch. An email or note a month or two later may be all you need to do to be netted. Alternatively, you may learn something about yourself that you can correct to avoid a similar rejection in the future.
The Aussie locum — ‘To go or not to go’

Are you trying to decide whether to go overseas and work? As veterinarians, we are very fortunate that our profession enables us to use our skills in other countries. This may be done as a volunteer, perhaps working in an under developed country on canine population control, or as an ‘Aussie locum’, backpacking your way around the UK.

Jobs in the UK are plentiful, varied and easy to find through the many locum agencies (the details for which can be found in the Australian Veterinary Journal). You can request the type of job you want, your desired location and the time you have available, and the agency will do the rest. Most jobs provide accommodation, a car, and of course pounds for your pocket and holiday fund. With all your worries taken care of, all you need to do is pack your bag, raincoat, walking boots and hop on the plane. Within 24 hours, you could be waving to the Queen, feeding the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, or drinking a warm beer in the comfort of a traditional English pub.

During 2003, I found myself working as a cattle veterinarian in the South-West of England. The drought here in Australia provided a perfect opportunity to explore that often-talked about UK. Working out in the country made touring really easy. It was nothing to drive 2 hours and pop into Wales for the weekend, much to the open-mouthed amazement of the Pommy locals.

The opportunity to mix work with travel is ideal. For first time international travellers, the UK is extremely user friendly. At least they speak a similar language, drive on the same side of the road and have similar breeds of animals. Australians always seem to receive a warm welcome, with clients loving to hear all about our homeland. Most farmers were keen to compare themselves to our farmers, and although occasionally sceptical about some Australian methods, were generally very accepting. It was disappointing however, not to be invited into every farmhouse for a full cooked breakfast or a ‘cup of tea and a crumpet’!

The narrow, windy, hedge-lined country lanes are only wide enough for 1.5 cars. It is important to remember that tractors can appear from nowhere, and from past experience, if you are offered a Ford escort van without rear windows from your new boss, decline. It makes reversing into the passing bays rather challenging.

As a dairy vet, the opportunity to work amongst the intensive dairy operations was very rewarding. The presence of so many huge sheds containing the parlour (milking shed and vat room), machinery, feed and all the cattle, was such a contrast to the small, outdoor Australian farms. Lambings were an experience and a novelty for an Australian who rarely gets the opportunity to do such things back at home. It was great to work with farmers who would do anything for their animals.

Back in the clinic, it was often non-stop action. It is true that consults are fast and furious, and that the English just love their animals. There was barely enough time to discuss the comparisons between England and Australia, or talk about the cricket, before a diagnosis had to be made and medications issued. It was hard work. If it weren’t for the highly qualified veterinary nurses, the location of our familiar Australian drugs with an English name would have taken hours, and working out the computer system would have been intolerable!

One thing that is hard to escape from is seeing at least one rabbit or hamster during your time. Be prepared for after hours calls to a sick rabbit! Pet insurance has taken off really well throughout the UK, thus providing a great opportunity to follow up cases without financial constraints, a bonus for any diagnostician.
All in all, it is an amazing experience. The drug names may be different, unfamiliar terminology may make you look vaguely at a client, and the cold weather make you long for the Australian sunshine, but at the end of the day, it is the memories that will make you want to return.

To any new graduate contemplating the big overseas trip, I highly recommend it. Having a base understanding of the Australian drugs may be beneficial, however, it doesn't take long to get into the swing of things once there. It is easy to find out information about locuming, so think about it. Do remember though, that on your return you will automatically assume the position of exotic pets' expert!

Amy Kay

TO WORK IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons is the regulatory body for veterinary surgeons in the UK. It is a legal requirement that you are registered and admitted to membership of the RCVS before engaging in any type of veterinary work in the United Kingdom.

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Belgravia House
62-64 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 2AF
Tel: (+44 20) 7222 2001
Fax: (+44 20) 7222 2004
Email: admin@rcvs.org.uk
www.rcvs.org.uk
Starting a new job is a very exciting and challenging time of your life. Surviving the first few weeks in practice can be made much simpler by a little pre-planning. If possible, spend some time in the clinic prior to your first day to become familiar with the practice layout, practice protocols, the computing system and the drugs and merchandise you have available to dispense.

Spend some time familiarising yourself with the local area and facilities. This will help you navigate your way to house calls and farm visits, and is particularly useful for those after hours calls in the middle of the night!

Once you’ve settled in, become involved in your practice and your community. Attend staff functions, meetings and activities. Make contributions to practice newsletters, website and client information sheets. Join your local AVA® Branch. Never underestimate the value of developing contacts and good relationships with other local vets. They can be a valuable source of support, advice and encouragement during your veterinary career.

Join in activities with your local community, such as sporting groups. This is very important in a rural community where social contacts and work clients are often one and the same. People appreciate and respect someone who is prepared to be involved in their community.

Find out what common problems are seen by your practice, particularly seasonal problems around the time you start. Is it calving or foaling season? Is it snake bite season? If so, which snakes are common to your area? Are ticks a problem? Take the opportunity to read up on the sorts of problems you may face when you first start employment and carry appropriate drugs.

Keep a list of commonly used rates in a form that is readily accessible. This can be kept in the glove box of your car or just outside the consult room for easy reference. You are not expected to be a walking encyclopaedia of drug doses. However mistakes can be serious, so don’t take chances. Don’t ever hesitate to check a drug dose.

**Practice protocols**

It is important when commencing employment at a veterinary practice that you immediately become familiar with practice protocols with regarding to both procedural and administrative issues. This will save you a great amount of time and help avoid embarrassment in front of clients when such issues arise.

Some veterinary practices will have detailed practice manuals that provide you with information regarding protocols, which if available you should request several weeks prior to commencing employment and become familiar with. Others will have few if any procedures written down to assist you in the transition to practice and you will be expected to learn on the fly.

Some of the important yet basic practice protocols with which you should be familiar include:

- procedural issues
- recommended vaccination schedules
- flea control products available
- recommended worming schedules
- euthanasia routines and disposal procedures (and costs)
- over the counter drug sales
- consent forms (surgery, euthanasia, etc)
- preferred laboratory service providers
- preferred referral centres
- regionally specific diseases
- preferred anaesthetic regimes
- pensioner discounts and local council arrangements
- payment terms (particularly for after hours work)
- policies with regard to bad debtors
• roster formats
• availability of nursing staff to assist with after hours work
• charges for routine procedures
• treatment costs for your own animals
• occupational health and safety requirements and rules
• recording of vehicle running costs.

**DRESS CODE**

It is also important to familiarise yourself with the practice dress code. Some practices, particularly those dealing with small animals, will have a practice uniform. It is important to always dress neatly whilst paying careful attention to safety. You should plan ahead regarding uniforms, so that you blend in more with other staff and so you can impress the clients and feel and act professional.

For large animal practice, it is important to dress practically in the appropriate protective clothing. It can be advantageous to wear attire similar to that of the other vets in your practice. This helps people recognise you as a vet in your practice. When working out of a car, be sure to always take spare clothes and be prepared for inclement weather.

Wear in new clothes before you go out to see a client. Even wearing them round the house and washing them a few times can assist in losing that clean-pressed 'student on work experience' image. Your aim here is to increase your credibility. You want to appear to fit in with the practice image.

Also pay attention to accessories that you wear, remembering that the objective is to appear professional whilst at the same time being practical.

Finally, it is also important to ensure, particularly with large animal practice, that your vehicle is well equipped with equipment and medications.

**The consult**

Your first consult can be a daunting experience, but whether it is on a farm or in the clinic, a few helpful tips can make it a lot easier.

Introduce yourself. Wearing a name badge helps to establish that you are the vet. Until clients get to know you, don't be surprised if you get mistaken for the new nurse, work experience student or receptionist. Be prepared for the surprised exclamation: ‘Are you really the vet?’

Perhaps shake hands. This is often a good start when visiting farming properties, but the formality of a handshake can also have its place in small animal practice. Make eye contact and, if appropriate, smile. A warm gesture such as this can put both you and the client at ease.

Help your client and yourself by taking a few moments at the beginning of a consultation to calm them and their animal down with some friendly banter.
Don't put on an act. Just be yourself and show a caring professional interest. It pays to bear in mind when dealing with clients that first they have to know how much you care before they care how much you know.

Clients may be anxious or uneasy in unfamiliar surroundings and react to this stress in a variety of ways.

Some become unresponsive, some slightly aggressive, while others may be reluctant to open up and give an adequate history of the situation. Sometimes it can be like ‘pulling teeth’, but be patient and gently prise out the information you need. If you are relaxed, they will find it easier to be relaxed too.

Perform a thorough physical examination of the patient, working confidently and efficiently (even though you may not always feel it).

Using your stethoscope is a good time to collect your thoughts, so make the most of it. Use the animal’s name often and the owner’s name occasionally.

While conducting an examination, briefly explain to the client what you are doing.

Be positive where you can (with comments such as ‘lovely coat’, ‘good teeth’ or ‘clear lungs’) and warn them if you are about to do something that may upset the patient, such as aural examinations, rectal temperatures or injections. This way they will admire your skill if the animal doesn’t react.

When you have completed your physical examination be sure to ask, ‘Are there any other specific things you would like me to check?’ (The veterinary version of, ‘Would you like fries with that?’).

You’ll be amazed at how often clients will point out malignant bumps on the far reaches of their animals. If the animal is aggressive or very timid, get a complete history first and limit your hands-on time with the patient to the minimum.

Do what you need to do, precisely and professionally. Don’t hesitate to restrain an animal to ensure your safety and that of the owner, or to use muzzles, halters, Twitches or sedation if necessary.

Listen carefully and acknowledge what the client is telling you. Then ask questions that allow the client to give you the information you require, such as:

• What prompted you to bring Muffy in today?
• What is different from normal?
• Do you have any ideas why this may have happened?

Ask the client what they expect as the outcome of the consultation, for example: ‘What is it you would like me to do for you/your pet today?’

Avoid asking leading questions. It is better to ask, ‘How much is she drinking?’ than ‘Is she drinking a lot?’ or to say, ‘Show me exactly where he is scratching?’ rather than ask, ‘Is he itchy at his tail base?’

Ask the client what has changed ‘What was it that made you decide to come to see us?’

However, sometimes you may need to give a lead.

If you asked a client about bowel motions from a scouring calf, for example, they may be confused as to how to describe them. You might give them a lead by asking, ‘Is the motion runny like water or more like custard or mucus?’

Complete the examination before you report any abnormal findings and don’t jump to diagnostic conclusions before completing the physical and history taking.

It is very difficult to back out of a diagnosis once you have shared it with your client.

When you have finished, clearly explain what you’ve found in language that your client can understand.

It can sometimes be useful to use sketches, prepared diagrams or computer demonstrations to highlight or clarify your discussions. In the case of radiographs, it is often beneficial to use these to explain to an owner what the problem is and how it can be fixed, especially in the case of a fracture.

If you can’t make a diagnosis, then don’t. Make a list of differential diagnoses rather than a presumptive diagnosis. If further tests are required, explain these to the owner with your reasoning.
Even if you opt to try conservative treatment as a first choice, there is no harm in taking a sample and storing it. There’s no point in doing a milk culture for mastitis on a cow after three days of treatment, but a sample collected before treatment can be stored and tested later if your original therapy fails.

If further tests are an option, offer them to your client even if you opt to trial conservative treatment first. This way, if the initial treatment isn’t successful, the client has a better understanding of what should happen next.

Record important details from the examination. This might include a brief summary of what was normal and abnormal, for example, ‘TPR NAD, temp/pulse and respiration, no abnormalities detected.’ Simple acronyms may be useful, but make sure everyone in the clinic can understand your histories. Make sure also that details and dose rates are recorded for all prescription medications.

Give your client written information and instructions in the form of printed drug labels, puppy or kitten packs, practice newsletters and medication information handouts.

Drug withholding forms are essential on large animal visits where an owner may not always be present during the clinical examination. Oral exchange of information may easily be forgotten once the owner and pet arrive home. When patients have been hospitalised, try to give instructions before discharging the patient. The owner is likely to listen more carefully if they are not distracted by the return of their pet.

Make revisits and follow up a part of the service you provide to find out how your cases are progressing.

Consulting is an art that takes some time to develop. If you know someone who is good at it simply watch, learn and copy. In time you will develop your own style and all of the above advice will become second nature.

**Second opinions and referrals**

You will be asked for your professional opinion on cases that another vet has already seen or treated. Your behaviour in handling these cases is important.

The people affected are as follows:

- the previous consulting vet
- the client
- yourself
- your workplace
- your profession.

Listen carefully to the history of the case, examine the case carefully, and do not give an opinion until you are satisfied that you have all the information. The history may not be accurate if given only from the client’s point of view, so contact with the previous consulting vet is essential. Try not to vary a treatment plan or start a new one without consulting with the previous vet.

Many second opinion cases are complex. Suggesting further investigation using lab tests or further diagnostic techniques over and above your physical examination of the patient is a good plan to follow.

**Supporting your colleagues**

You may consider referring the case to one of your colleagues in the practice, a specialist, or a referral centre for the best possible resolution to the diagnostic and treatment problems. In any complicated case it is wise to offer the client a referral option, regardless of whether it is your primary case or a case referred to you for a second opinion. Clients do not tend to perceive this as an admission of your
lack of skill, but more as your caring attitude and effort to do the best by their animal.

When referring cases to other veterinarians be sure to include a thorough history including initial presenting signs, previous and current treatments, concurrent disease processes or medications that you are aware of and any test results you have already conducted, including radiographs if appropriate. Referral vets may wish to repeat these tests but it is always of some value to have the initial results.

Most referrals involve sending your patient to a registered specialist, however, not all veterinarians who accept referrals are qualified specialists. Be sure your client is aware of the difference, as they may prefer to be referred to a registered specialist rather than an experienced vet who accepts referral cases. The skill level may be equivalent and the outcome the same, but it is an important distinction to make to your client.

Referral veterinarians will often contact you with their assessment of your case and suggest follow up treatments or checkups that you can do with your client. If not, it is always good practice to contact both the veterinarian and your client to follow up the case. You often learn valuable information from speaking to the referral veterinarian and gain great respect from your client by showing you care how their referral visit went. This is a win–win situation for everyone.

In reality, in rural practice and some emergency cases, referral can be an unrealistic option, or clients may simply decline referral. In these cases it is often possible to contact a specialist by phone, fax or email to ask for guidance. Be aware that not all specialists will volunteer this time, so ask in advance if there will be a fee for their advice. Ensure that your client is aware of this addition to their bill. This can save embarrassment later.

A list of registered specialists is available from your State or Territory registration board, or the ARVS (Registered Specialists SIG of the AVA®) may be able to assist.

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**Emergencies**

When you first start work it is a good idea to learn where all emergency drugs and equipment are kept. Keep a summary of emergency drugs and dose rates where it can easily be found.

When an emergency case arrives, don’t panic. Stop what you are doing as soon as possible and assess the situation. Often your nurses will have started this process anyway. Try to work quickly and calmly and, if necessary, have someone take care of the owner while you deal with the problem.

Once any life threatening problems have been dealt with and the patient is stabilised, don’t forget to do a complete physical examination. It’s very embarrassing to have a dog die from diaphragmatic hernia while you’re suturing its lacerations.
After hours calls

Despite the obvious drawbacks of after hours duty, you should not be discouraged from working in a practice that offers a 24-hour service. After hours calls can be among your most challenging, however they are often the most rewarding and a great source of experience.

As a new graduate you are entitled to adequate backup support, so be sure to have at hand, in your car or at the clinic, the phone numbers of people you can ring for advice when you need it.

Check the policy of your practice for calling in nurses after hours. In many cases the client may be able to assist, but be careful to watch out for increased respiratory rates and pale clammy skin — in the owner. If no assistance is available, IV access can be achieved using a tourniquet set up with a rubber band and haemostats.

In responding to an owner on the phone, don’t forget to ask, ‘How long has he been like this?’ It is annoying to rush into the clinic for a ‘hit by car’ only to find out that it happened the previous night and could easily have waited until you had finished dinner. Similarly, for house calls and farm visits be sure to get clear directions and a phone number. Some areas have poor mobile telephone coverage and you can’t recontact an owner to get directions once you’ve left. Most emergencies turn out not to be emergencies at all. Forgive the client; they are usually very anxious and may not be able to assess the situation. Canine cough can sound like a foreign body at 2am.

After hours calls are often inconvenient and made in difficult conditions (in cold weather, in the middle of the night, or with stressed clients), however, try to make a positive impression. Chances are the client doesn’t really want to be in the situation either, and most clients really appreciate the effort you make during these visits. These are often the times when you get to know the personal side of your clients.

Sometimes you’ll find yourself sitting in a client’s kitchen at 2am drinking hot tea and eating homemade cakes and having a chat and a laugh about the situation you were called to. You will look back and laugh about these experiences despite the inconvenience at the time.
Owner compliance

Owner compliance can make all the difference in achieving a successful treatment outcome. Good, concise and clear instructions are essential.

Use handouts or written instructions where possible and explain the reasons to the client, such as why they have to given a complete course of tablets, or bathe the wound. Often a subtle mention of the disastrous outcome if they don’t follow directions can assure their full cooperation, for example, ‘Please finish the complete course of scour tablets otherwise there’s a chance the problem may recur and you may end up with a resistant strain of bacteria’.

Ensure the client knows how to give the medication and, if necessary, demonstrate and get them to have a go while you’re present. Dosing cats with tablets is a classic example. Discuss ways to make it easier for them, such as wrapping the cat tightly in a towel, smearing the tablet in butter or having a second person hold the front legs.

Try to select a medication that comes in a form that the owner is confident administering. Many antibiotics come in both liquid and tablet form, and some horse owners find oral sachets easier than pastes.

Tablets may also be made more palatable by hiding them in small pieces of food (these must be fed before a meal, and owners need to watch that they are all eaten) or keeping them in the fridge to reduce the smell and taste.

If medication can be given easily, compliance isn’t usually a problem.

If possible select a treatment regime that fits in with an owner’s lifestyle. Medication to be given TID can be a problem, however, a dose before work, one immediately after work and the third just before bed can overcome this to some degree.

When the client visits, ask how many tablets are left. It’s a quick and easy check on compliance.

Be aware that there will be the occasional client who never follows instructions.

Customers

Customers are the lifeblood of a practice. They have come to see you because the companion they love, or the production animal that is their business, has a problem and they are prepared to pay the practice (you) to fix it. They have not come to the practice for the purpose of making your life hell, even though at times you may wonder!

Your attitude is important. Be positive and enjoy the good clients, the interesting cases, and the successful results of your training and hard work. Give yourself time to work through any difficult problems and don’t get too stressed. Remember your ‘wins’ and learn from them, but don’t dwell on the ‘losses’. Learn from your mistakes then forgive yourself (you deserve it). Don’t dwell on them. If you find yourself worrying about a particular problem or error you made, talk to someone about it. We have all made mistakes.

A run of difficult cases or emotional and irrational clients can affect your attitude. Remain positive, seek help from the rest of the staff and friends and listen carefully to the client’s needs. Communicating and working with the client will help immensely in difficult cases and takes much of the pressure off in these situations.

Never abuse or belittle clients, regardless of the situation. They do not have the benefit of years of veterinary training.
Remember that an emergency is ‘in the eye of the beholder’. What seems trivial to you is often a genuine concern for the client, and it’s your advice they seek to reassure them that everything is under control. Avoid lecturing them and making any implication that they are wasting your time with trivial problems.

It has often been suggested that only 3% of clients give you 97% of your problems (the other 3% of problems are imagined). Focus on the 97% of great clients and don’t get bogged down or rattled by the others. Hostile clients are inevitable, but your handling of the situation will determine whether you win or lose their service.

If someone does confront you, listen first and respond later. Allow them to express their concerns without interruption. Stay calm then respond to resolve the problem if possible. If it’s too difficult, simply refer the client to your boss, a senior vet or the practice manager. Don’t compromise your professionalism with pointless arguments or personal attacks.

It can be very easy to jump to conclusions and label a client as neurotic or difficult. Some clients are demanding and can be difficult to deal with. The bond between pet and owner can be very strong, and problems that may seem trivial to us are often very worrying to the pet owner. Some may jump at the slightest change in behaviour, however, don’t get caught out and dismiss their concerns. It’s not unusual for these concerns to turn into clinical problems. Be patient and understanding. Your confidence and reassurance will go a long way to allaying their fears. Follow up calls will be greatly appreciated. Often they become your best clients (and a sure bet for a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates).
Communicating with customers and colleagues

**Courtesy: you have internal as well as external customers**

Working in a practice means working in a team. Many of the problems you’ll face will be interpersonal ones. Most of these problems can be overcome or avoided with a mixture of tact and common sense.

Having the staff on your side is essential. In working together as a team, staff members can be a valuable source of advice, especially during your first weeks in the practice. A simple ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ will contribute to an enjoyable working environment. Let’s face it, there’s no point going to work unless you enjoy it.

**Different communication styles**

Effective communication hinges on people understanding your meaning and replying in terms that move the exchange forward — preferably in the direction you would like to go.

Communicating is always a two-way process. You communicate to:
- get things done
- pass on information
- obtain information
- reach decisions
- achieve joint understanding
- develop relationships.

**RECOGNISING BARRIERS**

The parties involved in any communication may have different
- wants
- needs
- attitudes.

These can present barriers if they conflict with those of the other party and may stop you conveying or receiving the right message. Any communication must overcome such barriers if it is to be successful and the first step is to recognise that these barriers may exist.

To help break down the barriers, follow these few easy steps:
- maintain eye contact
- face the person you are talking to — this shows that you are not afraid to listen to what is said
- listen to what the other person is saying — tilting your head slightly shows you are listening
- mirror their body language.

**CLARITY**

Good communication means saying what you mean and fully comprehending any feedback. The three rules that govern good communication are all associated with clarity:
- be clear in your own mind about what you want to communicate
- deliver the message succinctly
- ensure that the message has been clearly and correctly understood.
METHODS

Choosing the right way to communicate a message is very important consideration. For example, if you want speed and convenience, you may well choose speech as the best form of communication. Alternatively, you may want something more permanent and orderly which will attract a considered reply.

The following table summarises the types of communication methods that you can use to make your message heard in the most effective way.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Communication styles in word and gesture vary greatly across cultures. Be aware of the different styles of communication when dealing with people from a different cultural background to your own.

BODY LANGUAGE

Your body language is a huge range of unconscious physical movements that can either strengthen communication or damage it. Even if you are sitting completely still, you may be unknowingly communicating a powerful message about your real feelings.

Body language is difficult to read and to control because of its subtlety and range. However, a broad understanding of body language is one route to understanding the real opinions of others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Usefulness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written word</td>
<td>• letters • memos • reports • proposals • plans • discussion documents</td>
<td>The written word is the basis of organisational communication and is used because it is relatively permanent and accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken word</td>
<td>• conversations • interviews • meetings • phone calls</td>
<td>Verbal exchanges in person and by phone are used because of their immediacy. They are the chief means by which organisation work on a day to day basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic gestures</td>
<td>• gestures • facial expressions • actions • deeds • tone of voice</td>
<td>Actions and body language profoundly but unconsciously affect people - propaganda depends on the manipulation of positive and negative signs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual images</td>
<td>• photographs • paintings • drawings • illustrations • film</td>
<td>Visual images are used because they convey powerful conscious and unconscious messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia</td>
<td>• television • newspapers • magazines • leaflets • booklets • radio • cassettes</td>
<td>Media are especially useful when they can be participative. The more professional the use of multimedia, the more effective and productive they are likely to be.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**COMMUNICATING BY BODY LANGUAGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Body facing front and open posture shows confidence  
• Direct gaze and broad smile shows friendly attention  
• Hands on hips indicates determination and ability to take control | • Direct gazes shows attention  
• Relaxed arms and legs show a lack of tension | • Indirect gaze is evasive  
• Ear-pulling indicates doubt  
• Body turned away signifies rejection of what the other person is saying  
• Slight slumping shows lack of confidence |

**CONQUERING NERVES**

The nervousness that you may feel prior to making a presentation or attending an interview is very natural. Your mind prepares you for action via your nervous system so nervousness is due in part to an increase in adrenaline in your blood. You can use body language when you feel nervous to appear more confident than you feel by making a conscious effort to:

- smile  
- relax your arms  
- look people in the eye while you are talking or listening to them  
- keep your posture comfortably straight  
- do not fiddle with your hands.

To help yourself relax, take a slow, deep breath before commencing.

**KEEPING YOUR DISTANCE**

Leaving an acceptable distance between people is important. For instance, guests at a social gathering stand closer to each other than strangers in a non-social situation. Always take care not to intrude into another’s personal territory in case you arouse defensive or hostile reactions. As a guide, a good distance to leave between you and the other person is about 1 metre.

**CREATING AN IMPRESSION**

First impressions are very important. Research indicates that the initial five seconds of any first meeting are more important than the next five minutes, so attention to detail can make a huge difference. Think about grooming and appropriate clothing and err on the conservative side. Even if an informal look is required, ensure your garments and shoes are in impeccable condition. Before going into a meeting, check your appearance in a mirror to make sure that your hair is tidy.

**LISTENING**

Learning to be a good listener is an essential technique. When you are in search of information, consensus or a working relationship, the more obviously you listen attentively, the better. You may need to speak to get a response, but show you do not wish to dominate the conversation. Ask open question, which lead the discussion, and keep your responses brief. Repeat key words silently as you hear them to help you remember what is said.
## USING LISTENING SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of listening</th>
<th>Putting method into practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathising</strong></td>
<td>Empathise by imagining yourself in the other person’s position, trying to understand what they are thinking, and letting them feel comfortable — possibly by relating to their emotional experiences. Pay close attention to what the person is saying, talk very little, and use encouraging nods and words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysing</strong></td>
<td>Use analytical questions to discover the reasons behind the speaker’s statements, especially if you need to understand a sequence of facts or thoughts. Ask questions carefully, so you can pick up clues from the answers and use the person’s responses to help you form your next set of questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesising</strong></td>
<td>If you need to achieve a desired result, make statements to which others can respond with ideas. Listen and give your answers to others’ remarks in a way that suggests which ideas can be enacted and how they might be implemented. Alternatively, include a different solution in your next question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## ASKING QUESTIONS

How you ask questions is very important in establishing a basis for good communication.

What, when why and how are very powerful words. Use them often to seek, either from you or from others, the answers need to manage effectively.

## CHOOSING QUESTIONS FOR DIFFERENT RESPONSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of question</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open</strong></td>
<td>“What do you think about the practice setting up a social club?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closed</strong></td>
<td>“Do you ever read the staff meeting minutes that we circulate?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fact finding</strong></td>
<td>“What percentage of our patients, come in for a check up every six months?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follow up</strong></td>
<td>“Is this a good response compared with 2 years ago?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback</strong></td>
<td>“Do you think that communication with the practice has improved?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conflict resolution

Conflict at work is not a new problem. Most disputes and conflicts can be resolved in an amicable way. Learning how to deal with disputes or conflicts that arise in the workplace is important to ensure you have an enjoyable and productive career. Disputes arise when two or more people or groups perceive that their interests, needs and goals are incompatible.

Disputes/conflicts can be:
- collective disputes involving all employees or a group of employees in dispute with management
- an individual in conflict with management
- individuals at the workplace (unrelated to management)
- individual bringing problems to work or suffering some chaos in his/her life and so creating a problem at work.

Resolving the dispute or grievance at the workplace level has considerable benefits:
- it is quicker than having the matter dealt with by an industrial tribunal
- productivity losses resulting from the dispute/grievance will be minimised
- it creates a culture in which the parties have the confidence to resolve issues themselves
- in many instances it will save considerable amounts in advocacy or legal expenses by avoiding litigation
- the parties have a consistent frame of reference for dealing with disputes and grievances
- the parties have control of the process
- frank discussions can take place in an informal forum
- excessive legalism is avoided.

The emergence of enterprise bargaining and the changes in workplace relationships has resulted in an increased incidence of dispute resolution at the workplace or enterprise level, as opposed to settlement by an outside tribunal. Workplace dispute resolution means the parties and their representatives sit down and negotiate the matters in dispute, and reach an agreement that is acceptable to all.

Industrial laws now require that dispute resolution procedures be in place in awards and agreements, and be used in an attempt to resolve the dispute before it can proceed to arbitration by the relevant industrial tribunal.

The Veterinary Surgeons Award 2001 provides a framework for the resolution of employment related disputes.

Of course, non-employment related disputes or conflicts still occur in the workplace, such as with a client so understanding how to resolve conflict in an effective way is important for any new veterinarian.

Conflict resolution can be achieved by learning a few simple steps to assist you in this process.

Before you can solve a dispute you need to have agreement between the parties about what the dispute is actually about.

In this phase you should conduct a non-judgemental investigation to ascertain the answers to the following questions:
- Are you sure you know what the problem actually is?
- Who are all the people involved in this dispute?
- Is there anything relevant from the past which may be driving this dispute?
- What is the motivation for this problem?
- What are the obstructions to resolution of the dispute?

Preliminary work is an investment in effective conflict resolution and when undertaken jointly by participants to the conflict promotes resolution.

Whilst the nature of conflict may seem self evident, for example:
- cost of treatment
- received lack of care
- misdiagnosis
- rudeness.

It is important not to unnecessarily analyse the issue but recognise the importance of unmanifested issues, or the hidden agenda. Almost all conflicts have visible and invisible aspects.
Be suspicious if a relatively minor dispute leads to an extreme emotional reaction, a minor problem seems incapable of solution or the relationship you have with the person is characterised by repeated minor disputes. In these cases you may find that the real issue has not yet surfaced.

Approaches to conflict resolution that focuses on ‘facts’ are unlikely to be effective, because humans have feelings and feelings underlie all conflicts. Perceptions, not reality, fuel them and conflicts exist because facts or reality are perceived in a way that provokes negative feelings. The stronger the feeling, the greater the risk of conflict.

Reflect on how the situation that provoked the conflict was perceived by the other party and what emotions that perception stimulated. Remember, most people find it difficult to acknowledge mistakes of perception.

Talking through the issue in a calm and factual manner will almost certainly result in a resolution to the conflict.

Once agreement has been reached on a suitable resolution to the problem, confirm the steps to be undertaken to ensure that both parties are in agreement and understand the agreement that has been reached.

### Grief, loss and pets

For many, the loss of a pet is of limited importance and can be coped with readily. It may be sad, but given time, they can cope adequately.

For others, the loss may be devastating. The distress they feel may surprise or even frighten them.

A significant number of your clients will experience genuine, deeply felt grief over the loss of their pet. For those who felt that their pet was a part of the family, or to whom their pet was a constant companion, and in some cases their most loved friend, the loss may be as traumatic as would be the death of a child.

A significant difference between the loss of a pet and the loss of a relative is that grieving for a person is ‘allowable’, at least to a point. There are definitely barriers erected to prevent adequate grieving for what many perceive as an irrelevant object, such as a cat or dog. These barriers may be put up by the bereaved themselves or by ostensibly well meaning friends: ‘It was only a dog’.

Most people do cope moderately to adequately well. For others, it is a catastrophe.

How should you react to a client (or friend) who has lost their pet?

- Let them know you understand that they are deeply distressed and that it is awful for them.
- Give them your attention. Listen to them. Let them voice their concerns, feelings and anguish.
- Give them time. Find a place they can go to sit by themselves. Give them solitude from other clients who do not comprehend the situation.
- Shield them from irritating distractions such as the phone or other clients wanting advice on fleas, for example.
• The entire clinic’s staff needs to agree on how to handle the situation.
• It is generally agreed that viewing the pet’s body is to be encouraged, but first empathise. Think about how you would feel about looking at this particular body.
• Is it positioned with dignity?
• Is it clean, without urine and faeces, catheter or open wounds?
• If necessary, cover part of the body, and if possible, allow the client time alone with it.
• Some vets will keep the pet’s eyes closed with a drop of superglue.

EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia opens new dimensions to the subject of loss and grief. These aspects are not covered in books and articles on grief associated with human death and loss. This issue provokes more emotion, ethical deliberation and anxiety than probably any other subject in veterinary practice. Opinion is diverse. The following are a few thoughts and suggestions on how we can cope with our involvement at the sharp end of the issue.

This is not a discussion of euthanasia for strays, unwanted or abandoned animals or for phenotypically undesirable animals. Powerful opinions rightly exist on this subject. Is it a tragic necessity or convenience killing? If you cannot personally justify a particular euthanasia you have been asked to be involved in to your conscience and beliefs, simply don’t do it. There are always alternative strategies.

The issue here is limited to clients who have a pet that is sick, aged or seriously injured and who are wrestling with the option of euthanasia. You will be asked by many clients to help them in this very difficult choice. In Australia we have traditionally been shielded from death and tend to handle it badly. We do not like to use words like ‘kill’ or ‘humane death’ to describe euthanasia. Neither do we seem to feel comfortable with ‘died’. We talk instead of passing on, departing, expiring and so on. We are conditioned to deflect the reality of death.

We need to convey to clients that euthanasia is an important option to have and that an ‘easy death’ may be preferable to prolonged discomfort. Your attitude greatly affects what may be a painful and tormenting decision for the owner. While we should maintain an objective, professional attitude, this does not mean we must be dispassionate. On the contrary, anyone who has been through the anguish of this decision knows that empathy and understanding are needed from someone who can offer guidance, rather than merely cold reason.

Many owners need to work through a series of emotions before they are able to make the decision for euthanasia. They may be uncertain and want a second opinion. This should be encouraged. It is their right. They may also be angry. Do not take this personally, it is a natural part of grief and needs to come out. Some clients, especially males, are distraught and upset but can’t bear to show weakness or tears and this pent up emotion may explode or implode.
Questions that might be considered when considering euthanasia:

- Is there any joy left for the animal?
- Is there likely to be a response to treatment?
- Is the treatment acceptable? Will the costs to the animal, in side effects or pain, and to the owner, in terms of what their pet will require in ongoing nursing as well as the financial costs, be justified?
- Is the animal in pain? Can the pain be alleviated?
- If recovery occurs, what will be the quality of life for the patient and the owner? Will the pet retain the same personality?
- If recovery occurs, can the owner cope with nursing, time or finance? Will all this detract from the family’s quality of life?
- Is the owner ready to cope with the loss of their pet? If not, there may be ways to delay the need for a decision.

Once the client has made their decision, support it. This is not the time to distress them with doubts. They need your back-up and reassurance that this decision, which has often been made with enormous difficulty, is right for them and their pet.

You cannot make the decision for your client. Most will ask, ‘What would you do?’ It is an understandable question, but unless you know their situation intimately, you simply don’t have enough information on which to base an answer.

- Be extremely careful when dealing with children. See the section on children and pet loss.

AT THE TIME OF EUTHANASIA

If the decision has been taken to have the pet humanely destroyed (are you comfortable with the last word?), then as a veterinary professional you can make things easier for the owners in many ways:

- Your attitude — make sure they realise that you care. Do not avoid involvement via glacial professionalism. Find a way to let the owners know that you understand that this is a difficult experience for them to face.
- Take time to listen — do not rush the procedure. Allow as much time as possible.
- Set up an area for euthanasia with sensitivity — they will need privacy, without interruptions such as the telephone ringing or someone coming in to get drugs.
- Cover the syringes, needles and other apparatus until they are needed.
Should the client be present at the euthanasia? It may help them, but it may also greatly increase your own stress levels. If the client does stay, talk them through each step of the procedure. Tell them in clear and simple terms, what you are about to do. Use the pet’s name a lot; for example: ‘Now I am about to clip Snowball’s front leg. We need to be able to find the vein easily so that Snowball will not have to be fussed with me taking too much time.’

OK now Snowball, are you ready? There will be a buzzing sound, and you are going to feel a draught on your leg …’ (and so on). It is all just designed to inform and comfort the owner and their pet and to fill in what can otherwise be a very uncomfortable hiatus.

Be particularly careful to explain before you give the injection that some pets get a little stimulated but they are not conscious of what they are doing, and are certainly not suffering.

Owners who choose not to be present at the euthanasia may still wish (need?) to see the body afterwards. Prepare them beforehand by warning them that their pet will be still and perhaps cold. This is especially important when children are involved.

- Allow the client to be alone with their pet after the euthanasia — let them hug or stroke or cry over it. This is important to eventually accepting the loss.

Many clients need assurance that the animal is really dead. Even though you know you have given a large overdose, take time to listen with a stethoscope and check the reflexes. There are many who need to be absolutely certain and who will appreciate your care and caution.

On giving the clients the body, treat it with respect and acknowledge that this pet did matter. Wrapping the body in one of its own blankets is often an acceptable method, even if the animal itself is within a leak-proof body bag. Pet coffins are now available.

- Later, let the clients settle down somewhere quiet for a short while, perhaps with a coffee or water and have a few understanding words with them. A brief touch to an arm or shoulder can be greatly appreciated.

- Acknowledge that it has been an awful time for them and that there is no way for them to avoid feeling desperately sad. Support their decision for euthanasia.

CHILDREN AND PET LOSS

Parents often ask the veterinary staff for guidance when pets die. For many children it is the first time they have lost something they loved. In many cases they have known the animal all their lives.

The parents’ instincts are often to protect their children from sadness and unhappiness. Unfortunately, such loss is an inevitable part of life and the lessons in dealing with grief are going to have to be learned sometime. In the long run, it is far better to be honest with children, to involve them in the process of their pet’s death and to try to promote healthy grief.

Children always know when something is going awry in the family. They may not be able to articulate this comprehension, but they sense the upset of their parents. This can make them feel responsible, or at least confused. If they are told their pet has ‘gone to live on a farm’ or has ‘run away’ (for example), rather than that it has died, they may feel cheated or betrayed and this will reduce their trust in their parents. Their parents’ dishonesty may have far more severe repercussions than the pet loss.

Be particularly careful when dealing with young children (under eight). They are ‘egocentric’. They have a very strong tendency to blame themselves for what happens to the family. They may therefore blame themselves for the pet’s death and should be repeatedly reassured that they did not cause it and that what happened was natural and normal.

It is also sensible to bear in mind that the use of euphemisms, such as ‘put to sleep’ or ‘went to sleep’, can be very confusing. Children may develop a fear of going to sleep or may become anxious that someone might never wake up.

Eric Allan on behalf of AVA® Victoria
Insurance

Bury your head in the sand or protect your career from the outset?

When confronted with risk and danger, ostriches are infamous for burying their heads in the sand. While an ostrich may choose to ignore an approaching threat, the overall success of such a strategy is debatable.

When it comes to working with animals and practicing as a vet, it is important that you are aware of the occupational risks and hazards that you, and those around you, may be exposed to — before they have an opportunity to threaten your livelihood.

Have you considered what you would do if, after years of hard work, an unforeseen event resulted in you being unable to earn an income or continue practising as a vet?

As a vet, it is vital to consider alternative solutions when it comes to preventing harm and avoiding risk. An experienced vet will tell you — some events associated with vet practice can seriously threaten and damage:

• your health and wellbeing
• the health and wellbeing of other people
• the health and/or future performance of an animal you may be treating
• your property or the property of others
• your ability to continue to perform your duties and earn an income
• your career and reputation.

Moreover, the impact of events arising from you practising as a vet can fall squarely on your shoulders — this may even be the case if you are employed by someone else and do not own your own practice. As far as the law and liability go, when you are considered to be in control of an animal, you become responsible for its actions. Needless to say, the repercussions of some events can have significant long term consequences for you and others.

As a Student Member of the AVA®, if such an event occurred during your uni years you had the benefit of complementary liability and personal injury cover provided by the insurer to which the AVA® refers its members to — Guild Insurance.

Hypothetical Case Study

Several years ago, a vet was called to an ostrich farm where an event occurred that resulted in the vet being sued for negligence.

An ostrich farmer called the local vet, concerned about the condition of five of his ostriches — which for several weeks had been bumping into buildings and objects in the farmyard, injuring themselves.

When the vet arrived at the farm, he was greeted by the farmer and his recently hired farmhand, and led to the pen housing the five ostriches. On inspection of the birds, the vet determined there was little he could do to prevent the ostriches from causing themselves further harm.

Mindful of the livelihood the ostriches provided the farmer, the vet regretfully recommended that the birds be put down. After some consideration, the farmer conceded.

The vet instructed the farmhand to help bring the birds out of the pen one by one. The vet and the farmhand went into the pen and as they approached one of the ostriches, intending to lead it out of the pen, the bird became alarmed and highly agitated.

Suddenly, all five birds began running and kicking within the small pen. The vet stumbled against the pen and the farmhand was kicked by an ostrich and fell to the ground, hitting her head on a rock. She sustained serious injuries: bones were broken in her
cranium and face and she was unable to return to normal duties for several months.

A lawsuit was subsequently brought against the vet who fortunately had adequate insurance cover. As a result, the expenses — totalling more than $100,000 — were met by the insurer on behalf of the vet.

What cover do I need?

As a graduate veterinarian, you have arrived at an important juncture in your professional life. You have many decisions to make — the results will have a significant impact on your life from here on. As you progress in your career, you will need different types and levels of insurance cover.

AVA® members can benefit from the strong relationship the AVA® has with Guild Insurance. Appropriate cover can safeguard your income and give you peace of mind that your career and reputation — and one day your own practice — are protected.

The Guild group offers insurance products specifically for the veterinary practice, and employed, academic and volunteer veterinarians. Ensuring you are covered for incidents involving professional negligence and bodily injury, and that your income is protected in the event something happens to you, will enable you to work hard with peace of mind that each day you invest in your career is contributing to your long term success. It is important to be sure that a setback arising from injury or professional practice will have as little an impact as possible on your overall progress.

While the majority of professional and public liability claims against employee veterinarians would be covered by an employer’s insurance policy, in today’s increasingly litigious environment the potential exists for litigation to be directed against employee, academic and volunteer veterinarians.

Some of the policies available through Guild Insurance, and the types of cover provided, include the following:

**Guild Non-Proprietor Veterinarians Professional Liabilities Policy**

Particularly suitable for veterinarians who have just graduated and commenced practice as an employee or volunteer. The non-proprietor policy has been developed to protect you for:

- professional liability — breach of your professional duty as a veterinarian
- public liability — liability for accidental bodily injury or damage to property arising from your work as a veterinarian
- product liability — liability arising from goods sold or supplied
- the cost of disciplinary inquiries, subject to a set dollar limit
- breach of the *Trade Practices Act* or similar fair trading legislation.

**Guild Insurance Veterinarians Insurance Policy**

Suitable for veterinarians who have just graduated and commenced, or are in the process of commencing, their own practice. The policy is a package policy allowing coverage to be tailored according to a range of individual requirements.

**Income protection insurance**

May provide you with replacement income up to 75% of your gross income if you are unable to work due to sickness or injury — whether you have an employer or you are self-employed. A relatively small injury can keep you out of action for several months and, while you fully recover, income protection insurance can help to ensure your expenses are met. Furthermore, premiums for your income protection insurance policy are normally fully tax deductible. Income Protection can be arranged through Guild Financial Services, a member of the Guild group.

If you contact Guild Insurance (1800 810 213) or Guild Financial Services (1800 333 143) you can talk with someone about your plans and they can help you decide which type of cover would be most appropriate.
About Guild Insurance

Guild Insurance is different from other insurers. When it comes to your profession, Guild Insurance has a specialised knowledge of veterinary practice and its practitioners’ requirements. As a company, Guild values and supports long term relationships with clients and provides exceptional service.

Guild Insurance is an Australian-owned company with more than 40 years’ experience in servicing the insurance needs of healthcare professionals.

The relationship between AVA® and Guild Insurance spans more than ten years and AVA® refers its members to Guild Insurance for professional indemnity and business insurance. Guild Insurance works closely with the AVA® to make sure the insurance services provided keep pace with changes affecting the veterinary profession.

As an insurer of healthcare professionals, Guild Insurance provides veterinarians with unique benefits including:

- prompt, efficient and fair claims settlements — 99.2% of Guild Insurance’s clients who were surveyed say they would recommend the insurer to their colleagues
- one-to-one direct contact for all insurance claims
- direct dealings with a local Guild Insurance office — if you need assistance, someone from Guild Insurance is nearby
- advice on risk management and occupational health and safety issues — before a claim is made against you, Guild Insurance can help you manage any risks, vulnerability and exposure you may have
- a free national 24 hour emergency service number provides you with direct access to someone who can help you when you need it
- flexible payment options allow you to pay your premiums in several ways including monthly instalments.

AVA® members receive a high level of personalised service from Guild Insurance—staff will make themselves available to visit you at your practice to discuss your individual needs and tailor an individualised insurance program that suits you.

MAKING CONTACT

While there is no record of an ostrich being seen with its head in the sand, the tendency to lay its neck on the ground to appear less conspicuous when predators are near is probably not foolproof when it comes to the ostrich avoiding risk.

Some events are unforeseeable but hindsight is not the only way of determining what should happen in a given set of circumstances. Did you know that the impact of an unforeseeable event can often be mitigated and in some cases, the event can be avoided entirely?

Guild Insurance’s experience with Australian vets over many years provides you with a great resource and comprehensive knowledge base when it comes to the potential hazards of vet practice and how to best avoid them.

If you would like to talk about risk management or discuss the types of insurance cover that may best suit you, AVA® recommends that you contact Guild Insurance toll free on 1800 810 213, or visit their website on www.guildifs.com.au

Guild Insurance Limited AFS Licence No. 233791
Guild Financial Services Limited AFS Licence No. 225590
Congratulations on your graduation

Guild and the AVA have worked closely for many years to protect Veterinarians and their practices. If you would like further information on how Guild can assist you, please refer to the directory of services below.

**Insurance** – Freecall 1800 810 213
- Professional Indemnity
- Business Insurance
- Motor Insurance
- Home, Contents and Valuables Insurance

**Legal** – Freecall 1800 617 624
- Guild Lawyers – Lawyers who know and understand your profession

**Financial Services** – Freecall 1800 333 143
- Financial Planning
- Personal Risk Insurance

**Investments** – 1300 855 793
- Guild Capital Asset Management provides clients access to a disciplined investment approach, rigorous research and extensive experience in managing Australian shares.

www.guildifs.com.au

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Guild Insurance Limited AFSL No. 203791; Guild Financial Services Limited AFSL No. 225590; Guild Capital Asset Management AFSL No. 204529

Guild Legal Limited trading as Guild Lawyers ABN 18 108 546 774. Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) should be obtained before you decide to hold, or continue to hold any of the above-mentioned products. A copy of the PDS can be obtained by contacting Guild on any of the above phone numbers. Guild supports your association through the payment of information fees for certain types of products you take out with them.

*Guild Banking Banking products of Bendigo Bank, Bendigo Bank Limited ABN 11 068 049 179; AFSL No. 203779.*
Superannuation

What is superannuation?
Put simply, super is saving for your retirement during your working years. Members of superannuation funds generally must keep their compulsory retirement savings in a super account until their genuine retirement after reaching ‘preservation age’. That’s the age at which people can access their super and it varies according to birth date.

If you were born after 30 June 1964 you generally can’t access your super until you turn 60.

Types of super funds
Not all super funds are the same. In Australia there are several different types of funds, each structured and managed differently.

Industry funds are multi-employer funds and are often established to cater for the super needs of people in specific industries, like HESTA, the national fund for health and community services (that includes vets!). Industry funds don’t have shareholders, so all profits are for fund members. Typical industry funds also have no entry or exit fees or up front or ongoing commissions, which means more money in your super account.

Corporate funds are generally set up for employees of a particular company or group of companies, and are tailored to meet the needs of company employees.

Master trusts allow large numbers of people and companies to carry out super arrangements as a single group. Generally offered by life companies, banks and specialist superannuation administrators, they were originally designed to cater for smaller company schemes.

Retail funds are structured in a way similar to master trusts and are open for anyone eligible to join.

DIY or private funds generally cover superannuation arrangements for people who are prepared to create and operate their super fund and meet all the legislative and regulatory requirements.

Who pays for my super?
In Australia, employers are generally required by Superannuation Guarantee (SG) legislation to make contributions to a complying super fund for employees who earn more than $450 in a calendar month.

The minimum contribution under SG is currently 9% of an employee’s ordinary time earnings. However, if your workplace is bound by an industrial award or workplace agreement (for example the Veterinary Surgeons Award), employers must meet the super requirement specified in that award/agreement. This may be higher than SG, but is not allowed to be less.

SG contributions must be paid to your super fund at least quarterly and your employer must also provide you with written details of the contributions within 30 days after making the final payment for the quarter. This is so you know how much super is being paid for you and to which super fund.

Generally, members of super funds can also make their own extra contributions to their super, which may be before tax (salary sacrifice) or after tax. Some funds may charge extra fees for extra contributions, but many allow you to make unlimited contributions at no additional cost. If you make after-tax contributions to your super and earn less than $58,000 a year in assessable income plus reportable fringe benefits, you may also be eligible for a Government co-contribution. Contact the Australian Tax Office on 13 10 20 or visit www.ato.gov.au/super for more information.

If you decide to make extra contributions by salary sacrificing, check with your employer beforehand that your entitlements such as compulsory super payments, holiday loadings and shift allowances, will be calculated on your full salary (before salary sacrifice). Get all your agreements in writing including your full and adjusted salary and how your entitlements, will be calculated.
If you work under an industrial award or agreement, you need to ensure that any specified requirements are met. For example, you can’t salary sacrifice so much that your salary falls below the award rate.

It’s worth seeking financial advice before deciding to salary sacrifice, so that you can make the right decision for you and your financial situation now, and in the future.

Can I choose my own super fund?

Under the choice of fund legislation, from 1 July 2005 certain employees will be able to choose which super fund their employer’s super guarantee contributions are paid into.

If you do have the opportunity to select your own fund, make sure you read the information provided by the fund very carefully and ask questions if there is anything you don’t understand. In particular, find out what fees each fund charges and what those fees are for. For example, many industry funds, charge a flat administration fee regardless of how big your account balance is. Other funds charge fees that are based on a percentage of your balance, so the more money in your account, the more you pay in fees.

It’s important to know which fund your super is in and how many super funds you have. Multiple fees from multiple funds can erode your retirement savings, sometimes substantially, so it’s a good idea to find out whether you would save money by transferring your entire super into one account. Some funds may charge entry and exit fees — find out first so you can make an informed decision about how combining your super accounts may affect your balance.

You may already have one or more super accounts if you’ve been working while studying, so once you begin your veterinary career you may want to consider transferring all these into your new super fund. It’s also a good opportunity to review any death or disability insurance cover that you may have with these funds.

Investing your super

Many super funds provide members with a variety of investment options, so you can choose an option, or combination of options that suit your investment goals and stage of life. For example, HESTA offers members a selection of investment options, including international and Australian shares, cash, diversified portfolios and socially responsible investments which can be mixed and matched.
It’s recommended that you seek financial advice from a qualified financial planner so you fully understand the choices you’re making and how they’re likely to affect your retirement income. Factors that can affect your decision include how comfortable you are with investment risk (the chance that the actual return will be different from what you expect), how old you are and how much money you hope to retire on.

EXTRA BENEFITS

It’s not only providing for your income when you retire that you need to think about. It’s also important to protect your income while you’re working. Many super funds offer death and disability insurance at rates that are more competitive than you may be able to access as an individual. However, insurance purchased through your super is still subject to policy terms and conditions and payments of premiums.

One of the benefits of obtaining insurance via your super fund is that the premiums are generally paid from your superannuation account. However, keep in mind when deciding how much insurance you need that the amount of premiums deducted will affect your final balance.

You may also have access to other products and services through your super fund, such as home loans and other banking products, health insurance, financial planning and investment products other than super.
I would like to congratulate you all on making it this far. It takes a lot of hard work and determination to get to where you are today and unfortunately the hard work has only just begun.

Instead of talking about myself and my experiences, I thought I would offer you some advice in the way of a list of “10 tips to make it through your first 86 days in practice.” Most of these tips have come from bitter experience so I hope that they will help prepare you for what is in store and maybe even stop you from making some of the mistakes I did.

• Don’t take yourself too seriously and don’t be afraid to admit you don’t know something. Pretending to know the answer will only make it worse when you finally have to admit you didn’t know the answer the whole time.

• Your first night on call will be the worst you ever have. Same applies to your first calving. Just go with it and don’t be afraid to call for help.

• The vet nurse is your friend. They can make your life hell if you get on the wrong side of them so make sure you take the time to get to know them and learn from their experience and knowledge. They may not have the technical skills you have, but their practical skills will far outweigh yours. I am very lucky to have a great bunch of nurses to help me out and if they ever ask you make sure you tell them that I said that.

• If you’re not sure, phone an expert. As long as you start the conversation with “Hi my name is so and so and I’m a new graduate,” you can virtually ask whatever you like. No question is too stupid.

• Be on time, or even early if you can manage it. To your colleagues this is a sign of respect and commitment. To your clients it is a courtesy.

• Don’t throw the textbooks away just because you’ve graduated. Reading textbooks, journals, and articles is imperative to stay up to date and brush up on stuff you may not remember from university. Some of you may rely on the textbooks more than others depending on how many kegs you attend.

• Stay in contact with people from university. It will make you feel better to hear about their experiences and stupid mistakes and know that you are not the only one who feels they have no idea what they are doing on a daily basis. Again some of you may feel this more than others depending on how many kegs you go to.

• Know that it does get easier. Drug names, vaccination protocols, drip rates etc. are things you will not necessarily learn at university but I can personally guarantee that within 86 days of working you will be amazed at how much you remember when using the information on a daily basis.

• Choose your first practice wisely. As far as your career goes, this may be the most important decision you make. They must be supportive and willing to help you continue your learning for at least the first 12 months. I am one of the lucky ones, but I have heard many horror stories of being left alone for hours on end while the boss was out of phone range. Choose carefully.

• Balance your work and social life, especially if your first job is away from home. Give yourself time to unwind and meet new people. This is one I still struggle with. Get involved with a team, organize catch-ups with mates on a regular basis and visit your family occasionally. Because, although it won’t feel like it at the time, there is more to your life than your job and it’s important to experience it all.

I hope you can all take something away from my tips today and I wish you all the best for the upcoming study and for your careers.

Stacey Gwyther
Graduated 2006
Wagga Wagga Veterinary Hospital
You in a practice context

Initial loss of practice productivity

Employing a new graduate carries certain responsibilities and requires greater input from the practice than the employment of an experienced graduate. Not all practices have the resources to employ and properly support a new graduate, and some are not able to spend the time and effort necessary.

New graduates need immediate access to advice from experienced veterinarians for the first months in practice. This time period varies with the graduate but 3 to 6 months is average.

Advice provided may be by telephone, however, the physical presence of the experienced veterinarian is often required to provide guidance in diagnostic and treatment procedures.

In small practices there might only be one experienced veterinarian. Clearly, in this case a physical presence may be sometimes difficult to achieve. To overcome this obstacle, it is suggested that adequate arrangements to provide meaningful support to the new graduate be made with a colleague or neighbouring practice.

There should be adequate nursing assistance (that is, not a high proportion of inexperienced junior staff) and adequate diagnostic facilities appropriate to case load and species treated.

New graduates should not be required to attend after hours calls without adequate support for the first 6 to 12 months of practice. This may involve the attendance of a second vet at difficult calls for the first month. For the first 3 to 6 months there should be another veterinarian on call by phone for immediate advice, who could physically attend to assist with surgery etc. This veterinarian could be from the same practice, or another practice within reasonable distance, having regard to the location and type of cases treated.

Initially you will reduce and not increase practice profitability. This is because of your limited skills and experience and the need for supervision while you develop these. This is an investment made by practice principals who appreciate the long term benefits to the practice and the profession of supporting new graduates.

Your value to the practice

New graduates have been recently exposed to the newest knowledge, techniques and trends through their veterinary education. The fresh outlook, new knowledge and process improvements that a new graduate can bring to a practice can be considerable.

This is made very apparent in the below comments from Mark Hopwood, a practice principal from Western Australia, who had a final year veterinary student working in his practice:

‘I was lucky enough a short while ago to have in my one man clinic a final year veterinary student who was personable, interested and frankly more diligent than me. He also had the benefit of knowledge ten years more current than my own. During that week I had, at my beck and call, a veritable walking library, who looked up cases for me in the literature and was constantly checking my diagnostic and treatment approaches as I concentrated on the bigger picture.

I don’t mind saying that despite this young colleague being unqualified, my stress levels were decreased to have a sounding board against whom I could sound out treatment plans.

In the end I think that we all won from this short relationship. I learnt from the student more current practices, he learnt from me the ‘art’ of small animal practice (at least as I see it) and my clients benefited from the more thorough approach we were able to provide as a team.’
Importance of customer service

Yes, the science is important but don’t forget it’s the customer who pays your salary so they’re important too!

Keeping clients happy means a greater chance that they come back in the future and sell the merits of your practice or organisation to their friends, relations and colleagues.

Starting up and maintaining a good relationship with clients can be a difficult task but once you get the basics right, it can make the difference between success and failure. Always remember that once a client has lost faith in your service, it is very difficult to restore and your reputation is at risk.

Be friendly and polite to clients

Ensure they feel valued by your business and that their complaints or views are genuinely taken into consideration. Give clients a chance to air their grievances rather than talking over them. Courtesy costs nothing and will go a long way to building up a sound and long term relationship with clients.

The primary objective of your client service is to resolve problems, answer enquiries and generally to make the client’s experience as easy, clear and smooth as possible. At a lower level, it is an opportunity to gain insight into the concerns and opinions of clients and a chance to tailor your product or service.

It is also a chance to sell, but this must be done sparingly and sensitively if at all. The long term goal is to satisfy clients and try to ensure that they will come back and buy from you in the future and they may not appreciate a hard sell when they have contacted you with a problem.

Dealing with client enquiries requires knowledge. You need to know about:

• the business
• the products
• the services
• the prices
• the terms and conditions
• special promotions.

It is imperative that when answering the enquiries from clients, you know about every aspect of the practice or organisation, otherwise, you will look unprofessional and they will be ill-informed.

Use your clients to help you refine your service

When clients regularly call to ask questions about the instructions on using a particular product or caring for an animal post surgery, for example, you should take this as a signal that the instructions being given are not adequately detailed or clear for all of your clients. This gives you the opportunity to provide better instructions next time, improving the client experience as you go along and reducing the number of calls you receive.

Don’t use jargon

You will know more about the illness, disease or product than they do and you should seek to simplify and explain what’s happening in plain, clear language. If the client feels they are being patronised or talked down to, they will be much less likely to visit your practice again.

Be available

Ensure that you are accessible to your clients. If they want to speak to you they should be able to.

Deal with grievances

Clients will often call with a grievance and they should be allowed to air it in the first instance. Once this is done, it may be necessary for the practice principal or another senior employee to take over and deal with the problem. You should break the problem down into specific points and summarise these back to the client to clarify the exact nature of the complaint and to show that you are aware of what the problems are.

Go through the points one by one and offer resolutions there and then.

Be clear about the actions:

• what the client needs to do
• what you have promised to do.

Make sure the client can get back to you. Ensure that all appropriate people are aware of the nature of the original complaint including the receptionist,
practice manager and principal so when the client calls again they are ready to assist and provide support to facilitate the resolution of the problem.

Resolve the problem quickly
Deal with it the first time where possible and ensure it is done speedily and with the least amount of hassle to the client.

Avoid arguing
Never lose your temper and always concentrate on the resolution rather than focus on the nitty gritty of the problem. Sometimes you may need to back down in a negotiation to retain the loyalty of your clients, even when you know they are wrong.

Be honest
The number one rule is to not make promises to clients unless you know you can deliver upon them. To promise to remedy the situation, say by rebooking an appointment or saying you’ll call back within the next hour, and then failing to do so will leave clients angry and dissatisfied. If you can’t solve the problem immediately, say so. Clients will tend to be more forgiving if you level with them.

Service recovery – managing complaints

As a graduate veterinarian performing to the high standards of veterinary medicine, you are motivated by a highly developed set of ethical ideals and the most recent professional education. However, the best veterinary science will not protect you from complaints.

Everybody gets complaints, every so often. No matter how good your skills and level of care, at some stage of your working career there is a chance that you will be complained about or hauled up before the Veterinary Surgeons Board, the media or the courts.

Why should this be so? Two key reasons are:

Perception
Clients complain when their perception of what should happen does not match with the reality. Perception is reality to all humans, all of the time. This is the fundamental principle behind all complaints.

Empowerment
Clients in Australia are empowered to make complaints — through the AVA®, Boards, Departments of Fair Trading, the media and the courts. There is little if any cost to a complainant (excepting court cases), even if it costs you a fortune in money and professional standing to defend yourself. If a client feels injured, they will often take their complaint to all the parties in an effort to ‘get back at’ the practitioner.

REASONS FOR COMPLAINTS

Cost
While most complaints are about fees being too high, they very seldom are. Free medical attention for humans may lead some clients to believe that veterinary medicine should also be free, and this can be a problem. Real cost complaints generally relate to the perception of value for money; the cost in relation to what the client sees as the outcome.

Grief
This is a frequent cause for complaint and one that can be difficult to manage. From the client’s perspective, you should have cured their pet. Instead they have a dead animal, a large bill and a broken heart.

Fault
There is a broad belief in the community that if something untoward happens, someone must be at fault and someone must ‘pay’. Such expectations are generally the result of media reporting of legal cases or heroic treatment successes, and a lack of understanding of biological probability.

Communication
This may include misinterpretation of the client’s desire or understanding, or not getting your message across to them.

WHY SHOULD YOU MANAGE COMPLAINTS?
The answer is simple. Every single complainant goes away from the practice and tells at least 15 other people about their complaint. Sometimes they
will name you directly. There are also the hassles of defending yourself in front of the Veterinary Surgeons Board, the media or the court. So you lose.

Every successfully handled complaint helps to build strong client loyalty and guarantees you more business. The client will generally tell at least five people. So you lose.

Unless you have an endless pool of potential clients, you have to handle complaints.

HANDLING COMPLAINTS?

Every step you take to manage a complaint constructively is one step towards keeping it out of the Board, the courts or the media.

Accept that complaints are normal. They are rarely if ever an attack on you, regardless of how they might be expressed. Never hide or cover up a complaint.

Take steps to enable the complaint to be dealt with in the practice by you and your boss.

If you think that there might be a complaint coming, let your boss know immediately. This is a sign of strength, not weakness. Here’s how to do it:

Statistics prove that the faster a complaint is handled, the more likely it is to be quickly resolved to the satisfaction of both parties. If you sense a problem, ask the client if they are OK with the course, outcome, or issue. Don’t put things off.

Ensure that your case management is good, and your documentation is at a professional level. If it is not, then you must allow your boss to negotiate the complaint.

Get face to face with the client and your boss. Listen to the whole complaint and take notes. Nod to show that you understand. Clarify your understanding, but do not explain, defend, justify or even comment at this stage.

It’s OK to be empathetic. ‘I’m sorry you are feeling so sad’, is not an admission of liability. ‘I’m sorry that I did that’, is a potential admission of liability and should be avoided.

Ask the client, ‘What do you want to come out of this?’ This is not an admission of liability. Often what the client wants is a chance to be heard, or reassurance that something will not happen again. You might be able to resolve the issue without having to defend, justify, explain or comment. If this opportunity arises, take it.

Ask the client if they would like to hear some comments about the case. This is your chance to talk about the facts – only the facts, with no subjectivity. If the client has failed to do something and aggravated the situation, be careful how you express this. It may tend to make the client defensive or think that you are trying to shift the ‘blame’ onto them. Explain in ‘client English’, not ‘vet speak’.

If you can resolve the problem, be pragmatic and do so immediately. If your boss offers a discount on the fee, don’t take this as an admission of your liability, your boss is simply weighing the cost of the fees against the benefit of avoiding further hassles.

Keep records of the whole matter on the client’s file but do not add any subjective comments. ‘She’s a bitch’ in the margin of a case record could cause you huge problems if the case ever went to court.
WHAT IF A COMPLAINT IS NOT RESOLVED AT PRACTICE LEVEL?

Manage proactively for the best result. The AVA® has a national complaints mediation process. This process often resolves complaints by peer review without appearances, court costs or lawyers. Use this member service. In most cases the AVA® is also able to offer telephone advice to members.

You should talk to your boss about notifying your insurer as well — just in case.

Fear not. We all go through it. Welcoming complaints is a humbling experience for most vets (who, after all, have been selected by a million exams to always be right), because it is hard to accept that your actions or decisions are under scrutiny.

Managing complaints well strengthens the client bond and enhances the veterinarian’s ability to manage the perceptions, not just the patient.

Occupational health and safety

WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY?

Occupational health and safety (OH&S) concerns the physiological and psychological conditions of a workforce that results from the work environment provided by the practice. OH&S seeks to prevent accidents and diseases by ensuring workplaces are free from hazardous conditions.

Taking effective health and safety measures ensures that fewer employees suffer short or long term ill effects as a result of being employed by your practice.

Adverse physiological conditions include:
- occupational diseases and accidents such as loss of life or limb
- cardiovascular diseases
- various forms of cancer such as lung cancer and leukaemia
- emphysema
- arthritis
- white, brown and black lung disease
- sterility
- central nervous system damage
- chronic bronchitis.

Psychological conditions include organisational stress and a low quality of working life:
- dissatisfaction
- apathy
- withdrawal
- projection
- tunnel vision
- forgetfulness
- confusion about roles and duties
- mistrust of others
- vacillation in decision making
- inattentiveness
- irritability
- procrastination
- tendency to become distraught over trifling matters.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OH&S?

Responsibility for OH&S should be seen as a partnership between managers, and employees.

Managers should make safety and health a major objective of the practice, train all employees in safety and health and allow employees to participate in decision-making.

As an employee, you should be allowed to participate in the development and administration of OH&S programs, and should perform your tasks in accordance with established guidelines. It is important to accurately report work-related illnesses and injuries.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Reduction in the rate and severity of occupational accidents, disease and work related stress levels improves the quality of work life for employees thereby increasing their effectiveness. Improvements can result in:
- more productivity due to fewer lost workdays
- increased efficiency from a more committed workforce
- reduced medical and insurance costs
• lower workers compensation rates and direct payments
• increased flexibility and adaptability in the work force as a result of increased participation and an increased sense of ownership
• better selection ratios because of the enhanced image of the practice.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF AN UNSAFE AND UNHEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT?

In Australia, well in excess of half a million workers suffer work related injuries and illnesses at an estimated cost of $20 billion per annum.

The costs of an unsafe and unhealthy work environment can be viewed in three ways:
• direct costs by way of workers' compensation
• indirect costs in terms of lost productivity and the wider community at large
• human pain and suffering.

WHAT ARE MY EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

Although OH&S legislation differs from one jurisdiction to another, there are common principals and obligations. Key duties of employers include:
• establishing and maintaining safe place of work, including access arrangements
• providing and maintaining systems of work that are safe and without risk to health
• ensuring the safety and health of employees and others, including contractors and visitors in relation to:
  - the use, handling, storage and transport of substances
  - the installation, erection, commissioning, operation, dismantling and disposal of plant
• providing adequate information, training and supervision to employees.

Risk management

Working with animals and practicing as a vet poses a range of occupational and associated risks. Vets can practice in a wide range of settings and may work with a variety of animals that vary in physical size and clinical needs. Such occupational diversity requires well developed management skills and a broad range of clinical techniques — and it also increases the scope of a veterinarian's exposure to claims arising from the delivery of veterinary treatment.

In today's litigious environment, vets and other healthcare practitioners are increasingly subject to insurance claims. As a result of animal owners' rising expectations of the standard of care provided by vets, litigation has become more common and is changing the risk profile of the veterinary profession. This creates an emphasis on the need for all vets to safeguard their reputation and their practice against potential lawsuits.

In some instances, it may not be possible to prevent a claim being made against you, however, there are processes you can adopt to ensure that — should you ever need to defend your actions and your reputation as a clinician — you can consistently demonstrate the validity and responsibility of your decisions and actions.

To date, the majority of claims and risks of claims in which vets have been involved are considered to have been avoidable — if only the appropriate processes had been undertaken initially. Establishing appropriate processes to effectively manage risk prior to an incident arising is vital for practicing veterinarians. The repercussions of a lawsuit can be devastating to your reputation as a vet and to your practice. While it may be possible to re-establish a practice, a damaged reputation is very difficult to regain.

Veterinarians need to be proactive in the management of risks within the scope of their professional practice. Sound risk-considered approaches, when integrated and animal-owner consultation and communication processes, can have a positive impact on your relationships with clients and will prove invaluable in the event that a claim is brought against you. In applying measures
that control risk, you can reinforce your concern for the wellbeing of your patients and further develop credibility and trust with the animal owners.

HOW CAN I PREVENT AN INCIDENT?

An awareness of any vulnerability you or your practice may be exposed to, can be gained through a sound approach to risk management. Effective risk management involves the identification of hazards and accurate assessment of potential risks, followed by the application of the most appropriate control measures to mitigate the risks and ongoing, regular reviews of your risk management processes. This will ensure you are consistently taking the most effective steps to protect your practice and your reputation.

To help veterinarians identify any vulnerability they may be exposed to, Guild Insurance and the AVA® have developed Guild RiskMASTER, a self-assessment risk management guide for veterinary practice. Guild RiskMASTER provides a training report generated from your answers to a specific survey that you choose.

Guild RiskMASTER outlines the steps you can take to reduce opportunities for incidents to occur and thereby, protect your professional reputation and your practice. A joint initiative of Guild Insurance and the AVA® Risk Management Committee, Guild RiskMASTER has been developed to complement other AVA® resources and is provided free as an AVA® member service.

To use Guild RiskMASTER, log on to the AVA® website at www.ava.com.au and click on 'Member benefits'.

If you would like to discuss risk management the AVA® recommends that you phone Guild Insurance on 1800 810 213.
About the AVA®

Founded in 1921, the AVA® is the peak national body representing the veterinary profession in Australia. The AVA® was founded for the purpose of advancing veterinary science.

VISION
The vision of the AVA® is for a cohesive, strong and highly respected veterinary profession.

MISSION
The mission of the AVA® is to be the national organisation representing and serving the interests of the veterinary profession in Australia and to act and speak with a single voice on matters of importance to its members.

To achieve its mission, the AVA® will focus on the following five main goals:

• to be recognised as the national body representing the veterinary profession in Australia
• to provide a forum for veterinarians to exchange information and ideas and to access member services
• to assist members to strive for professional excellence
• to provide leadership and expert advice in animal science, health, welfare and production
• to promote the value of animals and the veterinary profession to government and the community.

ROLE
The AVA® undertakes a number of important services that benefit individual veterinarians and the profession as a whole.

The AVA®:

• represents the profession to all levels of government, especially regarding changes in legislation affecting veterinarians
• promotes the profession to the community to ensure that veterinarians are the first point of contact for animal health and welfare issues
• maintains a Code of Professional Conduct for veterinary practitioners. AVA® members are committed to using their skills and knowledge for the welfare of animals and society, and all members adhere to a 10 point Code of Professional Conduct
• publishes the Australian Veterinary Journal, the leading Australian source of information on clinical case studies, scientific research, news and employment opportunities
• prepares modules for veterinary practice management programs to assist practitioners in their businesses
• promotes animal welfare. The AVA® is represented on many government and community animal welfare committees
• publishes the online Members Directory and Policy Compendium
• organises the AVA® Annual Conference, one of the veterinary professional’s best avenues for continuing education and peer networking
• publishes a range of newsletters at Division and Special Interest Group levels
• maintains the AVA® website, a comprehensive information resource
• resolves complaints through national mediation processes
• extends help via the AVA® Veterinary Benevolent Fund to veterinarians and their families in difficult circumstances.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
The AVA® is involved with decision makers at all levels of government. It is an important participant in policy formation affecting veterinary and animal health. For example, the AVA® was in close consultation on the planning of national responses to outbreaks of animal disease.
It is a shareholder, with governments and industry, in Animal Health Australia, through which it participates in many national activities relating to animal health and welfare.

The AVA® also has significant influence at an international level, being a member of the World Veterinary Association and the International Veterinary Officers Council. This involves the veterinary associations of the UK, USA, Canada and New Zealand, as well as the World Veterinary Association. In 2001, the AVA® organised a program under which 37 private veterinary practitioners travelled to the UK to assist in the eradication of foot and mouth disease.

AVA® MEMBERS ARE DIFFERENT:

AVA® CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Veterinarians shall always consider the welfare of the animal first in the provision of veterinary services
2. Veterinarians should strive to improve the quality of veterinary services, and the health and the welfare of animals, at every opportunity
3. Veterinarians should provide the best possible veterinary services to the animals under their care and to the community based on current scientific knowledge
4. Veterinarians shall treat information about a client and his/her animals in confidence unless otherwise compelled by law
5. Veterinarians should, where possible, obtain the consent of the client, and discuss the cost of the service, before undertaking any procedures or treatment
6. Veterinarians shall not misuse or permit the misuse of their professional knowledge or skills, or abuse their privilege to prescribe restricted substances for animal use
7. Veterinarians should continue to develop their professional knowledge or skills and share their knowledge with colleagues and other relevant professionals as appropriate
8. Veterinarians should uphold the integrity of the veterinary profession
9. Veterinarians should ensure that animals under their care are treated humanely and with respect
10. Veterinarians should utilise the skills of colleagues, by consultation or referral, where appropriate.

Organisation

DIVISIONS

There are eight Divisions within the AVA®, based on State or Territory boundaries. Each Division elects its own honorary officers and Divisional Committees and represents the veterinary profession as a State level. Divisional membership varies from approximately 1635 in New South Wales to 43 in the Northern Territory in 2004.

AVA® BRANCHES

Within each Division there are Branches based on regional boundaries or particular interests (for example, rural and metropolitan practitioners).

Most Branches are quite small, so members get to know each other well, provide mutual professional support and enjoy a spirit of camaraderie.

AVA® Branches represent an excellent avenue for new graduate support and networking opportunities. Please refer to the Service Directory for a full listing of AVA® Branches.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

The AVA® Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are based on individual species, specific disciplines or common interest.

Each of the larger groups conducts an annual scientific meeting. Most SIGs also participate in the AVA® Annual National Conference. Graduates are encouraged to join the SIG most relevant to their chosen line of work.

All SIGs provide essential information that will keep you up to date in the years following graduation. To join a SIG you must be an AVA® member.
PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The AVA® Board of Directors, chaired by the AVA® National President, is responsible to members for the administration and business affairs of the AVA®. The Board comprises:

- President, who held the office of President Elect in the immediate preceding year
- President Elect, elected by a postal ballot of AVA® members
- Past President, who held the office of President in the immediate preceding year
- Treasurer, elected by the Board at the first Board meeting after each election of Board members
- Three Directors elected by a postal ballot of AVA® members. One is elected each year and the term of office is three years
- Three Directors, one nominated each of ASAVA, ACV and EVA. Other Directors may be nominated by any SIGs as determined by the membership from time to time at a general meeting.

POLICY COUNCIL

The AVA® Policy Council provides a forum for the Divisions and the SIGs to discuss and advise on policy issues.

The Policy Council consists of one Councillor appointed by each of the Divisions, one appointed by each SIG and the Board members (ex officio Councillors). Each Division and SIG can nominate an alternative Councillor.

The Council meets twice a year and is responsible for initiating, planning and development draft AVA® policies. After member discussion, policies are ratified by the Board and published in a Members Directory and Policy Compendium. AVA® policies are available on the AVA® website at www.ava.com.au.
AVA® in the community

PETS AND PEOPLE EDUCATION PROGRAM (AVA® PetPEP)

The Pets and People Education Program (AVA® PetPEP) is an example of the AVA® contributes to the community.

AVA® PetPEP is a highly successful education program. Conceived over a decade ago by Western Australian veterinarian Dr Di Evans, AVA® PetPEP involves local veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses working with teachers to help primary school students learn responsible pet ownership and improve their understanding of animals.

The veterinarians discuss animal care with students, complementing work done by teachers. This cooperative approach, plus interactivities such as pet expos, helps to enhance children’s understanding of many different facets of responsible pet ownership and makes a valuable contribution to educating the next generation of pet owners.

The AVA® PetPEP teachers resource book contains work sheets, activities, website references, black-line masters and industry contacts. It is an ideal resource for teaching a unit on pets or animals and can also be used to integrate messages into other curriculum areas.

Topics include:

• behaving safely around pets
• choosing the right pet
• being responsible for a pet
• preparing for a pet
• caring for your pet’s health
• treating all animals well.

AVA® PetPEP is more than merely a text resource. This is what makes it different to other programs. It is a network of vets, vet nurses, teachers, schools, community groups and local governments, working together to bring messages about responsible pet ownership to children in a positive environment. It is also a great way for graduating vets to become involved in their community.

THE FUTURE

The AVA® is continually improving the services it offers to members and the contribution it makes to the profession and the community, and has a written strategy for achieving such improvements.

Currently, the AVA® is working towards:

• broadening the range of member services to assist in improving personal development, management, lobbying and business skills
• broadening the range of high quality continuing education activities
• developing of community relations programs, such as PetPEP and the Urban Animal
The AVA® Telephone Counselling Service is a national service providing male and female professional counsellors who are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. AVA® telephone counsellors use unbiased strategies to help you work through problems and can provide face to face consultation if required.

**Work-life Stresses?**

The AVA® has identified the specific need for a service that may assist members to deal with the pressures of practicing as a veterinarian in today’s climate. Veterinarians, like similar professions, are exposed to stresses that can impact performance, work life and family life.

The AVA® has implemented a free national AVA® Telephone Counselling Service for members to deal in confidence with problems and stresses members may be encountering.

**Confidentiality**

AVA® Telephone Counselling Service provides the utmost confidentiality between the veterinarian and the Counsellor. The abides by the National Privacy Principles and guidelines as endorsed by the office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner.

**Types of issues the AVA® Telephone Counselling Service deals with**

- stress, harassment and bullying
- conflict with peer or management
- coping with change
- job performance
- career transition
- other factors that may cause stress in the work place.

**Work Related Issues and Personal Issues including:**

- relationship and family issues
- anxiety, depression, stress
- substance abuse
- grief, loss, bereavement
- trauma Management
- other personal issues that may affect your personal life.

**What happens if all lines are busy?**

On the rare occasion that all AVA® Telephone Counsellors are busy, a voicemail message will say ‘welcome to ITIM, please leave a message after the tone. Your call will be returned at the first available moment.’

The AVA® Telephone Counselling Service is available to all members and their immediate family on Freecall 1800 337 068.

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The demands of our rapidly changing society have resulted in the growing need for professionals to identify, develop, market, maintain and improve upon their knowledge and skills. The veterinary profession is no exception.

Veterinarians bring with them unique technical and professional skills that are employed across many industry sectors. The environments in which veterinarians operate are constantly shifting. Leading edge techniques soon become standard and new knowledge obsolete. Improving and developing your knowledge, skills and networks is vital in adapting to meet the challenges of our changing world.

Your continuing professional development, both as an individual and as part of the veterinary profession, is essential to ensure that high levels of expertise and professional standards are maintained.

The following chapter highlights just some of the variety of continuing education (CE) options that are available to you.

AVA® conferences

AVA® ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The AVA® Annual Conference is the major veterinary conference in Australia, bringing all veterinarians together to update themselves with the leading edge in veterinary science and management across a range of disciplines and species.

Central to the AVA® Conference is a quality, scientific program that allows delegates the flexibility of attending seminars across a variety of species and disciplines. For example, for those in mixed practice, it is possible to attend sessions in the equine, cattle and small animal streams. Whilst those in small animal practice can attend the small animal stream and still indulge their interest in unusual and exotic pets.

Importantly for new graduates, the AVA® Annual Conference also represents an excellent opportunity to interact with colleagues across all species, disciplines and sectors and to share in delegates’ collective knowledge and experience.

This networking extends beyond the classroom into the variety of social events available to delegates during the week. Expanding your network of contacts can prove another means of valuable support during your first years in practice.

Additionally, the AVA® Annual Conference plays host to the most comprehensive veterinary trade exhibits in Australia. This enables new graduates to maintain their knowledge of the latest veterinary technology for utilisation in their practice.

For information on the AVA® Annual Conference, or to register your interest, please refer to the AVA® website on www.ava.com.au or contact the AVA® Events and Education administrator at events@ava.com.au.
**AVA® SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP CONFERENCES**

The AVA® has 22 SIGs. Many of these participate in the AVA® Annual Conference by offering a stream focussed on their species or discipline. Some of the SIGs also conduct their own interest specific conferences.

AVA® SIGs currently holding conferences on an annual basis include ASAVA, EVA, ACV, AETS, AVPMA and UEP.

AVA® SIG Conferences allow you to gain current knowledge and practical advice in an area of special interest. They also allow you to network with colleagues and build contacts in that particular field.

For those interested in focusing on improving their veterinary expertise in a specific area of interest, AVA® SIG Conferences represent a good opportunity to do this.

Many of AVA® SIGs also run additional CE opportunities, such as seminars and workshops, throughout the year.

Please refer to pages 12 to 28 of this handbook, or the AVA® website www.ava.com.au for information for AVA® SIGs.

**Continuing veterinary education**

**OFFICE OF CONTINUING VETERINARY EDUCATION AT MURDOCH UNIVERSITY**

The Office of Continuing Veterinary Education at School of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences at Murdoch University offers varied opportunities to participate in CE in WA and SA.

New graduates are offered complimentary subscription to the Office of Continuing Veterinary Education and if you are working in WA or SA please contact this office to ensure we have you on the subscription list.

Lifelong learning can be as simple as reading up on cases or as committed as studying for a membership to the Australian College. The Office of Continuing Veterinary Education tries to support you in your life long learning. In most cases, after 5 years of university you feel reluctant to commit to further study, however, you will fall into some pattern of study, structured or unstructured.

The range of activities from the Office of Continuing Veterinary Education includes:

- Grads in Practice in conjunction with AVA® in March each year — an information afternoon for new graduates
- day or half day courses on weekends for vets and general public
- evening seminars during the week – general practice, medicine, surgery and dermatology
- videoconferences to regional centres in WA, SA and NT
- publications from courses
- Continuing Education Award
- CE rewards for frequent attendance at day or half day courses redeemable for MUOCVE courses
- additional subscriber benefits such as regular newsletter and mail outs about forthcoming events.

The complimentary new graduate subscription will ensure you are informed of forthcoming CE events, and include other benefits such as:

- discounts on course attendance
- discount on individual proceedings purchased
- Murdoch University Library reduced subscriptions rate $25.00pa (Murdoch Alumni have free library use)
- Learning CurVE’s newsletter
- facility to check your CVE Rewards points online
- access to Dermclub notes online
- individually designed practice seminars at a reduced rate
- practice membership — faxed/emailed fliers for notice board reminders
- eligibility to apply for the CVE Award after two years membership — an opportunity for financial support for further study.
POST GRADUATION FOUNDATION IN VETERINARY SCIENCE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

The Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science of the University of Sydney was formed in 1965.

The Foundation became the world’s first and leading organisation dedicated to postgraduate veterinary education.

Veterinarians from many countries now use the Foundation as a resource and attend its courses.

The Post Graduate Foundation aims to assist members of the profession in many ways and offers the following services.

**Five day refresher courses**

Courses are conducted Monday to Friday in capital cities, and are presented by world authorities on specific subjects, supported by local specialists. Courses participants are provided with the very latest information by the speakers and in proceedings are available for purchase by those unable to attend.

**TimeOut seminars**

One or two day seminars are conducted throughout the year in most capital cities in the eastern states and in some rural centres as required. Originally designed to assist veterinarians re-entering active practice, or reorienting within the profession, the TimeOut seminars are also well attended by veterinarians in practice.

**Symposia and workshops**

Symposia and wet and dry workshops are the formats most appropriate for imparting knowledge on some topics. These vary in duration from two to five days and are conducted at venues with the resources for practical exercises.

**Distance education**

 Provision of expert tuition by correspondence is a relatively new and exciting activity of the Post Graduate Foundation. Since the beginning of the Foundation’s involvement in distance education in 1991, the number of courses has increased from 2 to 22 and the number of students from 19 to 270. Students are from Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Kenya, UK, USA, Canada, Thailand, India and Malaysia.

Distance education courses include:

- veterinary diagnostic imaging
- cardiorespiratory medicine
- ophthalmology
- small animal medicine & surgery
- dermatology
- emergency medicine
- equine medicine
- ruminant nutrition
- feline medicine
- avian medicine
- animal behaviour
- medical oncology
- sonology
- equine dentistry
- equine surgery
- small animal dentistry
- rabbits and rodents
- wildlife (Australia).
Most courses consist of 10 monthly modules incorporating tutor notes, visual aids, prescribed reading material and student assignments. To gain maximum benefit, students should allow approximately eight hours per week to complete their course. Two one day workshops are scheduled during most courses. Many participants use the distance education program to prepare for membership and fellowship examinations in the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists.

Publications

Publications are available from the online bookshop at vetbookshop.com in the following series:

- **PGF proceedings.** Full notes are produced by all course lecturers. These are distributed as a fully indexed book at the time of registration. Copies are available after the course. It is often possible to purchase these for several years, however, the policy is not to reprint.

- **PGF control and therapy articles.** These invaluable gems of wisdom consist of short descriptions, discussions and exchanges by veterinarians on techniques, procedures and extraordinary experiences they have found useful, worrying or intriguing in their professional activities. Contributions have been received from veterinarians around the world. The articles are circulated with regular mailings to members of the Post Graduate Foundation. Perspective articles by people experienced in important topics are included with some mailings.

- **Vade mecum series.** Vade mecum, meaning ‘go with me’ is a series of small species specific, quick reference companions. Series A includes volumes on therapy; Series B, on differential diagnosis and Series C, compendia on uncommon species.

- **Teton® veterinary series.** These cover various topics of importance to practice. PGF is the licensed distributor of the Teton® Veterinary Series in Australia.

**Membership**

The services of the Post Graduate Foundation are available to all veterinarians. Members of the Foundation are entitled to substantial discount rates for attendance at courses and purchase of publications, access to locked web pages and online discussion forums, and other services.

Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science
University of Sydney
Level 2 Conference Centre
Building B22
SYDNEY NSW 2006
Phone: 02 9351 7979
Fax: 02 9351 7968
Email: sales@pgfvet.usyd.edu.au

**Management courses**

**UNE PARTNERSHIPS**

Qualifications specifically tailored to practice management are offered by the University of New England (UNE).

**Certificate IV in Practice Management**

The Certificate in Practice Management is applicable to practice staff who either currently hold the position of Practice Manager or Office Manager, or aspire to undertake a practice management role. The Certificate is aligned against the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 4.

**Diploma of Practice Management**

The Diploma of Practice Management is applicable to the experienced Practice Manager who is, or intends to be, responsible for the business planning and development of the practice. The Diploma consists of the six modules of the Certificate plus four additional planning and reviewing units.

The Diploma is aligned against the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 5.
Practice managers with considerable experience and qualifications in the area may apply for recognition for some or all of the first six units of the program. Please refer to the Service Directory for UNE contact details.

**AVPMA MANAGEMENT EDUCATION**

The AVPMA (Australian Veterinary Practice Management Association), a Special Interest Groups of the AVA®, also provides management education. Please visit [www.avpma.com.au](http://www.avpma.com.au).

**OTHER**

A range of undergraduate and postgraduate management courses are available through Australian and overseas universities and their graduate schools of management. Options available include: postgraduate certificates and diplomas ranging up to the Master of Business Administration (MBA). Resources such as the Good Universities Guide ([www.thegoodguides.com.au](http://www.thegoodguides.com.au)) can assist you in identifying the courses most suited to your needs.

**AVA® Vet Ed**

AVA® Vet Ed is the CE scheme of the AVA®, a quality education scheme that enables AVA® members to develop both personally and professionally.

By participating in AVA® Vet Ed, you are contributing to the high levels of knowledge, expertise and professional standards of the veterinary profession.

AVA® Vet Ed is based on a system of points that can be achieved through various learning activities. Completion of 120 AVA® Vet Ed points within a three year period will entitle the member to the use of the postnominal Chartered Member AVA® (CMAVA) for the year following.

The postnominal can be used by AVA® members to market themselves as a professional who is striving to maintain high quality standards in their field of endeavour, setting them apart from others.

AVA® Vet Ed is designed to assist members to maintain appropriate CE records. Learning can be pursued at home, in the city or the country, alone or with others, inside or outside of working hours. Not only does AVA® Vet Ed allow members to meet the Veterinary Registration Boards’ requirements, it also allows members to pursue other areas of interest relevant to their current veterinary activities.

Most activities you undertake to further your professional competence as part of a planned development program can be counted towards AVA® Vet Ed points. Many people choose to attend courses and seminars offered by AVA® or other external providers but you could also take part in more informal networks or group learning activities, undertake in house training or participate mentoring arrangements.

To find out more please contact the AVA® Vet Ed Coordinator by telephone on 1300 137 309 or on veted@ava.com.au
# POINTS ALLOCATION TABLE

## STRUCTURED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>POINTS: HOUR</th>
<th>VALIDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University CVE Courses</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Courses *</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences/Seminars</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Presentation to peers</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>Copy of paper (first presentation only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence Courses</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>Certificate/Letter of results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written assessment tests</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>Certificate/Letter of results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes based on presentations or journal papers</td>
<td>1 point per quiz per presentation or paper</td>
<td>Completed quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks to community/schools (First presentation)</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>Signature of organiser or copy of paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Publication (Peer reviewed)</td>
<td>1 point per hour of preparation time with a cap of 20 points per paper</td>
<td>Copy of paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Publication (Not peer reviewed)</td>
<td>1 point per hour of preparation time with a cap of 4 points per paper</td>
<td>Copy of paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refereeing peer reviewed journal</td>
<td>1 point per hour with a cap of 4 points per paper</td>
<td>Copy of letter from editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessed audio visual or computer based courses</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>Certificate/Letter of results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APAV Courses</td>
<td>1 unit/chapter</td>
<td>Certificate/Letter of results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation scheme by examination *</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>Evidence of accreditation/accreditation certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops/Wetlabs</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## SELF VALIDATING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>POINTS : HOUR</th>
<th>VALIDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Group Learning</td>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>Signature of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Review Project</td>
<td>4 Points</td>
<td>Submission of review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Plan (Not more than once per annum)</td>
<td>3 Points</td>
<td>Submission of plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical rounds</td>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>Signature of group leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## UNSTRUCTURED

AVA has capped points available from the unstructured area at 40 points per triennium while Veterinary Registration Boards' have capped this area at 45 points. Registration Boards’ may have a limit to how much mentoring is allowed to contribute to CE requirements and participation in email list discussions or professional representative activities may not be included in their calculation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>POINTS : HOUR</th>
<th>VALIDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Un-assessed AV/audio/computer based including courses</td>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>Evidence of activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private reading (journals, textbooks)</td>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>Name/journal/author/pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring undergraduate students</td>
<td>1 per day</td>
<td>Signature of student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring (Postgraduate/specialist/college candidates)</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>Signature of recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being mentored (postgraduate/specialist mento/collage candidates) *</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>Signature of recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative in professional organisation (eg. Committees, AVA Policy</td>
<td>1:2 with a cap of 8 points per</td>
<td>Evidence of attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council)</td>
<td>triennium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in moderated e-list (eg. ACVSc, ‘Countdown Downunder’)</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>Submission of transcript</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Acquisition of recognised post-graduate qualifications in veterinary science related to the chosen field of work

The registered veterinary practitioner who is currently undergoing formal post-graduate training with a view to the acquisition of a higher qualification in their chosen field of work or a related area of veterinary science, is considered to be fulfilling all the requirements for continuing education. The study programs for such courses usually contain formal requirements to attend lectures and conferences and to read the published literature relevant to the field of study. Such individuals would be exempt from any other requirements for CE while undergoing such training.*
Service directory

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Fax: 08 9368 2193
Email: avawa@ava.com.au
AVA® Branches

Contact your divisional office for your local branch network details.

NEW SOUTH WALES
Blue Mountains / Hawkesbury / Nepean
Central Coast
Central West
Far North Coast
Highlands
Mid North Coast
Newcastle
New England
North Coast
Orana
Riverine
Shoalhaven
Far South Coast
South Coast
South West Slopes
Sydney Metropolitan Practitioners
Upper Hunter

QUEENSLAND
Brisbane Veterinary Practitioners
Central Queensland
Darling Downs &
South West Queensland
North Queensland
South East Queensland
Sunshine Coast
Gold Coast

SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Small Animal Practitioners
Rural Vet Practitioners
Hindmarsh

VICTORIA
Melbourne Metropolitan Practitioners
Geelong
Central
Western
Central Highlands
South Gippsland
East Gippsland
Northern
North Eastern

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Southern
South West

AVA® Special Interest Groups

Contact the AVA regional office for SIG's contact details or visit www.ava.com.au

ACUPUNCTURE (AVAG)
ALPACA (AAV)
AVIAN (AAVMA)
BEHAVIOURISTS (AVBIG)
CATTLE (ACV)
CONSERVATION BIOLOGISTS (AAVCB)
DENTAL (AVDS)
EQUINE (EVA)

GREYHOUND (AGVA)
HISTORY (AVHS)
HOLISTIC (AAHV)
INDUSTRY (AVI)
PIG (APV)
POULTRY (AVPA)
PRACTICE MANAGEMENT (AVPMA)
PUBLIC HEALTH (AVPH)

REGISTERED SPECIALIST (ARVS)
REPRODUCTION (ARV)
SHEEP (ASV)
SMALL ANIMAL (ASA)
UNUSUAL & EXOTIC (UEP)
WELFARE & ETHICS (AVAWE)
## Veterinary Surgeons Boards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Board Name</th>
<th>Registrar Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Fax</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeons Board of ACT</td>
<td>PO Box 976, CMC SQUARE ACT 2608</td>
<td>02 6205 1601</td>
<td>02 6205 1602</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vsbregistrar@act.gov.au">vsbregistrar@act.gov.au</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.health.act.gov.au">www.health.act.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Veterinary Practitioners Board of NSW</td>
<td>PO Box 6391, ALEXANDRIA NSW 2015</td>
<td>02 9699 4477</td>
<td>02 9699 4488</td>
<td><a href="mailto:registrar@vsb.nsw.gov.au">registrar@vsb.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.vpb.nsw.gov.au">www.vpb.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Veterinary Board of the Northern Territory</td>
<td>PO Box 37045, WINNELLIE NT 0821</td>
<td>08 8999 2133</td>
<td>08 8999 2043</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vetboard.dpi@nt.gov.au">vetboard.dpi@nt.gov.au</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeons Board of QLD</td>
<td>GPO Box 46, BRISBANE QLD 4001</td>
<td>07 3239 3600</td>
<td>07 3225 1488</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vsbqld@dpi.qld.gov.au">vsbqld@dpi.qld.gov.au</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.vsb.qld.gov.au">www.vsb.qld.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeons Board of SA</td>
<td>PO Box 218, WALKERVILLE SA 5081</td>
<td>08 8269 3216</td>
<td>08 8342 5325</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vsbsa@senet.com.au">vsbsa@senet.com.au</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.vsvsa.org.au">www.vsvsa.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Veterinary Board of TAS</td>
<td>PO Box 183, HUONVILLE TAS 7109</td>
<td>03 6239 6823</td>
<td>03 6239 6824</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vsbtras@ava.com.au">vsbtras@ava.com.au</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/">www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/</a> agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of VIC</td>
<td>Level 11, 470 Collins Street, MELBOURNE VIC 3000</td>
<td>03 9620 7444</td>
<td>03 9620 7044</td>
<td><a href="mailto:registrar@vetboard.vic.gov.au">registrar@vetboard.vic.gov.au</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.vetboard.vic.gov.au">www.vetboard.vic.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeons Board of WA</td>
<td>PO Box 1124, SOUTH PERTH WA 6951</td>
<td>08 9367 4674</td>
<td>08 9368 2193</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vsbperth@wt.com.au">vsbperth@wt.com.au</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.vetsurgeonsboardwa.au.com">www.vetsurgeonsboardwa.au.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Universities

CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY
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Fax: (02) 6338 6001
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Fax: (07) 3365 1255
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Fax: (03) 9731 2366
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www.vet.unimelb.edu.au

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www.vetbiomed.murdoch.edu.au/CVE/

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Fax: (02) 6240 7636
Email: noosr@dest.gov.au

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SUVA
Treasurer - Dr Bill Pryor
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Fax: (03) 5341 2733
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www.vets.org.nz

**President**
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Fax: +64 (0) 4 471 9494
Email: nzva@vets.org.nz

### South African Veterinary Foundation
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Fax: +27-12 346 2929
Email: savf@sava.co.za
www.savf.org.za

### Urban Animal Management Reference Group (UAM)
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Email: info@uam.net.au
**Conference Organiser**
Phone: (02) 6288 3998
Email: conference@uam.net.au
Animal Control and Regulation Training Package: training@uam.net.au

### World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)
**WSPA**
GPO Box 3294
SYDNEY NSW 2001
Phone: (02) 9902 8000
Toll Free: 1300 139 772
Fax: (02) 9906 1166
Email: wspa@wspa.org.au
www.wspa.org.au

### Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia
**Secretariat**
PO Box 1228
BENDIGO CENTRAL VIC 3552
Phone: (03) 5439 3202
Fax: (03) 5439 3202
Email: vnca@vnca.asn.au

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Prescribing and supplying veterinary medicines

Veterinarian’s responsibilities
An important element in the delivery of professional veterinary services is the provision of a wide variety of biologicals, pharmaceuticals and pesticides to clients. The veterinarian’s right to prescribe, authorise and dispense such substances also carries significant legal and ethical responsibilities. The AVA® Prescribing, Authorising and Dispensing Guidelines are regarded as the minimum standards expected from a veterinary practitioner exercising reasonable skill and care in the treatment of animals. All veterinarians should ensure they are familiar with these guidelines and the relevant legislation of the jurisdiction(s) in which they practise.

The AVA® Guidelines can be found when on the member section of the AVA® website, www.ava.com.au, under AVA® Policies.

LEGISLATION
Veterinarians must be familiar, and are expected to comply, with the current Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation relating to the supply and use of veterinary medicines and pesticides. The rules in different jurisdictions vary.

State and Territory drugs and poisons legislation authorises registered veterinarians to obtain, and use, supply, order, authorise or prescribe Schedule 4 and 8 drugs (and sometimes drugs from other schedules depending on the legislation in a particular jurisdiction). With this authority comes a clear responsibility to comply with the legislation and to act in a professional manner. Each State and Territory also has legislation controlling the use of veterinary medicines that further delineates the duties and responsibilities of veterinarians in the supply and use of drugs and veterinary chemicals (chemical use and veterinary registration legislation).

Any breach of the relevant legislation or the Prescribing, Authorising and Dispensing Guidelines could constitute unprofessional conduct.

VETERINARIAN-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP
Any prescribing or supply of veterinary medicines should only occur within the bounds of a valid veterinarian-client relationship.

A bona fide veterinarian-client relationship exists where each of the following occurs:

• the veterinarian has assumed responsibility for making judgments regarding the health and welfare of the animal(s) and the need for treatment, with the owner’s (client’s) agreement
• the veterinarian has sufficient knowledge of the animal(s) to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of their medical condition. This means that the veterinarian has recently seen and is personally acquainted with the keeping and care of the animal(s) by virtue of a clinical examination, or by medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animal(s) are kept
• the veterinarian is available, or has arranged for adequate emergency coverage, for follow up evaluation in the event of an adverse reaction or failure of the treatment regimen.

The care of the animal or herd by the veterinarian should be real and not merely nominal, that is, there must be evidence of personally having contact with the animal/herd for diagnosis and treatment and of assuming personal responsibility for the diagnosis, treatment and outcome.
The veterinarian should know the client and hold clinical records relating to the client’s animals. In the case of a new client, the veterinarian should personally familiarise him/herself with the client and their animal or herd by establishing the clinical history and performing appropriate clinical examinations, and commence keeping appropriate records, prior to dispensing restricted drugs.

Associates and locums working in the practice can deputise for the veterinary practitioner provided they have unrestricted access to the client’s records.

A client may have a bona fide professional relationship with more than one veterinarian, or more than one veterinary practice. When dealing with a request for dispensing from a client with whom the veterinarian does not have a current professional relationship, it is advisable to ask the client if they have a current professional relationship with another veterinary practitioner. The veterinarian is then in a position to either refer the client back to that provider and/or establish a current bona fide professional relationship.

A veterinarian must be registered to practise in the State/Territory in which the animal or herd is located.

**OUTCOME OF TREATMENT AND AFTER CARE**

There should be adequate after care and follow up to determine whether the expected outcome of treatment has been achieved, and to review treatment if the expected outcome is not fully achieved. Follow up is important. It completes the clinical history, ensures appropriate dispensing, alerts the veterinarian to any unexpected outcomes or side effects of the medication, allows for monitoring of a client’s drug supplies and for the collection and correct disposal of any unused drugs. Above all, it demonstrates the veterinarian’s concern for animal welfare.

The veterinarian should report adverse drug reactions to the manufacturer and to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority through the Adverse Experience Reporting Program (www.apvma.gov.au/qa/aerp.shtml), in any case where an unexpected or adverse reaction to a drug may have occurred.
CLIENT UNDERSTANDING AND COMPETENCE

The veterinarian is expected to have knowledge of the individual client and their husbandry and treatment management, knowledge, skills and ability to understand instructions and correctly administer drugs. This is a pivotal reason for the requirement that dispensing of drugs occurs only to bona fide clients. It assumes that the veterinarian will be able to fully inform the client regarding proper use of the drug, including dosage, route and method of administration, possible side effects and withholding periods or export slaughter intervals.

In the case of drugs which can be dangerous to handle (e.g. prostaglandins, tranquilisers or anabolic steroids), it may include informing the client of any special restrictions on who is to handle the drug and how it is to be handled. Any specific instructions about the administration of the drug should be included in an advice note, and a copy kept in the clinical records.

For food-producing animals, the label or advice note (if the advice is too voluminous to put on the label) should provide the client with other essential information, e.g. withholding periods, export slaughter intervals and safe handling instructions.

AMOUNT DISPENSED

The quantity of drugs dispensed must be commensurate with the therapeutic need. The veterinarian should take all reasonable steps by way of accurate record keeping, to ensure that the drugs supplied were all used or would be used for the specific purpose intended.

In food-producing animals, the responsibility for advising of withholding periods, export slaughter intervals, and exact dose of the drug for the specific condition, rests with the veterinarian for each case in which the drug is used, and this cannot be achieved if drugs are used for conditions other than those for which they were supplied. The occurrence of unacceptable residues as a result of over-prescribing may place the veterinarian in a legally vulnerable position.

‘OFF-LABEL’ USE OF DRUGS

‘Off-label’ prescribing is writing a prescription or authorisation to a client to allow them to use a registered drug or veterinary chemical in a manner contrary to the approved label directions (type of animal, dosage, treatment interval etc). This must not be contrary to a specific label restraint.

Veterinarians are permitted to exercise professional judgement in the off-label use or supply of most drugs or other veterinary medicines. This gives veterinarians access to beneficial drugs which may be registered for human use or which have limited registration for veterinary use. However, veterinarians must be aware that access to such drugs is the subject of concern in the community, and that misuse of such drugs may lead to withdrawal of this authority.
A number of legal limits have been placed on the ‘off label’ prescribing of drugs by veterinarians under national control-of-use principles adopted by most States/Territories. These primarily relate to treatments for defined food-producing species, and are less stringent for companion animals. In most jurisdictions use of any product for companion animals is permitted, but supply is usually restricted to human pharmaceuticals or products compounded by the veterinarian or on their prescription.

Off-label use in food producing animals should only be considered when:

• a careful and definitive diagnosis and evaluation of the condition for which the drug is to be used has been made

• the veterinarian is operating within the bounds of a valid veterinarian-client relationship

• a deliberate determination is made that there is no other appropriate veterinary drug available, that is, there is no marketed veterinary drug specifically labelled for the disease condition to be treated or the veterinary drug has been found clinically (or in laboratory tests) to be ineffective by the veterinarian in the animals to be treated

• adequate steps to prevent the occurrence of illegal residues in edible animal products have been taken. This should include a review of the best available toxicological and tissue distribution and tissue residue depletion data, and establishment of an appropriately long withholding period, to ensure that no detectable residues will occur. The animal owner or custodian should be given explicit written withholding period instructions, and the veterinarian should be very confident that these instructions will be faithfully followed

• the drug has been approved for use in at least one food-producing species.

OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS

An accurate record of scheduled drugs or unregistered chemicals administered or supplied must be maintained (and kept for 2-3 years, depending on the jurisdiction). The normal veterinary medical records are a suitable form of record for this purpose.

Veterinarians prescribing, authorising or dispensing drugs for use in stock feeds or premixes must be familiar with the relevant legislation. The prescribing veterinarian may be held responsible for any residues found in animal products as a result of their advice.

The dispensing of drugs by veterinarians for competing animals (horses and greyhounds) should be undertaken with care to ensure that the requirements of the relevant controlling authorities, that animals compete ‘drug free’, are met. This extends to all forms of competition, including eventing and dressage.

The supply of drugs to any person who is not the owner or responsible agent for the animal is not permitted. Accordingly, supply of drugs to a third party where the veterinarian has not personally established therapeutic need for the animal(s) intended to receive the treatment could be considered wholesaling. The veterinarian who supplies drugs in such a manner is abrogating his or her responsibility to establish and record therapeutic need, to control the dose and frequency of use of the drug, to provide follow up and after care and to ensure correct use of the drug and understanding of its use, and any contraindications, by the end user.

The supply of drugs to non-veterinarians for animal welfare and/or occupational health and safety reasons, e.g. sedation of horses for dental work, should be only within a bona fide veterinarian-client relationship.
1. HOW MUCH SHOULD I GET PAID?

The majority of private veterinary practices in Australia are covered by the Veterinary Surgeons Award 2001. This award provides minimum rates of pay and conditions for veterinarians engaged in private practice. Different Awards and agreements will cover veterinarians who are employed in the public sector, educational institutions, welfare organisations and industry and whose employer is unincorporated and covered by the State IR system.

The Veterinary Surgeons Award 2001 is a Federal Award made under the provisions of the Workplace Relations Act 1996.

Following is an overview of the terms and conditions of the Veterinary Surgeons Award 2001.

Professional Development

- 1 week paid study leave per year of completed service
- may accumulate up to 2 weeks
- not payable on termination.

Allowances

- communication system
- employer to provide and/or pay for it
- higher duties
- pay at higher rate if more than two weeks
- laundry allowance
- if uniform required to be worn or the employer may launder
- travelling — rate per kilometre for use of your vehicle whilst undertaking work on behalf of the employer.

Superannuation

- 9% of ordinary time earnings to be paid a complying fund of the employee's choice

Hours

- ordinary hours — 38 per week to be worked between the hours of 6am-9pm, Monday to Sunday
- spread can be altered if agreed in writing and kept with time and wages records

| CLASSIFICATIONS |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Level            | Description                                               | Base Rate as at 11 November 2005 |
| Level 1 A        | Graduate                                                  | $35,876          |
| Level 1B         | Graduate with experience - must progress no later than 6 months after graduation | $38,376          |
| Level 2          | Must progress by 2 years after graduation. "conducts professional work without detailed supervision but with guidance on unusual cases and/or procedures" | $41,772          |
| Level 3          | Experienced veterinarian "conducts professional work including more difficult assignments requiring substantial professional experience and initiative." | $46,272          |
| Level 4          | Senior Veterinary Surgeon "considerable independence of approach" | $52,772          |
• maximum one shift 10 hours plus meal break (at least 30 minutes per day).

Extra Hours
• paid at ordinary time or time off in lieu
• may be paid an annual allowance if agreed in writing.

Days off/Time in Lieu
• permanent employees
• at least 3 days per fortnight
• accumulate if not given.

Rosters
• published at least 1 month in advance
• annual leave and public holiday rosters — at least 2 months
• all to include rotation system to ensure fair distribution of on-call, extra hours and public holiday duty.

On Call Duty
• Minimum payment of allowance for each 24 hours on-call
• If required to attend to animal, at least 50% of professional fee charged for work undertaken whilst on-call
• “Professional fee” includes at least the total fee charged for consultations, surgery time and/or the procedure rate
• Can be made by payment, time in lieu on single time rate equivalent to the amount earned under this clause, an annual allowance not less than what otherwise would have been payable
• Agreements must be in writing

Annual Leave
• 4 weeks per year
• Paid at ordinary rate plus 17.5%
• Time of leave to be reached by mutual consent

Personal Leave
• personal illness or injury (sick leave); or
• for the purposes of caring for an immediate family or household member that is sick and requires the employee’s care and support (carer’s leave); or
• because of bereavement on the death of an immediate family or household member (bereavement leave)
• Accrueable to a maximum of 10 days p.a.

Public Holidays
• New Year’s Day
• Good Friday
• Easter Saturday
• Easter Monday
• Christmas Day
• Boxing Day
• Australia Day
• Anzac Day
• Queen’s Birthday
• Eight Hours’ Day or Labour Day
• one other day to be specified according to State, Territory or locality or on some other basis.
• when Christmas Day is a Saturday or a Sunday, a holiday in lieu thereof shall be observed on 27 December
• when Boxing Day is a Saturday or a Sunday, a holiday in lieu thereof shall be observed on 28 December
• when New Year’s Day or Australia Day is a Saturday or Sunday, a holiday in lieu thereof shall be observed on the next Monday
• may agree to take days at other times
• Christmas Day (Sat or Sun) weekend rates @ time and a half
• Public holiday — double time

Long Service Leave
• as per individual State/Territory Acts
• generally 13 weeks after 15 years
• some early entitlements

Parental Leave
• 52 weeks (max) unpaid leave on each occasion
• Birth
• adoption
• available to females and males

Jury Leave
• Employer to make up difference in pay
• Maximum 10 days
Termination

- one month’s notice required by either party to terminate employment
- redundancy provisions for all employees, regardless of practice size

A full copy of the Award and the current rates of pay are available on the AVA® Website in the members only section or by contacting the AVA® Members HR Advisory Service on 1300 788 977.

2. SHOULD I GET THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF MY EMPLOYMENT IN WRITING?

Absolutely!

It is extremely important when you are offered a position to make sure you get the terms and conditions put to you in writing. This way there is reduced likelihood of problems occurring because of a misunderstanding about what the conditions of your employment actual are.

3. WHAT’S A PROBATIONARY PERIOD?

A probationary period is a period of time during which the employer can test the employee’s fitness and suitability for the position. On the other hand, the employee can make an assessment of whether the position is really what was expected and, if not, conveniently resign. An employee who is dismissed during a probationary period can not take unfair dismissal action.

A fixed probationary period does not necessarily require an employer to keep an employee in employment for the whole of that period if it is clear, on reasonable grounds, that the employee is not satisfactory.

Generally a probationary period is 3 months in length and cannot be more than 6 months.

The terms of probation should be clearly set out in your letter of offer. A standard probationary period clause will read something like this:

"PROBATIONARY PERIOD

Your employment shall be probationary for the first 3 months of your employment. You acknowledge and agree that, having regard to the nature and circumstances of your work, this period of probation is reasonable.

During the probationary period, your performance will be monitored regularly, and on-the-job training will be provided to ensure your transition to [Practice Name] is successful.

At the conclusion of the probationary period, [Practice Name] will review your performance. At that time [Practice Name] will either:
• confirm your appointment
• terminate your employment.”
4. WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE I SIGN A CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT?

Before signing any contract of employment, you should check that the terms and conditions are at least those provided by the applicable award.

You should always seek some independent advice on the contract either from the AVA® HR Hotline on 1300 788 977 or from your solicitor.

5. WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WAGES AND SALARY?

Generally, a wage is a payment normally made on an hourly basis, so an employee’s wage is directly related to the amount of hours worked. Fluctuations will occur each week according to variations in the amount of hours worked during that pay period, overtime rates and shift and other loadings.

Salary is a uniform payment which remains the same each pay period regardless of the number of hours worked. Although a salary may not be affected by overtime rates, shift or special loadings, it may be part of a remuneration package which includes fringe benefits.

Other distinctions are made in relation to frequency of payment and level of skills. A wage may be paid on an hourly, daily or weekly basis for work. Salaries are normally paid on a fortnightly or monthly basis for work requiring higher skills.

6. WHAT ARE THE COMMON TERMS I NEED TO BE AWARE OF WHEN LOOKING AT REMUNERATION AMOUNTS IN ADVERTISEMENTS AND CONTRACTS?

Remuneration levels are variously described in contracts and advertisements.

Base salary $X means this is the salary for working the ordinary hours of the position. You will need to inquiry whether or not this amount includes items such as superannuation and leave loading.

Hourly rate usually describes the rate per hour paid. You will need to clarify what rate is paid for work in excess of the ordinary hours.

Rates of pay are always expressed in gross terms.

7. WHAT RECORDS SHOULD I KEEP OF MY TIME WORKED, AFTER HOURS CALLS ETC.?

It is advisable to keep a daily diary, which details your daily appointments, and any other issues that arise during the day. Whilst it may not be necessary for you to keep a diary entry for all of your consultations as the details of these are recorded in the client records, it is a good idea to keep a note of any unusual things that happen during the day, complaints, injuries, travel times, work completed whilst on-call and overtime worked etc. to help jog you memory in the event of an inquiry.

8. SHOULD I GET A PAY SLIP FROM MY EMPLOYER?

Employers are required to give employees a pay slip which details the following information:

- employee’s name
- whether the rate of pay is set by an industrial award
- classification of the employee (i.e. level under Award and whether permanent or casual)
- date on which payment was made
- period of employment to which the payment relates
- total amount of payment (including overtime and other payments)
- amount paid as overtime or information to enable to employee to calculate the amount paid as overtime
- amount deducted for tax
- amount deducted as employee contributions for superannuation
- details of all other deductions
- net amount paid.
9. AM I ENTITLED TO SICK LEAVE?

Sick leave is paid leave to which employees are entitled when they cannot work due to illness, providing the illness is not covered by workers compensation.

All permanent employees are entitled to sick leave whether they work on a full-time or part-time basis. Casual employees are generally excluded unless their particular contract of employment provides differently.

The specific amount of time allowed to be taken as paid sick leave is usually prescribed by the award, agreement or other contract of employment between the employer and the employee.

If you develop a serious illness or require extended leave because of illness, you will need to negotiate this directly with your employer. It may be that your employer will agree to grant you a leave of absence. The best chance you have of having your employer agree to an extended period of leave is to ensure that you communicate with her/him as soon as you know what the situation is and clearly state how much time you need. Your employer, however, is under no obligation legally to agree to such an extension.

10. DO I HAVE TO MAKE UP ON-CALL DUTY FROM WHEN I WAS SICK?

There is no requirement in the Award for an employee to make-up on-call duty if they were sick when rostered for this duty. However, in most instances it would mean that another employee or a practice principal has covered your stint of on-call duty. Therefore, it would be a professional courtesy to offer to cover that person’s next rostered on-call duty.

11. WHAT IF I AM SICK BECAUSE OF WORK?

Employers are required by law to have a workers compensation insurance policy which covers their workers in the event they suffer a work related injury or illness. These policies ensure that injured and/or ill workers receive financial compensation for lost wages, medical expenses and permanent incapacity. You cannot be dismissed from your employment whilst on workers compensation.

It is important that if you suffer a work related injury or illness that you inform your employer as soon as possible and provide the appropriate medical certificates.

12. HOW MUCH ANNUAL LEAVE CAN I HAVE?

Annual leave is usually a period of 4 weeks paid leave which is accrued by working at least 12 months without a break with any one employer. Awards and agreements may provide different conditions. The Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standards require annual leave to accrue each 4 weeks of service, at 1/13 of the nominal hours worked by that employee in each 4 week period.

The Veterinary Surgeons Award 2001 provides for four weeks leave paid at the ordinary rate of pay. Annual leave loading of 17.5% about the ordinary rate of pay is also payable.

Unused annual leave is cumulative is paid as a lump sum on termination of employment.

The Veterinary Surgeons Award 2001 provides that the time and amount of annual leave taken should be arrived at by mutual consent between you and your employer. When an employer insists on leave being taken at a specific time, then this leave shall not be less than four consecutive weeks unless the employee agrees.
13. WHAT IS CLASSED AS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

A person sexually harasses another person if:

• the person makes an unwelcome sexual advance, or an unwelcome request for sexual favours, to the other person, or
• the person engages in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the other person.

The harassment must take place in circumstances where a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would have anticipated that the other person would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

The types of conduct which might fall within these definitions include:

• attempts at sexual intercourse or some other overt sexual connection
• kissing
• touching or pinching
• sexual propositions
• gender-based insults or taunting
• statements of a sexual nature, either verbal or written and either made to a person or in their presence
• suggestions or innuendo
• intrusive questions asked at pre-employment interviews.

If you feel you are being harassed, you should immediately speak with your direct manager and advise them of the nature of your complaint. They should then investigate the complaint. You can also ring the AVA® HR Hotline on 1300 788 977 for advice and support.

Although the term workplace harassment is not specifically defined in any legislation, a working definition of the term could be: any harassing conduct in the workplace be it offensive, abusive, bullying, belittling or threatening behaviour which is based on any of the discrimination issues including gender, race, disability, sexual preference or age.

14. WHEN CAN I BE IMMEDIATELY DISMISSED FROM EMPLOYMENT?

Misconduct is when the employee does something so bad that it may be unreasonable to maintain the employment contract. There are varying degrees of misconduct which include misconduct, serious misconduct, and serious and wilful misconduct.

Under the Workplace Relations Act 1996 serious misconduct includes (but is not limited to):

• wilful or deliberate behaviour inconsistent with continuation of the contract of employment
• conduct which causes an imminent and serious risk to the health or safety or any person, or the reputation, viability, or profitability of the employer’s business
• any of the following in the course of employment, unless the employee can show that, in the circumstances, the conduct did not make employment in the notice period unreasonable:
  - theft
  - fraud
  - assault
  - intoxication
  - refusal to carry out a lawful and reasonable instruction which was consistent with the employee’s contract.
15. ARE THERE OTHER REASONS THAT I CAN BE DISMISSED FROM EMPLOYMENT?

Yes, your employer could dismiss you from your position if you are not performing your duties to his/her satisfaction. However, in order to do this, the employer must give you a ‘fair go’ to improve your performance otherwise the termination will be considered harsh, unjust or unreasonable.

As an employee, you have several duties that you must abide by. Failure to adhere to these could result in your termination.

**Obedience**

An employee must follow reasonable and lawful instructions of the employer. This ensures that you perform the work that the employer wants done. A ‘lawful instruction’ tells an employee to do work that is not against the law in any way and is within the scope of the contract of employment. To find out what work is within the scope of the contract of employment, check any terms expressed in a written or oral contract, implied by the conduct of the employer and employee and/or implied by custom and practice in the industry.

Instructions to do work of a lower grade or of a different nature might not be within the scope of the employment contract.

A ‘reasonable instruction’ is one that the employee is:

- physically able to do
- does not threaten the employee’s health or safety
- is reasonable in the circumstances.

**Good faith**

An employee has a duty to act in good faith toward his or her employer. That is, you must not intentionally harm the employer’s interests or business by, say, setting up a practice in direct competition with your employer or helping another practice in direct competition with your employer, unless the employer is aware of this activity and approves of it.

**Duty to account for money received**

As an employee you must pass on money received if it is given because of your role as an employee or if you have used the property of the employer to make money. The employee must give the money to the employer unless the employer agrees that the employee can keep it.

**Confidentiality**

There are two kinds of information that you will receive as a result of being employed:

- general knowledge of your employer’s business or skills connected with the job
- detailed information confidential to the operation of the business, such as client lists.

You may not use either kind of information in a way that damages the employer.

16. DOES MY EMPLOYER HAVE TO WARN ME BEFORE TERMINATING MY EMPLOYMENT?

Employees of employers who employ more than 100 employees are able to claim unfair dismissal if they have at least 6 months service.

Employees of incorporated employers who employ fewer than 100 employees cannot claim unfair dismissal, however may be able to take a claim through other avenues, such as unlawful dismissal or breach of contract.

We recommend that an employer should follow a counselling process that gives you the opportunity to correct the problem.

Generally, the process would involve the following steps:

**Step 1 - Counselling and verbal warning**

- investigation of the matter thoroughly before the session
- during the session the specific problem is stated and the desired performance or behaviour detailed
- you should be given a chance to respond
- your employer should detail the change he or she expects
- your employer should ensure you understand what is required and set a date to review performance
• you should make thorough notes of the session and the conclusions reached.

**Step 2 - Counselling session and written warning**

Follows all Step 1 procedures plus tells you that you are receiving a written warning and failure to produce the required change in their performance or behaviour may jeopardise your employment.

You will be asked to sign and date a copy of the warning noting that you have received and understood it.

**Step 3 - Counselling session and final written warning**

Same as for Step 2.

Final written warning should states that if performance or behaviour has not improved to the required standard, the contract of employment will be terminated.

**Step 4 — Termination**

During all sessions your employer should speak to you in a private area and allow you to have a witness present, if you desire it.

If you are dismissed without warning then it is possible that you have been unfairly dismissed and you should seek advice on your options. You may be entitled to file an unfair dismissal action against your employer and seek reinstatement to the position or monetary compensation. Call the AVA® HR Hotline on 1300 788 977 for advice.

17. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I WANT TO RESIGN?

An employer cannot force you to work under a contract that you wish to terminate. However, as an employee you have certain legal obligations which include:

• working out the appropriate period of notice or forfeit money in lieu of this period. You may be relieved of this obligation if your employer decides to pay out the notice period rather than have you work it.

• possibly being liable for monetary damages if you have signed a fixed term contract or you are under a contract that does not terminate until a particular project is finished.

You are required to provide notice as set out in the award, agreement or other contract of employment or such other notice which may be considered reasonable.

18. I LOST MY TEMPER AND RESIGNED ON THE SPOT. NOW I WANT MY JOB BACK.

If you resign on the spot and the employer accepts, this may forfeit your employer's right to deduct payment in lieu of notice.

Caution is stressed in this type of situation. If you resign on the spot and then subsequently change your mind it may be possible to seek reinstatement. However, this is not a professional way to act in the workplace. The best advice is to think about the situation overnight, and if you still want to resign, put it in writing the next day.

19. WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT EMPLOYMENT RELATED PROBLEMS?

Call the AVA® Members HR Advisory Service Hotline on 1300 788 977. The HR Hotline operates from Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm EST. Alternatively you can email the service on avahrhotline@whr.com.au or fax on (02) 9993 9709.
The AVA® wishes you well in your endeavours and hope the AVA® has provided the tools you will need as a new graduate to enter the work force with ease and confidence.

Remember the AVA® network is vast, there is always someone you can contact if you are having problems.

You have new responsibilities as a graduate in the veterinary profession:

- Realistically assess your career needs and interests
- Make a fair and realistic commitment to your first job
- Know and understand the practice policies
- Appreciate and respect all staff and their responsibilities within the practice
- Appreciate your impact on practice profitability
- Take all the opportunities provided to you for development of skills and expertise
- Understand the working conditions
- Appreciate that veterinary science is a profession, not just a job.

This is your opportunity to grab hold of your career and soar, develop your skills and gain experience in a supportive and nurturing environment and know the AVA® is always there to support you — an AVA® member.

GOOD LUCK.
THE AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION LIMITED

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