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WVA POSITION STATEMENT ON VETERINARY PARA-PROFESSIONALS

WVA POSITION

The WVA recognises the critical role played by Veterinary Para-Professionals¹ (VPPs) in supporting the performance of veterinary veterinary services (PVS). Further, VPPs should be regulated by Veterinary Statutory Bodies (VSBs) or equivalent Veterinary Professional Authority (VPA) to perform tasks designated by territorial laws and guidelines.

WVA also recognises that in some remote and rural areas where there may be a shortage of veterinary professionals certain primary animal healthcare services may be provided by veterinary para-professionals (VPPs) as designated by territorial laws and guidelines and regulated by the VSB or VPA. Such VPPs should work as outreach partners for veterinary clinics, veterinary service organisations, and under an overseeing veterinarian who retains responsibility (and authority) of the services and procedures rendered.

The WVA is committed to the promotion of positive interactions between veterinary professionals and VPPs in the performance of veterinary services in a manner that promotes robust growth of the veterinary service delivery business.

In brief, VPPs should:

1. Perform duties delegated by the Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB) or equivalent Veterinary Professional Authority (VPA) under the direction and responsibility of a veterinary professional.
2. Have the required education and training, with clear competencies and certification that are monitored by a national or state-level Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB) or equivalent Veterinary Professional Authority (VPA).
3. Be registered and regulated by national or state-level VSB or equivalent VPA.
4. Never use the title 'Doctor' which is reserved only to veterinary professionals and not to VPPs, as regards the performance of veterinary services.

¹The World Organization for Animal Health's (WOAH) Terrestrial Animal Health Code states that, "Veterinary Para-Professional means a person who, for the purposes of the Terrestrial Code, is authorized by the veterinary statutory body to carry out certain designated tasks (dependent upon the category of veterinary para-professional) in a territory, and delegated to them under the responsibility and direction of a veterinary professionals. The tasks for each category of veterinary para-professional should be defined by the veterinary statutory body depending on qualifications and training, and in accordance with need."

BACKGROUND

VPPs carry out certain animal health procedures under the direction and responsibility of the veterinary professional as designated by territorial laws guiding and regulating the veterinary practice usually provided for, and mandated under legislation or regulations by the Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB) or the equivalent Veterinary Professional Authority (VPA).

VPPs require education and certification, including registration and regulation by VSB or equivalent VPA. Ideally, VPPs educational and training qualifications should be formalized and an associated registry agency should be developed and overseen by the VSB or equivalent VPA.

The titles used to refer to VPPs vary, including veterinary nurse, veterinary technician, veterinary technologist, veterinary assistant, animal health assistants, or animal health technicians.

DISCUSSION

The importance of infectious diseases on human and animal populations highlights the need for a well-trained veterinary workforce, including both the veterinary professionals and VPPs. The capacity, competence, and ethics of both VPPs and veterinarians must be overseen by a national or state VSB or an equivalent VPA.

Thus WVA recognises that:

1. VPPs work under the mandated direction and authority of the veterinary professional to perform tasks designated by territorial laws guiding and regulating the veterinary practice.
2. In some remote and rural areas where there may be a shortage of veterinary professionals certain primary animal healthcare services may be provided by VPPs working as outreach partners for veterinary clinics or veterinary service organisations. In such situations, innovative supervisory ways such as telematics may be acceptable in cases where the veterinary professional is not physically present within the geographical area, as long as the veterinary professional retains full responsibility (and authority) of the services and procedures rendered.
3. The critical role played by VPPs in supporting the veterinary professionals in delivery of essential veterinary services requires up-to-date technical skills and the development of business environments conducive to the task.

The WVA is committed to promotion of positive interactions between veterinary professionals and VPPs in the performance of veterinary services in the manner that promotes robust growth of the veterinary service delivery business.