

AVCB Mission Statement 2016

Amended 27/7/2016

What do we do?

Veterinarians are and can be involved in conservation biology and many levels.

The involvement of veterinarians with wildlife goes well beyond the activities of zoo veterinarians, and this was one of the drivers in the establishment of an AVA Special Interest Group (SIG) so that it would cater for the needs and aspirations of those with any interest in the conservation of biodiversity.

In defining the scope for such a group there was a need to choose a name for the SIG that was descriptive of its aims. In this regard it was decided that the term "veterinary conservation biology" was an accurate statement of the wide spectrum of activities that it would include. The acronym AVCB is now used to acknowledge its Australian context and position within AVA. The term "conservation biology" was already widely used to describe a new multidisciplinary science that sought to understand the nature and scope of human impacts on biodiversity and to seek practical solutions to these. Adding the word "veterinary" simply emphasized the potential role for veterinarians in teams with other biologists, wildlife managers, economists and other advisers to governments and farmers alike. It then became possible to describe the range of activities encompassed by AVCB, which fall under these six headings:

1. Conservation health and welfare - in all its contexts includes, conservation medicine, ecosystem health of free-living populations, health and welfare of captive animals including sick, injured or orphaned fauna in the hands of veterinarians or wildlife carers. There is increasing interest in defining the links between wildlife health, human health and the health of livestock, with the Wildlife Health Australian is now one of the key players. The concept of One Health is widely accepted. With the additional work of the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health and a number of other facilities it is fair to say that conservation medicine has made immense bounds in the last decade or so. The Wildlife Disease Association – Australasia also makes an important contribution nationally and is part of an international body.

2. Conservation of endangered species - activities involving the use of tools like enhanced reproductive technologies, conservation genetics, powerful data recording systems and databases. The work of Taxon Advisory Groups under the Australian Species Management Plan (ASMP) coordinates planning and recommendations for species in institutions under the umbrella of Zoo and Aquarium Association.. There are many roles for veterinarians in these fields, including oversight of animal welfare.

3. Sustainable farming including off-reserve conservation - there is now an understanding of the need to take a "whole farm" approach when giving advice to land owners. This includes control of invasive species and the development of land use strategies that include incentives to preserve native vegetation. Every large animal practitioner can play a part in this.

4. Sustainable utilisation of wildlife - from the commercial harvest of free-living animals (e.g. kangaroos, feral pigs and fisheries) to modern game farming and ranching (crocodiles, deer, emus) and ecotourism. There is a multiplicity of roles for veterinarians, from health and production issues to animal welfare.

5. Import and export of wildlife - quarantine and control of international trade of endangered species under Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and other treaties and conventions provide essential mechanisms for conservation.

6. Education and Communication – education, training and communication are essential components of conservation keeping veterinarians, wildlife carers, conservation bureaucrats and the public informed.

Our Special Interest Group is involved in numerous activities including

1. Advocacy – providing scientific and balanced input to decisions made in the interests of conservation and sustainability.
2. Policy Development - The AVCB contributes to the Policy Advisory Council (PAC) by drafting policies relating to conservation biology. AVCB members have been involved in the development of many AVA policies including zoo animals, circus animals, hunting and fishing, control of feral animals and utilisation of wildlife. For a full list of AVA policies, please see the AVA Policy Compendium.
3. Education – through conferences, newsletters and journals
4. Networking – keeping members in touch with one another to promote career opportunities and collaborations which help conservation.

The AVCB has an important role to play in policy development and members are invited to take part in the process.