

Australian Veterinary Association

Great Veterinary Workplaces

(Draft) Guidelines and Checklist

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Scope of the Guidelines.....	3
Use of these Guidelines.....	3
The AVA Great Veterinary Workplaces Guidelines.....	4
1. MEANING AND VALUE.....	5
1.1. Organisational vision, mission and objectives.....	5
1.2. Lived values.....	5
1.3. Understood costs and value.....	6
1.3. Workplace systems and processes.....	6
2. HEALTH AND WELLBEING.....	7
2.1. Compliance and Risk.....	7
2.2. Management.....	7
2.3. Leadership.....	8
2.4. Personal support.....	9
3. EQUITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY.....	10
3.1. Behaviour and communication.....	10
3.2. Human resource management practices.....	11
3.3. Psychological environment.....	12
3.4. Physical environment.....	12
3.5. Teamwork.....	12
3.6. Well-informed workplace.....	13
4. JOB DESIGN AND DEMANDS.....	13
4.1. Job content.....	13
4.2. Workload.....	14
4.3. Support.....	14
4.4. Hours and scheduling.....	15
4.5. Autonomy and flexibility.....	16
5. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.....	17
5.1 Quality Feedback.....	17

5.2 Professional and personal development	17
5.3 Career development and progression.....	18
6. REWARD AND RECOGNITION	18
6.1 Pay	19
6.2 Other benefits	19
6.3 Recognition.....	19
7. PROACTIVE PEOPLE PROCESSES	20
7.1. Recruitment, Selection and Onboarding.....	20
7.2. Performance review, career and succession planning.....	21
7.3. Performance management	21
7.4. Exit processes	22
7.5. Concern and conflict resolution	22
7.6 Human Resource Management education and support.....	22
8. COLLEGIALITY AND CONNECTION	23
8.1. Personal connection	23
8.2 Workplace connection	23
8.2. Professional community.....	24
8.3. Broader community	25
9. SOCIAL AND ENVIROMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY	25
9.1 Social and environmental impact.....	26
10. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND STANDARDS	26
10.1. Personal behaviour, including professional ethics.....	27
10.2. Professional judgement	27
10.3. Leadership and management systems.....	28
PILLARS SUMMARY and REFLECTIVE CHECKLIST	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Introduction

The AVA defines a Great Veterinary Workplace as one which seeks to develop, encourage, support, connect and motivate everyone within it. By providing an engaging and healthy work experience for individuals, great workplaces contribute to a thriving and sustainable veterinary profession essential for animal and public health.

These Great Veterinary Workplace Guidelines support the AVA's *Great Veterinary Workplace Policy*. The Policy acknowledges that skilled professions within a strong service industry require work environments that prioritise essential human resources across every role and career stage. The Policy's Recommendations reflect that Great Veterinary Workplaces require a balance of organisational, individual and public actions, supported by advocacy and educational activities at industry level.

Scope of the Guidelines

These Guidelines include actions for both employers and employees, spanning all roles and types of veterinary work within the sector. Although around 80% of veterinarians work in clinical practice, in this document "practice" and "practise" refer to the application of veterinary knowledge and skills in all contexts, and "organisation" refers to the practice, business, department or institution where that occurs.

The following Guidelines recognise the complex interplay of the organisations', workers', patients' and clients' needs. Based on established theory, peer-reviewed evidence and veterinary sector data, the Guidelines comprise ten Pillars which span effective leadership, HR and business management, professional standards and ethics. Together, they contribute to an engaged, healthy and high-performing veterinary workforce.

Use of these Guidelines

Focussing on the workplace to improve the everyday experience of those working and studying in the veterinary sector, these Guidelines aim to provide a central reference of helpful evidence-based goals, actions and behaviours. They can be used in combination with the Guidelines Summary and Reflective Checklist to guide internal organisational audits and improvements, management and staff education, and help prospective employees and shareholders determine whether a workplace might meet their needs.

Each Pillar includes a brief description relating to great veterinary workplaces. Beneath each Pillar sit key areas for consideration, underpinned by practical examples. Actions listed under one Pillar often also support other Pillars. Thus, the Guidelines should be considered in their entirety.


Examples are not exhaustive and will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect contemporary knowledge. Additional useful resources include WorkSafe, FairWork, Vet Board Guidelines, various employment and health legislation, and the many service providers offering tools, training and support relevant to these areas. Relevant AVA resources and programs are listed at the end of each Pillar.

Management practices rely on input and adoption by all workers, and today's leaders and leadership constructs will not be tomorrow's; therefore, these Guidelines are not always categorised into role-based responsibilities. Instead, they describe the attributes and actions of a Great Veterinary Workplace, allowing organisations and individuals the autonomy to implement these in ways which best suit their context.

Ultimately, these guidelines highlight that Great Veterinary Workplaces are intentional and multifactorial. By nature of the diversity of people who lead, work in and frequent them, they are also unique. Therefore, understanding oneself is also a key step in finding and creating a workplace that is a great fit for *you*.


The AVA Great Veterinary Workplaces Guidelines

Great veterinary workplaces recognise that every person working in the veterinary sector is unique and reasonably requires different things to thrive.

In navigating the following pillars, great workplaces use clear organisational vision, goals and values to guide their decisions. The needs of owners, shareholder  employees, clients, the veterinary professions, animals and the public should all be considered.

The AVA's ten pillars of Great Veterinary Workplaces are:

1. **Meaning and value**
2. **Health and wellbeing**
3. **Equity  clusion and diversity**
4. **Job design and demands**
5. **Growth and development**
6. **Reward and recognition**
7. **Proactive people processes**
8. **Collegiality and connection**
9. **Environmental and social responsibility**
10. **Professional ethics and standard **

In combination, these Pillars aim to deliver sustainable productivity, career engagement, human and animal health and wellbeing, profit  and respect for the veterinary professions.

1. MEANING AND VALUE

Great workplaces help provide veterinary professionals with the opportunities, capabilities and motivation to deliver high standards of animal health care in ways that are valued by clients, patients, employers and the professionals themselves. While motivations vary between team members, everyone is united by a clear, specific and appealing “big picture” vision and goals and know how they fit within that. Defined organisational values guide a strong, intentional workplace culture where empowered autonomy can flourish.

Examples of how great workplaces achieve this include:

1.1. Organisational vision, mission and objectives


People know why they are there, and where the organisation is headed.

- a. Time and resources are committed to collaboratively developing a clear organisational vision, mission and strategic objectives that are well aligned with the contemporary and future needs of the public and animals, owners and shareholders, the veterinary labour market and the profession.
- b. The organisation’s “big picture” is regularly communicated with the entire team and public to focus effort, inspire initiative and innovation, and clarify the business’s value proposition.
- c. The business’s progress towards specific and valued objectives is regularly monitored and openly communicated to the whole team, for example using a “balanced scorecard”-type approach to identify and measure workplace benefits to
 - shareholder/owners/managers (eg. meaningful vision and mission, return on investment, profit, risk management)
 - customers (eg. service quality, value, cost, innovation, timeliness, communication, trust)
 - all team members (eg. meaning, motivation, connection, performance, development, health, reward, balance)
 - process improvement (eg. efficiency, cost, resource requirements, consistency, safety),
- d. The business model is appropriate to assist the team in sustainably achieving the workplace objectives and strategy. For example, there are appropriate service offerings, pricing and profit structures, remuneration models, organisational structure and succession activities.
- e. Employees consider how (and if) their personal purpose is consistent with the organisation’s objectives when choosing roles that will facilitate sustained engagement.
- f. All team members seek to understand their own, and others,’ work motivator.
- g. The organisation invests time and resources to periodically review its environment and business strengths, weakness, threats and opportunities and identify priority areas for strategy development and business evolution.
- h. Early communication of any organisational changes and their reasons occurs. Team member discussion and questions are encouraged. Any transitions, such as staff numbers, responsibilities or required skills and knowledge, are proactively supported and enacted in accordance with employment law.

1.2. Lived values



People feel confident to make decisions and behave in ways that support the team’s culture.

- a. Time and resources are committed to collaborating with all team members to develop clear and meaningful organisational values.

- b. Values are not just “words on a wall” but are regularly considered and referenced personally, professionally and as an organisation to guide “how we do things round here” 
- c. Leaders and managers lead by example, demonstrating behaviours and management decisions that are consistent with the organisations’ values and which set the tone for workplace culture.
- d. Every team member recognises that their own behaviours and decisions contribute to an empowering and supportive work culture. Individuals hold themselves and others to account in acting in alignment with workplace values.
- e. Everyone is encouraged to identify and suggest improvements to any policies, processes and ways of working that are inconsistent with workplace values. Employers and managers regularly seek specific feedback about workplace culture from team members at all levels, and act on issues identified.


1.3 Understood costs and value

Everyone is supported to understand and confidently communicate their own, and their team’s, professional value and costs.

- a. Training, communication resources and processes ensure that all team members understand, and can communicate to the public, the value of performing various work.
- b. The value of all team members’ and the veterinary professions’ work is clearly and regularly communicated to the public, for example through practice social media and newsletters.
- c. All team members are guided to understand the costs involved in the provision of their veterinary services, so that fees and prices are charged and communicated to the public with confidence. This includes an appreciation that staffing levels and pay are influenced by total business income 
- d. The organisation supports individuals’ discussions with clients by proactively communicating the business’s services, including after-hours options, and costs upon enquiry.
- e. Consistent billing is facilitated by clear and specific schedules of costs, including the use of bundled procedure pricing that can be refined for each patient.
- f. Service pricing sufficiently encompasses all aspects of associated costs, including non-billable work such as record keeping, some communications, management tasks including policy and protocol development, and teaching and learning. The high professional value of those work aspects is appropriately recognised within the profit structure.
- g. Team members can clearly see, through HR processes, feedback mechanisms and organisational data and reporting, how their efforts are contributing value to their organisation, customers and patients and broader community 

1.3. Workplace systems and processes

Continued process improvement is encouraged to reduce unnecessary or low-value work.

- a. A culture of continuous workplace improvement is encouraged, where process improvements and technologies are explored to reduce low value, repetitive, unattractive work and increase efficiency, accuracy and time spent on meaningful, high value work 
- b. Appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative measurement and monitoring occurs to identify opportunities for process improvements, and the results of improvements.
- c. Leaders are responsive to team members’ suggestions and experiences.

AVA Resources relating to MEANING AND VALUE

AVA Employer of Choice Program, Strategies 13,19,21, 28

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities

AVA HR Advisory Service - Links offering various options: Starting work, At work (Member benefit)

2. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Great veterinary workplaces prioritise physical, mental and emotional health and safety through effective prevention, mitigation and response strategies. Great workplaces know that health, wellbeing and resilience are multifactorial, dynamic and influenced by an individual's environment. People with diverse health and wellbeing needs are well supported. Continuing education to understand and care for oneself and others is actively encouraged. Individuals are best placed to monitor their own health and wellbeing and take proactive steps to maintain or respond to it, however everyone supports each other in the pursuit of good health.

Examples of how great workplaces achieve this include:

2.1. Compliance and Risk





Everyone understands and helps prevent workplace physical and psychological risks.

- a. The workplace complies with national, state and territory Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) legislation, guidance and professional regulation, to provide fit for purpose facilities, equipment, training, licensing and support.
- b. Risks and hazards are identified and communicated to all team members, and the public.
- c. Team members regularly contribute to the development, communication, adoption and refinement of organisational systems, policies and procedures that reduce and respond appropriately to hazards associated with veterinary work. These include working with radiation, cytotoxic drugs, chemicals, and dangerous and nervous animals as well as agreed approaches to managing fatigue and supporting pregnancy.
- d. Incident reporting and resolution processes are explained and collaboratively and regularly reviewed.
- e. Risks and hazards are regularly monitored and all policies and procedures refined or revised accordingly.
- f. Workplace Health and Safety and relevant employment award and legislation requirements for work-free time, such as regular mandated breaks, maximum work periods, and time away from work, are met or exceeded.

2.2. Management




Processes, procedures, policies and management decisions prevent and effectively manage harmful incidents.

- a. All team members are supported to understand and access the workplaces' conflict resolution policy and process/es. These are applicable to internal conflict and to team member/client conflict and are practical, respectful and constructive. Conflict resolution policies and processes are regularly reviewed in consultation with all team members, who each enact and support their use.
- b. There are regular opportunities for discussion and peer coaching including clinical rounds, management meetings with employee contributions, stressful event debriefing and mentoring.

- c. Gratitude and positivity are built into regular practises, for example by displaying client cards, puppy school photos, highlighting well-managed challenging cases during rounds, and celebrating outstanding effort, “wins” of any magnitude, and strong teamwork.
- d. Personal leave opportunities which support mental and physical health are provided, approved and respected. All individuals monitor their needs and proactively identify when such leave is necessary 
- e. Managers or employers ensure that leave and breaks are taken as rostered  working during breaks, days off and/or leave is occurring, managers seek to understand the reasons and resolve them so chronic overworking does not occur.
- f. Employers and managers work with employees to develop business systems, models and staffing arrangements that enable leave entitlements to be met without putting extra pressure on other team members 
- g. Appealing spaces which facilitate both private reflection and team connection are accessible 
- h. All other Pillars are conscientiously considered to deliver motivational, performance, connection, professional and practical needs. This includes an appropriate workload and healthy, sustainable work-life integration.

2.3. Leadership

Leaders model healthy habits, empathy and responsiveness; they champion a proactive, healthy workplace.

- a. Personal safety always takes precedence, including over various other professional responsibilities.
- b. Leaders model actions and attitudes which prioritise health, by building an open and safe culture which celebrates and supports healthy work/rest-of-life integration.
- c. Leaders model and support a culture of psychological safety in which everyone feels comfortable talking about mistakes and suboptimal decisions to learn from them 
- d. Leaders promote a culture of active engagement with health and safety matters, support good practise and challenge unsafe practises.
- e. Leaders facilitate opportunities to understand team members’ experiences and investigate  their suggestions.
- f. Employers and employees acknowledge joint responsibility in looking after their own mental wellbeing and that of their colleagues. This includes identifying and mitigating potential risks and triggers  and seeking personal development and/or support when necessary.

2.4. Personal support

Everyone has the awareness and practical ways to seek health support. Everyone looks out for each other.

- a. A culture where all individuals, whether employee or employer, can discuss concerns or challenges with their teammates is promoted. All employees know that an issue raised with their manager will be taken seriously, confidentially, and with due consideration towards solutions and support.
- b. Within the team there is awareness, knowledge and skill to effectively prevent and respond to physical and mental illness, injury and disability at work, or affecting work.
- c. Employers provide access to a suitable Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and provide clear information about this and other relevant helplines and support groups, so that everyone knows how to readily access assistance when needed.
- d. All team members respect their own and others' health limitations and possible impacts, rather than trying to "push through" or "tough them out". This includes taking and respecting necessary sick leave or personal leave and following advice from external services where necessary.

2.5. Well-informed workplace and community

Everyone has access to the information they need to support their own and others health and wellbeing.

- a. To support the wellbeing of both staff and public, information about resources which support the emotional, physical and financial aspects of animal ownership is provided to all team members and clients. For example, the organisation and public-facing team members can provide information about public health risks, pet insurance, third party payment options, any subsidised vet care options, ambulatory animal health services, telehealth and pet loss grief counselling.
- b. Workplace policies and procedures, including those relating to mental and physical health and safety, are explained within employee induction. These are reviewed and updated on a regular basis in collaboration with staff.
- c. Staff receive regular training to support strong compliance with OHS regulations and guidance.
- d. Workplace, profession and community-based initiatives and discussions which build stronger understanding of health and wellbeing are supported.
- e. All team members are provided with training to build capabilities to look after their own wellbeing, and that of others. This includes education which strengthens
 - preventative and mitigative capabilities; such as having difficult conversations, gratitude practice and mindfulness, navigating ethically challenging situations, leadership and human resource management skills, reflection and active listening, and establishing personal boundaries, and
 - reactive tools such as mental health first aid training and personal strategies to respond to ill-health.
- f. The workplace supports initiatives at individual, organisational and profession-wide levels which seek to educate the public in key veterinary issues, for example:
 - the financial, practical and ethical responsibilities of animal ownership
 - reasonable expectations for treatment, including costs, practical limitations and professional boundaries

- the rewards, challenges and impacts of veterinary work to veterinary professionals and teams

AVA resources relating to HEALTH AND WELLBEING:

AVA Policy: Safeguarding and improving the wellbeing of veterinary teams

AVA Policy and Guidelines: Cytotoxic drug handling

AVA Policy: Employment of new graduates

AVA Policy: Diversity and Inclusion

AVA VetHealth <https://www.ava.com.au/member-services/vethealth/>

AVA Benevolent Fund

AVA Counselling Hotline

AVA Mental Health First Aid program

AVA Employer of Choice Program, Strategy 12, 13, 18, 30

AVA Veterinary Business Group education activities

AVA Veterinary Business Group Workplace Health and Safety Policies and Procedures Manual Template

AVA Veterinary Business Group WHS Psychological Injury resource

AVA Superfriends Wellness Report 2021

AVA HR Advisory Service - Links offering various options: Starting work, At work, Wellness resources, WHS resources (Member benefit)

3.EQUITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Great veterinary workplaces are highly inclusive and recognise the many benefits of diversity within their community. All personnel within the workplace are treated fairly and equitably, with zero tolerance for prejudice, discrimination, aggression or other inappropriate behaviours. Management practices and individual behaviours seek to create an environment where people feel safe, connected, respected, valued, and able to express themselves.

Examples of how great veterinary workplaces achieve this include :

3.1. Behaviour and communication

Everyone can feel safe, respected and included, and is empowered to take action if that is breached.

- Workplace values and a code of acceptable conduct is communicated to everyone and applies to everyone within the workplace, including external service providers and members of the public.
- Written, verbal and non-verbal language is inclusive and respectful, as experienced by minority groups in the workplace and community.
- Sensitive discussion seeking to understand other's emotional, physical and mental needs and belief systems is encouraged and modelled with the whole team, to build a well-informed and considerate workplace culture.
- Communication with owners is clear, comprehensive and free of medical jargon so that they are able to make well informed decisions. Options for optimal animal health management are presented to owners without prejudice or assumption. Owners' identified constraints are respected, with a

focus on practical solutions. Team members are responsive to questions which improve owners' understanding and participation in patient care.

- e. Resources which support good communication are accessible to team members and clients, for example written information, an interpreter service, audiovisual material (YouTube etc) or necessary technology.
- f. A zero-tolerance policy exists for discriminatory, abusive or inappropriate behaviours by employers, employees and the public. This is clearly communicated and enacted; everyone is empowered to call out inappropriate behaviours.
- g. If discrimination or bullying may have occurred, a reporting, recording and investigation process is followed, with the assistance of appropriate resources and support
- h. There is a consistent and enforceable approach to inappropriate patterns of behaviour which may require involvement or support from other agencies such as Fairwork, Worksafe, AVA HR support, and state regulators. Workplaces can refuse to work with repeatedly or wilfully discriminatory, abusive or inappropriate people.

3.2. Human resource management practices

Employment processes, practises and conditions are transparent, fair and provide equal opportunity.

- a. Processes and decisions about employment, advancement, responsibility and reward are fair, transparent and equitable in accordance with Australian employment and anti-discrimination laws
- b. Employment decisions are made or informed, wherever possible, by more than one person. Diversity of decision-making perspective, for example across gender, sexuality, age, experience, qualification and role, physical ability and ethnicity mitigates the risk of discriminatory implicit bias
- c. Information about workplace opportunities for development, advancement or reward are provided to all employees. There is transparency about when, why and how opportunities may be open to staff, what pay range is applicable, and the basis on which decisions are made.
- d. Employers and employees understand their responsibilities under laws and regulations.
- e. Personal leave respectfully accommodates the broad range of reasons it may be required.
- f. Parental leave applies to all genders and recognises all stages and forms of parenting, including miscarriage, stillbirth and adoption
- g. Caregiving in all its forms is recognised as important, and variable in the challenges it may pose to team members. Employers are open to flexible working arrangements and leave allowances that support caregivers to contribute and progress meaningfully
- h. Strategies, policies and actions related to equity, diversity and inclusion are regularly reviewed by the whole team or representatives spanning all segments of it.

3.3. Psychological environment

Everyone is encouraged to be themselves and be open-minded and curious in understanding others.

- a. Diversity within the workplace and the profession is championed by leaders.
- b. Diverse perspectives are sought in making workplace decisions and in reviewing policies and procedures, including a diversity strategy.
- c. Autonomous self-expression through cultural and religious practices and personal appearance is facilitated in accordance with OHS requirements.
- d. Leaders establish ways to regularly check in with all employees. They practice an open-door policy, inviting discussion about concerns, challenges and suggestions without prejudice or reprisal.
- e. Visible and practical support is given to initiatives that champion and improve equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- f. There is visibility for all staff and clients about how to access support, resources and connection if it is needed (eg industry groups and relevant government and non-government and not for profit organisations, EAPs etc)

3.4. Physical environment

All team members and animal owners are well supported to physically participate in the workplace.

- a. Facilities and equipment support the participation of diversely able people. Management is open to modification suggestions which support accessible work activities.
- b. Breastfeeding, pumping and baby change areas, bathroom facilities and spaces suitable for prayer or quiet reflection are available and appropriate for these purposes.
- c. Work and profession-based activities and venues are planned to span the physical and psychological needs of all team members.

3.5. Teamwork

An inclusive community is fostered.

- a. Diversity of personal values, beliefs, knowledge and capabilities is respected, fostered and harnessed through management and clinical practices which encourage sharing of perspectives. Collaborative and/or consultative leadership and decision making occurs through workplace meetings, feedback processes, clinical rounds, mentoring and coaching, and communication with clients.
- b. Animal owners and all staff are considered important members of an animals' health care team. Differences in the understanding, beliefs and priorities of individuals are explored with curiosity and open-mindedness, with the aim of identifying shared goals, reducing knowledge gaps, and defining acceptable outcomes.

- c. Activities, discussions, continuing education, physical spaces and facilities, and cultural elements (such as name badges, uniforms, titles and privileges) are inclusive, fostering a sense of community within the workplace, local area and the veterinary professions.

3.6. Well-informed workplace

Everyone aims to build shared understanding of their own and others' needs

- a. External and internal training, and team-led informal education opportunities are encouraged and facilitated, such as culturally diverse lunches and brief presentations about (as just some examples), neurodiversity, LGBTQI+ issues, handicapability, diverse religious and cultural celebrations.
- b. Individuals and/or managers provide explanation as to why a behaviour or communication is unacceptable, to strengthen workplace understanding and help prevent recurrence
- c. Information about barriers to equality and diversity and the consequences of discrimination is sought and communicated to the whole team so it may inform workplace actions and decisions. Sources include, but are not limited to, published research and reports, government and workplace resources, and continuing education opportunities.

EQUITY, INCLUSION and DIVERSITY: Workplace education, education and support activities

Relevant AVA resources:

AVA Employer of Choice Program, Strategies 7, 8, 13, 27

AVA Return to Work program

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities

AVA Policy: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

AVA HR Advisory Service - Links offering various options: Starting work, At work, Managing performance, Wellness (Member benefit)

4. JOB DESIGN AND DEMANDS




To meet the varied demands of veterinary work, great workplaces encourage open dialogue between employers and employees to understand individuals' scope to contribute according to their various evolving skills, constraints, needs, motivators and goals. Work roles are consciously refined to facilitate individual engagement, achievement and sustainability. Individuals' technical and non-technical capabilities are valued and nurtured through thoughtful job design. Everyone feels able to openly identify when work demands exceed capacity, and also steps in to share the load when they're able.

Examples of how great veterinary workplaces achieve this include:

4.1. Job content


People do work that is interesting, meaningful and well-suited to their knowledge, skills and capabilities.

- a. All employees have clear role descriptions including areas of responsibility and accountability, which are updated regularly to include any aspects of the role which have changed or developed.
- b. Everyone understands how various tasks contribute to the "big picture".
- c. There is variety of work within each role.

- d. Appropriate work within a role is assigned to that employee based on their skills, knowledge and experience. All team members can communicate what they are legally allowed to do and their level of competency so that work can be delegated appropriately 
- e. There is agreement between employee and employer about the scope of expected work, including any changes in scope.
- f. Veterinarians or veterinary nurses and technicians' job content may recognise valuable non-technical skills and knowledge which add to the non-clinical or internal aspects of the business 
- g. Managers welcome employee-led discussions where an employee believes a role could be developed to make better use of their skills, or if they have concerns regarding tasks being assigned inappropriately.
- h. All team members are guided to consider  and communicate their capabilities, interests, work needs and constraints to their manager and employer.

4.2. Workload

People have an appropriate and sustainable workload and help each other when exceptional circumstances arise.

- a. Flexible teams coordinate the provision of services to clients and maintain oversight of animal health, animal welfare and public health. Delegation and collaboration supports a manageable and fulfilling workload for all team members and builds varied knowledge across differing roles.
- b. All staff are provided with the training and support to appropriately prioritise and allocate time for work, including non-client-facing aspects, to prevent chronic overbooking. Contingencies for emergencies are built into scheduling 
- c. The organisation's capacity to accept work is understood and appropriately acted upon by all team members
- d. Stories about chronically long work hours, poorly supported work or extreme altruism are not glorified. The workplace culture celebrates conscientiousness accompanied by self-awareness of personal needs and limits, and the ability to discuss these constructively to find win/win solutions.
- e. All public-facing team members receive training and support to communicate to the public the business's approach to accepting work, expectations of clients (for example around cancellation, payment, client behaviour and patient preparation) and work capacity or capability limitations.

4.3. Support


Everyone is provided with the support they need to do their work well.

- a. Practical supervision, assistance and support for work is provided and based on identified need, irrespective of career stage. Continued learning is supported throughout all team members' careers.

- b. At employment, and within regular performance review and development planning, employers and employees work together to identify any need for support and to agree on its form and extent.
- c. Recent graduates and trainee nurses are expected to require significant direct supervision from suitably experienced and capable professionals of good standing. Regular and frequent check-ins within the first 3-12+ months of employment occur until capabilities are demonstrated and confidence is strengthened.
- d. Direct supervision by suitably qualified staff occurs if/where unqualified team members perform roles that require technical (including medical) knowledge.
- e. Afterhours work is appropriately supported by trained nursing and/or veterinarian peers, based on personal and job need as agreed between the employer and employee. This can include support for both technical and non-technical reasons, such as safety and efficiency.
- f. The options for referral, inter-practice collaboration and/or specialist opinion or assistance are made clear to all veterinarians, and these collaborative professional relationships are maintained.

4.4. Hours and scheduling

Employers and employees agree on realistic, anticipated and sustainable work hours and schedules which support a healthy work /rest-of-life balance.

- a. Work schedules are set in consultation with staff, to maintain and monitor workloads which are fair, anticipated, and which provide adequate time for all aspects of the job (such as client communications, record keeping, diagnostic interpretation, teaching and learning, management tasks and meetings).
- b. Any unforeseen work hours are infrequent, genuinely unanticipated and rewarded and/or recognised appropriately.
- c. There is a transparent and practical system in place to record and monitor hours worked, including any overtime and/or afterhours jobs, to ensure correct remuneration and identify patterns that may require workload adjustment. If “reasonable overtime” occurs, this is clearly defined and agreed upon.
- d. Workplace culture celebrates and supports boundaries between work and time on breaks or away from work. Individuals take responsibility for, and realise the value of, their own time and wellbeing and make conscious decisions about taking breaks.
- d. Appropriate breaks are scheduled and protected for physical and mental health. All employees are effectively quarantined from work when they are on breaks or rostered off. 
- e. There are systems, and time within scheduled hours, in place to facilitate good communication and smooth transition of patient and client care between team members. All team members utilise these systems effectively to protect their own, and others,' time off alongside animal health.

- f. Afterhours requirements are clearly communicated and agreed to. Maximum hours of continuous work, including fielding public enquiries, are recognised according to occupational health and safety legislation and employment laws.
- g. There is a clear policy about provision of veterinary services outside regular work hours, which aligns with the relevant state vet regulatory guidance. This is developed and reviewed in consultation with veterinarians within, and where necessary, beyond the business so that all team members understand their rights, responsibilities and available resources in providing afterhours care.
- h. The business and all team members proactively communicate to the public the afterhours service options offered. Any limitations in the level of supervision or hours of emergency service or hospitalisation provision, and any reasonably anticipated risks, are clearly communicated to assist the animal-owning public in their responsibility to understand and make provisions for accessing afterhours care.

4.5. Autonomy and flexibility

Team members are empowered to make decisions and provide suggestions about how they do their work.

- a. Expected work and/or outcomes are clear and documented. Along with an understanding of organisational goals and values, the teamwork required and any relevant constraints, this gives employees autonomy in deciding how they and their team will successfully meet these goals.
- b. Initiative and flexibility is encouraged for a resilient workplace.
- c. When flexible working conditions or a change in employment hours, duties or scheduling is requested by any team member, employers, managers and employees work together openly to craft solutions and accommodate these requests wherever possible. Great workplaces recognise, respect and do not judge the many reasons – often personal – that flexibility or a different work-life balance is required.
- d. All team members recognise the possible impacts of flexible or part time work on the rest of the team, and work to support each other in their need for flexibility.

AVA resources relating to JOB DESIGN and DEMANDS:

AVA Employer of Choice Program, Strategies 1, 9, 10, 11, 21, 24, 29

AVA Policy: Employment of New Graduates

AVA Policy: Safeguarding the wellbeing of veterinary teams

AVA Return to work program

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities

AVA Practice Management Induction Manual

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities - Human resources - Various

AVA HR Advisory Service - Links offering various options: Recruitment, Pay, Starting work, At work, Leave, Managing performance, Ending work, WHS and Wellness (Member benefit)

5. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Great workplaces encourage continued learning and career progression for all team members, for example through coaching and mentoring opportunities, structured and balanced appraisals, clear guidance and appropriate support, and valued education, development and advancement opportunities. There is genuine care for personal growth as a foundation for pride, motivation, and performance. The workplaces' systems and culture facilitate reflective learning from mistakes.

Examples of how great veterinary workplaces achieve this include:

5.1 Quality Feedback

Everyone can understand the results of their efforts.

- a. Appropriate processes, tools and culture and skills exist for everyone, including employers and employees, to respectfully deliver and receive regular, balanced and constructive feedback with emotional intelligence. This includes 360 degree (internal) and external (client) feedback mechanisms, and the consistent use of 2-way performance appraisals and staff exit interviews to identify strengths and areas for development. Due consideration is always given to the aim (positive reinforcement or constructive?), context and style of feedback.


5.2 Professional and personal development

Everyone is supported to learn and grow in personally motivating ways.

- a. Professional *and* personal development is supported, recognised and rewarded as important for thriving, motivated, highly capable personnel and the delivery of professional services.
- b. Continuing professional and personal development (CPD) is facilitated by the provision of continuing education allowance and leave and time within workhours to undertake teaching and learning. There is time and opportunity to implement new knowledge and skills and share information with team members.
- c. Both clinical/technical and non-clinical education is valued and supported.
- d. Everyone is empowered to guide their own professional and personal development that supports, in direct or indirect ways, the organisation's various needs and goals. Regular structured employment reviews, informal feedback, peer coaching and/or mentoring provides additional insights.
- e. A range of types of CPD and development opportunities are considered and facilitated; for example, information and education hub subscriptions, in person and online events, courses and forums, in-house resources, one-on-one coaching and training and sabbaticals, secondments and exchanges between workplaces.
- f. On-the-job skill and knowledge development, including through internship or residency, is supported by sustainable scheduling and is remunerated appropriately for the role's competency and knowledge requirements, level of supervision, accountability and performance.
- g. A growth mindset culture is modelled and encouraged, where everyone is open to trying new things and learning within the workplace, including through debriefing of mistakes or suboptimal outcomes.

5.3 Career development and progression

Everyone can access ideas and opportunities for desired progression.

- a. Diverse role models are visible within the workplace and broader veterinary profession. 
- b. A variety of career progression opportunities are visible, accessible and attainable irrespective of financial, care-giving or geographical constraints.
- c. There are fair, clear and transparent structures, criteria and rewards (including remuneration) for progression within the organisation.
- d. Application and selection processes are fair, understood and truly open to all.
- e. Employers and managers are receptive to innovation and suggestions for new or alternative career development and progression which aligns to the business vision and objectives.
- f. People can be seen and respected as leaders irrespective of job title and are supported to develop their leadership skills and responsibilities.
- g. Opportunities for “shadowing”, mentoring and/or on-the-job training for various roles, including ownership or senior management responsibilities, are provided to support smooth succession and shared confidence.

AVA resources relating to GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Relevant AVA resources:

AVA Employer of Choice Program, Strategies 4, 5, 11, 20, 25, 26

AVA Policy: Employment of New Graduates

AVA Return to work program

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities - Managing your business - social media and marketing resources, Business management, Risk management

AVA HR Advisory Service - Links offering various options: Recruitment, Pay, Starting work, At work, Leave, Managing performance, Ending work, WHS and Wellness (Member benefit)

6. REWARD AND RECOGNITION

Reward (including wages) and recognition systems are fair, equitable and transparent, and serve to positively reinforce valued effort, growth and achievement. Great workplaces also know that equity is not the same as equality and despite its immediate efficiencies, “one size” does not necessarily fit all.

Recognising that every person uniquely assigns value to various intrinsic (internal, intangible) and extrinsic (external, tangible) rewards and brings different strengths to the team, employers regularly work together with each employee to agree on appropriate employment conditions which align with the organisation’s needs and values. Great workplaces establish systems to regularly seek, record and act on positive feedback from customers, patients and team members.

Examples of how great veterinary workplaces achieve this include:

6.1 Pay

Pay is fair and equivalent and reflects valued team and individual work.

- a. Pay is fair and equitable for all team members, relevant to their respective responsibilities and capabilities. Pay is regularly reviewed by management for equality and fairness, and in the context of the broader labour market. As one example, there is no gender pay gap across equivalent roles.
- b. Pay is transparent, with pay ranges for all roles advertised. Sharing details of employment conditions, including remuneration, is not restricted by the employer.
- c. Any relationship between pay/rewards and work/outcomes is clear and documented. For example, remuneration for various afterhours work, overtime, meeting performance targets or in return for an increase in responsibility or capability is transparent, agreed and documented.
- d. Incentivised pay structures consider the regular role of teamwork in providing great veterinary services and remunerate people in a way that recognises and strengthens that. For example, where performance targets rely on the teams' combined skills, knowledge and efficiency, all involved individuals are rewarded for the teams' achievement. This may be through profit sharing, team bonuses or other reward mechanisms.
- e. Pay complies with all relevant employment law, and all parties know where to seek information and support if necessary (for example, Fairwork, Chambers of Commerce, and AVA HR Advice service). The relevant veterinary Awards are considered as a minimum limit and are considered alongside other information.
- f. All team members ensure their work hours and other relevant details (including afterhours procedures, travel, medical record keeping, client communications and other expenses) are documented for accuracy and future reference.

6.2 Other benefits

People are rewarded for valued contributions in meaningful ways.

- a. The reasons for further reward are transparent, understood, fair, equal and effectively aligned with the organisation's mission and goals.
- b. Beyond their pay, individuals' valued skills, knowledge, capabilities and work are rewarded in ways that hold meaning and value for that person, in alignment with the role and organisation. This may involve both tangible benefits (money, business equity, facilities, equipment, uniform, team, food and drinks, or development opportunities) and/or intangible benefits (change in title, team dynamic, privileges, respect of others, greater alignment of job meaning with personal purpose etc).

6.3 Recognition

The right people are recognised for the right things in the right ways.

- a. Reasons for special recognition are made clear to the recipient/s and broader team, and support the organisation's mission, goals and strategy.

- b. Recognition of effort and achievements are specific and tailored to their context. Individual outcomes are appropriately attributed to the person responsible; team outcomes see the whole team recognised for their efforts.
- c. Visible recognition and celebration of effort occurs within both the team and broader organisation and community
- d. Employees and employers think creatively about benefits and recognition, focusing on those which best help to create a positive work culture for their team and which are valued by the employee.

AVA resources relating to REWARD AND RECOGNITION:

AVA Employer of Choice Program, Strategies 1, 19, 23

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities - Human resources - Industrial awards, Business management, Risk management

AVA HR Advisory Service - Links offering various options: Recruitment, Pay, Starting work, At work, Leave, Managing performance (Member benefit)


7. PROACTIVE PEOPLE PROCESSES

Great veterinary workplaces build employer and employee understanding and confidence through consistent, considered human resource management processes. They understand that as a service business, their success relies heavily on well-aligned, highly capable and motivated people. These businesses focus on attracting and selecting the right people for the right jobs, helping them to understand and sustainably thrive in their role, and ensuring their eventual exit from the business is constructive and not disruptive. Great workplaces invest in developing processes that support their significant investment in people.

Examples of how great veterinary workplaces can achieve this include:

7.1. Recruitment, Selection and Onboarding

People are sought, selected and supported to succeed in the workplace.

- a. Recruitment is thoughtful – requirements and negotiables are well-considered and a position description with key knowledge and capabilities is developed. These serve as helpful references in selecting the most appropriate recruitment channels (eg via universities, non-vet forums and veterinary sector recruitment agencies and advertisers), differentiating and personalising roles, and during onboarding, performance review and development planning 
- b. To ensure expectations match reality, employers are transparent and honest about the organisation and the role when hiring new team members, including any potentially difficult aspects. Candidates are equally honest in identifying any concerns or challenges.
- c. Employers engage in open and honest discussion with all team members about finding, selecting and supporting the right people in the right ways to succeed.

- d. Selection processes are fair and afford equal opportunities to shortlisted candidates. For example, the time, questions and opportunities offered to applicants during their selection process are equitable, and equal diversity of perspective is sought regarding each person.
- e. Employers provide written contracts to all employees to ensure everyone is aware of agreed expectations, pay and other benefits, entitlements, responsibilities and obligations.
- f. Anyone new to the organisation receives appropriate support to carry out their role and are actively engaged in two way feedback opportunities in the first few months of employment.

7.2. Performance review, career and succession planning

Everyone knows how they're doing at their work, and what they need and want to do next.

- a. Referring to their position description, everyone understands what they are responsible and accountable for within their role and has agreed with their manager how performance in those areas will be measured.
- b. Performance measurements are specific, relevant, and balanced across all areas of capability required for the job including technical skills and knowledge (such as surgical, medical, financial, IT etc) and non-technical capabilities (such as communication, teamwork, peer coaching/mentoring, leadership).
- c. Measurements reflect where performance is valuable to achieving organisational goals over short, medium *and* long terms. Quality, quantity and consistency of work are considered through quantitative and qualitative measurement.
- d. Performance review and planning gives due consideration to the capability, motivation and opportunities given to each team member. For example, performance measures and goals must align with sufficient opportunities to develop and perform, and with the available resources including time, people, equipment, information and training. If stronger performance is desired, leaders seek to understand what, if any, additional resources may be required.
- e. All team members are guided to consider and communicate their capabilities, interests, work needs and constraints to their manager and employer at least annually as part of their performance review and planning.
- f. Role description and performance indicators are regularly reviewed; for example, upon a new person assuming the role; as part of performance appraisals; at the request of either employer or employee; and in response to an exit interview.

7.3. Performance management

People are supported in their motivation, capability and opportunity to deliver on work expectations, but continued underperformance is not accommodated.

- a. Managers are pro-active in managing poor behaviour or underperformance of team members, initially through specifically identifying it and seeking to understand the reasons for it.
- b. Managers and employers then work together with the employee to provide motivation, capability and opportunities for improvement; for example through clear instruction, goals, support and/or

training but if needed, team members are removed, or reassigned to roles which better fit the person.

- c. Employees are encouraged to use their regular review meetings to raise any concerns and request support.

7.4. Exit processes

When people leave, leaders and managers learn more about the workplace while minimising disruption to it.

- a. Employers have, or seek advice to develop, a good understanding of legal requirements and processes for ending employment in a range of circumstances so that this is managed legally, ethically and fairly.
- b. Managers review potential gaps in managing workloads and specific tasks, and seek to minimise disruption through succession planning. For example this may require early recruitment and onboarding, internal promotion, education and training, process or service changes, and customer and team communications.
- c. Exit interviews routinely occur when a team member leaves. This may be facilitated by a human resources person external to the team to encourage honest and complete feedback and suggestions. Constructive feedback is passed onto relevant leaders and managers and improvements considered and/or actioned.

7.5. Concern and conflict resolution

Everyone understands how to respectfully raise and constructively respond to concerns and conflicts.

- a. There are clear and transparent complaints processes for dealing with complaints from the public and for dealing with internal concerns. This process is supportive, accessible, fair and constructive, and is well documented for all involved. All team members are educated about this procedure so that they are aware of what to do when anyone has a concern.
- b. Leaders and all team members seek to more fully understand a situation where conflict exists, actively listen to others, explain their own perspective clearly, and focus on solutions.
- c. Employees highlight any concerns with HR processes to their managers, discuss suggestions for solutions and seek advice from the AVA HR Advisory service, FairWork and/or their relevant state and federal small business support resources if needed.

7.6 Human Resource Management education and support

Leaders and managers are encouraged to develop skills in designing and managing engaging, fulfilling and sustainable jobs.

- a. Leaders and managers undertake continuing education or access expert advice and resources in integrated Human Resource management

- b. Time and money are invested in improving and reviewing human resource management processes, including seeking advice from subject matter experts such as HR professionals and/or organisational psychologists to improve recruitment, management, and exit processes where necessary

AVA resources relating to PROACTIVE PEOPLE PROCESSES

Relevant AVA resources:

AVA Employer of Choice Program, Strategies 2, 3, 10, 11, 14, 15, 21, 22, 26

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities: Human resources - Industrial awards, Business management, Risk management, General business information links

AVA Practice Management Induction Manual

AVA HR Advisory Service - Links offering various options: Recruitment, Pay, Starting work, At work, Leave, Managing performance (Member benefit)

8. COLLEGIALITY AND CONNECTION

Great veterinary workplaces encourage and facilitate connection: between team members, between the organisation and its customers, between veterinary businesses, with veterinary and other health care professions and amongst the broader public community. They are mindful that personal non-work-related relationships are also an important part of a balanced, sustainable and fulfilling life for everyone and take conscious steps to support those. Great workplaces help their team members to feel supported and valued for their contribution within a range of communities.

8.1. Personal connection

Opportunities exist for everyone to develop personal connections within and outside of work.

- a. Workplace induction and review processes facilitate development of supportive networks, for example for the purpose of mentoring, peer coaching and social connections.
- b. Work tasks and breaks are scheduled and equipped to facilitate interaction between team members.
- c. Reasonable and mutually agreed afterhours requirements allow for regular time physically and mentally away from work.
- d. Team members are encouraged to engage in social events and activities outside of work, with and/or without their work colleagues.
- e. Partners and family members are invited to participate in some workplace social events, to enhance opportunities for connection and inclusion.

8.2 Workplace connection

The workplace community is celebrated and strengthened by formal and informal symbols, stories and rituals

- a. Symbols, facilities and equipment that signify a professional or workplace community are used in ways that are meaningful and appreciated by team members. For example, name badges, uniforms and scrubs, employee carparking, staff noticeboards, coffee mugs, coffee machine, water bottles, lunchrooms and other non-public areas.

- b. Regular meetings that include everyone, and others which include functional or crossfunctional teams, are scheduled and protected, for example practice meetings, clinical rounds and working groups (focussed on specific workplace projects or goals (such as Diversity and Inclusion, Environmental Sustainability, Team Wellbeing, Client Communications etc)
- c. The format of meetings consistently encourages contribution from everyone present, bringing diversity of perspective to shared celebration, goals and challenges.
- d. Workplace social and educational events are encouraged and held regularly. There is balance between in- and out-of-hours events, recognising that mental and physical time away from work is also important.
- e. Birthdays, employment milestones and other occasions and achievements are celebrated by the whole team.

8.2. Professional community

Everyone is encouraged to connect with others in and beyond the veterinary sector. Professional collegiality is fostered irrespective of commercial competition.

- a. Collegiality and connection is modelled and facilitated between professional peers and businesses, for example through encouraging local social and professional events, special interest educational opportunities, sharing resources (products, people or equipment), or co-servicing clients with diverse needs.
- b. Mentoring and peer coaching relationships beyond the workplace are practically encouraged. For example, recent graduates are encouraged to participate in the AVA Graduate Mentor program and time is planned to build these relationships. Career development planning considers the option to seek mentor/s for general or specific development purposes.
- c. Where there is need to meet non-veterinary workload, relationships are established with suitable paraprofessionals whose work complements the veterinary teams'.
- d. All team members are helped to understand the role and intended value of professional bodies such as the AVA and VNCA, regulators (state Boards, AVBC) and unions (Professional Scientists of Australia). These organisations are recognised as integral parts of the veterinary profession which employ and represent the perspectives of member veterinarians, nurses and others to advance the professions.
- e. Team members are encouraged to strengthen their professional bodies through contribution of many individuals' perspective and skills, for example through volunteer involvement, membership or employment.
- f. Team members have the opportunity and encouragement to share and discuss current issues, learning and initiatives within, and emerging from, veterinary sector groups and resources such as VIN, AVA and SIGs, VNCA, VetEd, SVC, AVN (according to any confidentiality rules), and other forums.

- g. The workplace encourages and builds teams that span various work areas, qualifications, experience levels and organisations, to enhance innovation, strengthen mutual understanding and develop complementary skills and knowledge. For example, relationships with local human health support services and professionals are fostered, in recognition of the interplay between human and animal health and wellbeing.
- h. The workplace facilitates practical learning opportunities, such as “exchange” visits between practices or work sabbaticals.

8.3. Broader community

Team members can feel a sense of value and belonging within their local and global communities.

- a. Animal owners are viewed as part of the organisation’s community – an “us and them” attitude is discouraged and respectful teamwork facilitated. For example, trusting and appreciative relationships between clients and team members are celebrated; negative client interactions are discussed constructively to build understanding and relevant skills.
- b. Notwithstanding this, personal boundaries around professional communications and work with clients are respected and supported.
- c. There is visibility of the workplace in the local community, for example through event sponsorship, social media, signage, and involvement in community initiatives (see also Social Responsibility)
- d. Rostering allows team members sufficient time away from work and associated responsibilities to nurture non-veterinary connections with the local community.

AVA resources relating to COLLEGIALITY and CONNECTION:

AVA Employer of Choice Program, Strategies 16, 17, 29

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities

AVA Safeguarding and improving the mental health of veterinary teams



AVA Graduate Mentor Program

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities (Managing your business - social media and marketing resources, Business management, Risk management)

AVA HR Advisory Service - Links offering various options: Recruitment, Pay, Starting work, At work, Leave, Managing performance , Ending work, WHS and Wellness (Member benefit)

Veterinary Nurses council of Australia - Website

9. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Great veterinary workplaces seek to make a positive difference in their local and global communities. They take their essential role in OneHealth  ectives seriously and champion environmental sustainability. Daily practises help everyone to feel proud,  gnated and empowered by the way they work.

Examples of how great workplaces achieve this include:

9.1 Social and environmental impact

Everyone is empowered to be considerate and helpful to the world around them.

Everyone is aware of their professional impacts on the wider community. They conscientiously engage with One Health agendas and develop appropriate policies, protocols and knowledge through training. For example, an antimicrobial prescribing protocol is used, disease surveillance and reporting is well understood, and the human-animal bond regularly considered.

- a. A meaningful and regularly reviewed environmental sustainability policy exists, and appointed sustainability champions develop and report on initiatives and progress.
- b. Actions which support environmental sustainability are demonstrated within daily work; for example recycling and appropriate reuse, low-paper practices, power saving initiatives (including insulation), green energy sources, and environmentally and socially conscious choices of products and suppliers.
- c. The organisation supports their team members in undertaking and/or reporting on pro-bono or charity-funded veterinary work. For example, this may be through agreed time-in-lieu, establishment of a workplace "benevolent fund", care for wildlife, or through donation of consumables or equipment use.
- d. Everyone is supported in their efforts to make a positive contribution to the wider community within and beyond work contexts. For example, time is allowed within work to speak to local school children, a service club, livestock producers group or other animal club, and work experience students are well-supported through consistent induction and monitoring processes. The workplace may offer some annual community service leave for employees to contribute to the community in any way they value.
- e. Contribution to professional veterinary community issues and initiatives are practically supported, for example through sharing media content, attending events, participating in research, or making financial, in-kind or work contributions.

AVA resources relating to SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

AVA Employer of Choice Program, Strategy 6

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities

AVA Veterinary Business Group resources and education activities, including business management, risk management, change management

AVA HR Advisory Service - Links offering various options: Leave - Community service leave (Member benefit)

AVA Digest - Sustainability and recycling in veterinary practices, Tucak, P, (2020)

10. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND STANDARDS

Professional standards require more than appropriate facilities and technical knowledge and skill. Veterinary professionals also earn their respected reputation through accountability, ethical behaviours and principled

leadership within their veterinary work and in the community. Great workplaces model these things, empowering their people to develop and demonstrate sound professional judgement as expected by their veterinary peers and the public. Consistent, considered and ethical behaviour from all team members within the workplace, whether members of the veterinary profession or not, supports public trust, peer respect and strong regulatory compliance.

Examples of how great workplaces achieve this include:

10.1. Personal behaviour, including professional ethics

Everyone behaves in ways which strengthen the veterinary professions' good standing.

- a. Everyone's behaviour towards other team members, animals, professionals outside the organisation and the public is guided by the professional principles of:
 - i. *Honesty and integrity.* For example, everyone is honest in their professional and commercial dealings. They consider alternative approaches suitable to specific situations and communicate those without prejudice. They base their decisions and actions on the best data available and communicate any limitations of this. They respect the confidentiality and privacy of their interactions with owners and each other.
 - ii. *Self-management and Accountability.* For example, everyone is mindful of their own health and wellbeing and takes steps to modify their practice if their performance and judgement may be impaired. They recognise the limits of their knowledge and experience and seek appropriate advice and support when needed, while remaining accountable for their decision making and actions. In making ethical decisions, they consider if, when, why, and how their own interests should be constrained.
 - iii. *Respect.* For example, everyone demonstrates due regard for the welfare, beliefs, customs, perceptions, and cultural heritage of animal owners, team members and professional peers. They listen actively to owners and provide sufficient, clear and accurate information to enable informed consent for veterinary care. They make decisions that are in the interests of the individual animal and which also demonstrate due concern for individual and collective animal health and wellbeing, human health and wellbeing, the community and the environment.
- b. All team members are supported to navigate ethically challenging situations, for example through peer discussion and continuing education.

10.2. Professional judgement

Veterinary professionals are supported to make well-justified decisions and actions that meet their peers' and public expectations. Complaints are viewed as an opportunity for reflection and where necessary, growth.

- a. All registered veterinary professionals are aware of their responsibilities, privileges and obligations under their relevant Acts, and are familiar with the guidance provided by their state veterinary Board about professional standards of veterinary practice.
- b. Everyone in the team respects diversity in veterinary professionals' approach to their work. Everyone understands that there is more than one effective way to do many things.

- c. Everyone respects that professional judgement includes navigation of various owner, patient and environmental constraints and considerations, including:
 - animal health and wellbeing
 - public health and safety
 - environmental impact
 - currency of knowledge and practice
 - legal and regulatory compliance
 - healthy, supportive and collegiate work environment
- d. Everyone understands that upholding regulated professional standards refers to good practice which “meets peer and public expectations” and not “gold” standard care in every case. Workplace peers are available to provide perspectives on what might be considered reasonable by professional peers; all veterinarians learn from and contribute perspective to others’ work.
- e. Everyone is empowered to ask questions to understand why patient health decisions have been made, and to contribute other ideas and suggestions.
- f. Everyone is encouraged and supported to identify and acknowledge the limits of their own expertise and ask for others’ assistance and perspectives.
- g. Professional decisions are made based on contemporary knowledge and evidence, to the extent that that exists. Innovation based on sound related evidence is acknowledged as necessary for both knowledge expansion and to suit very varied veterinary work contexts.
- h. Concerns about professional standards are investigated according to a consistent and fair process, always seeking first to understand reasons for behaviour. Peer or public concerns are heard attentively, and veterinarians are always given an opportunity to explain the rationale for their decisions and actions.
- i. Any complaint about professional standards that escalates to a state or territory veterinary Board is viewed constructively as an opportunity for independent and objective feedback to validate or strengthen practise. Support, including mentoring for that process, is facilitated where appropriate.

10.3. Leadership and management systems

Leadership and management systems support everyone to meet their professional responsibilities.

- a. Policies, systems, processes, decisions and procedures appropriately consider and prioritise
 - animal health and wellbeing
 - public health and safety
 - environmental impact
 - currency of knowledge and practice
 - legal and regulatory compliance
 - healthy, supportive and collegiate work environment

- b. There are systems, including technology where appropriate, to support professional standards of complete record keeping and communication. This includes informed medical and financial consent, communications with owners and peers, reasons for decisions, test results, outcomes and further plans, in accordance with regulatory guidance.
- c. Registered professionals are empowered to make decisions and act in a manner that reflects their own professional judgement, acknowledging that veterinary practitioners are individually accountable for their professional standards.
- d. All team members are helped to develop a good understanding of the regulatory considerations and constraints of veterinary work, including the veterinarian's accountability and the public's responsibilities. Resources such as fact sheets and checklists that help educate team members and the public about these responsibilities are utilised.
- e. Development and regular review of systems and policies that support professional standards occurs in consultation with all regulated professionals and other relevant team members to ensure they are practical, clear, comprehensive and efficient in supporting professional practice.
- f. Continuing education support, such as allocated time, funding and agreed use, adequately reflects professional standards CPD requirements

AVA resources relating to PROFESSIONAL ETHICS & STANDARDS:

AVA Employer of Choice Program, Strategies 26, 28

AVA Australian Veterinary Animal Welfare and Ethics (AVAWE) SIG:

AVA Veterinary Business Group : Professional Ethics

AVA Resources: Details for State and Territory Veterinary Regulatory Boards and AVBC

AVA Policies: a wide range of policies relating to animal health and welfare; Regulation of provision of animal health services; Veterinary nursing;