



Australian Veterinary Association Victorian Division

2014 Election Platform



BACKGROUND

As professional experts on animal health and welfare, over 2500 veterinarians are registered in Victoria and play an indispensable role in the community.

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the only national organisation representing veterinarians in Australia. Its 1786 members come from all fields within the veterinary profession, eg. clinical practitioners can work with companion animals, horses, farm animal, including cattle and sheep, and wildlife. Veterinary students are also members of the Association.

Government veterinarians work with our animal health, public health and quarantine systems while other members work in industry (eg. pharmaceutical) and other commercial enterprises. Also we have members who work in research and teaching over a range of scientific disciplines.

The AVA has input into policy measures affecting animals and works with governments and other organisations to ensure positive outcomes on health and welfare. This not only benefits animals, but also the health and welfare of Australians and the economy.

Following are issues that the AVA believes should be addressed by government.



A parliamentary review into the effectiveness of the restricted breed legislation

The AVA is vehemently opposed to breed-specific legislation. There is no evidence of an increase in public safety or a reduction in dog bites. Attitudes have changed on this issue. Animal welfare experts and agencies now advocate strongly against this legislation.

A more forensic approach to reducing dog bites and increasing public safety is required. A parliamentary review on the effectiveness of the restricted breed legislation should:

- investigate and measure the success of breed-specific legislation in preventing and reducing dog attacks, using all available data and statistics
- consider whether there are more cost-effective means of preventing and reducing dog attacks
- draw on relevant materials from other Australian parliamentary investigations and investigate other proven models such as the Calgary Model.

In August 2012 the AVA released a policy framework, titled "Dangerous dogs - a sensible solution." This document was produced after reviews of Australian and international legislation pertaining to breed specific approaches. The document offers scientific information on dog behaviour and welfare and identifies the key elements of dog management legislation in relation to dangerous dogs and dog attacks. The Calgary Model focuses on education for pet owners and children and increased penalties for owners of dogs that attack. The Calgary Model resulted in an increase in dog registrations and a significant and tangible reduction in dog aggression in the community.

AVA Mission: To drive the success of the veterinary profession and promote veterinary science to benefit animals, the environment, the community, and our members.



The Code of Practice for Breeding and Rearing Businesses be reverted to prior revision

The AVA encourages the government to reinstate Revision 1 of the Code of Practice for Breeding and Rearing Businesses (Code). The gazetted Code is a step backward for animal welfare. There was a consensus by Victorian veterinary practitioners and animal welfare agencies that the previous Code was a strong tool for curtailing the negligent practices of breeding facilities and ensuring positive animal welfare. The health of the breeding dog should be a high priority. The previous Code included pre and post partum health checks of breeding dogs which ensured positive animal welfare and this should be reinstated. By removing this requirement it will become extremely difficult for veterinarians to give considered and informed advice and to issue certificates of fitness to breed future litters unless the veterinarian has observed the health of the breeding dog pre and post litters.

Restricted acts of veterinary science returned to the Veterinary Practice Act 1997

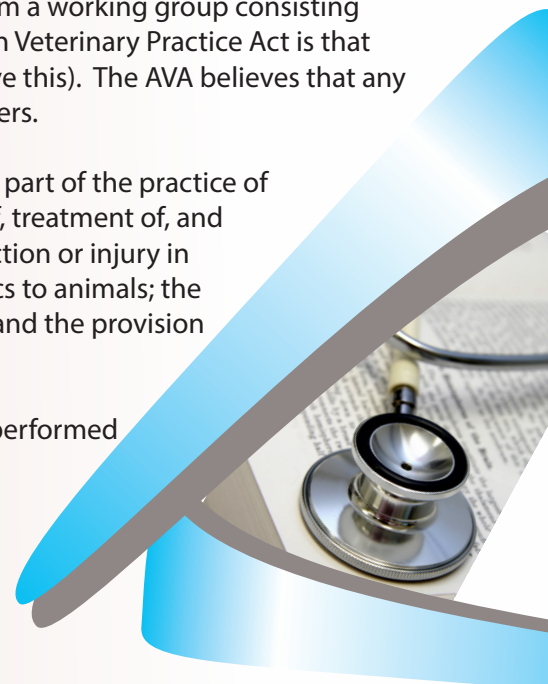
The AVA has compiled a report of recommendations that were formulated from a working group consisting of member representatives from each state. The major issue with the Victorian Veterinary Practice Act is that restricted acts of veterinary science are not included (the only state to not have this). The AVA believes that any act of veterinary science must be restricted to registered veterinary practitioners.

The AVA believes that an 'act of veterinary science' means services which form part of the practice of veterinary surgery and medicine, and includes, the diagnostic confirmation of, treatment of, and provision of management advice for; infectious disease, physiological dysfunction or injury in animals performing surgical operations on animals, administering anaesthetics to animals; the prescribing of scheduled poisons for use in animals, prescription of vaccines, and the provision of veterinary certificates.

The AVA recommends that in addition to the above, the following should be performed only by registered veterinary surgeons:

- stomach tubing or oesophageal intubation of horses
- artificial insemination of horses
- sampling of tissue of live animals
- pregnancy testing of horses by rectal examination
- microchip insertion in horses
- laparoscopic insemination
- general anaesthesia
- the carrying out of any treatment, procedure or test that involves the insertion of anything in the nasal passage, nasal sinuses, thoracic cavity, abdominal cavity, pelvic cavity, cranial cavity, spinal cavity, tooth alveolar cavity, eye, orbital cavity, tympanic cavity, joint spaces or any other synovial cavity of any animal
- the performing of any dental procedure on any animal other than manual rasping on a horse performed by a person with an appropriate Certificate IV qualification
- the performing on a horse of any dental procedure that involves;
 - o making an incision through the skin or oral mucosa, or
 - o extracting a tooth by repulsion; or
 - o entry below the gum line; or
 - o any other activity to maintain or restore correct dental function (except basic hand filing and rasping).
 - o the use of a power tool

For animal welfare and practicality reasons there are some areas that could be exempt from the above and AVA believes these exemptions should be determined by the AVA Policy Advisory Council.



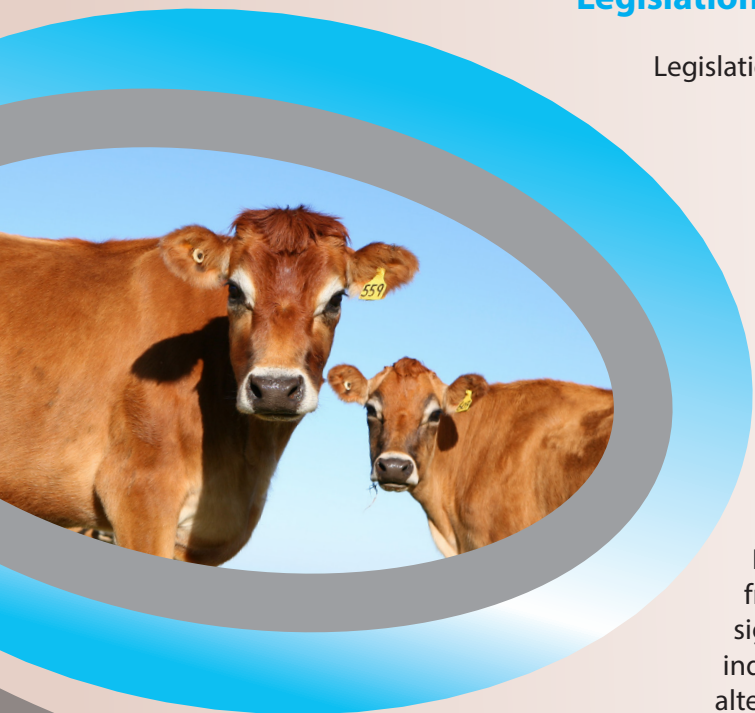
Veterinary practices be exempt from registering as a domestic animal business if running puppy socialisation classes

Many veterinary practices that conduct puppy socialisation classes and don't run animal adoption schemes or board animals are being told by their local council to register as domestic animal businesses. Not only does this require an annual fee to be paid to council but also compliance to the many requirements pertaining to the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Puppy socialisation classes are not obedience classes - rather they are classes that provide owners with health advice and basic training commands for their puppy, which are vital to prevent future behavioural issues. These classes contribute to safer communities. The more owners and puppies that are socialised, the safer each community will be. Councils should be encouraging veterinarians to run these classes and commending owners that attend these classes. Puppy socialisation classes are within the breadth and scope of a veterinary clinic and therefore should not require further registration and endure unnecessary red tape to continue to or to commence these classes. The AVA requests that a directive be made to councils by the State Government to exempt veterinary practices from having to register as a domestic animal business.



Legislation to address tail docking of cattle

Legislation should reflect that tail docking in cattle should be performed only for therapeutic reasons on veterinary advice. Currently tail docking in Victoria can be carried out by farmers. Some farmers believe that it improves milking shed and udder hygiene, cow health and workplace health and safety (by preventing tails from hitting the faces of workers and reducing the transfer of microorganisms to workers). Existing scientific evidence (Tucker et al. 2001, Schreiner & Ruegg 2002) does not support claims that tail docking of dairy cows reduces the prevalence of mastitis, improves the clinical health of cows, reduces the soiling of teats and udders, reduces bacterial contamination of milk or reduces the incidence of leptospirosis in staff. Docking does remove physical interference to milking staff from the cows' tails, but there is no evidence that tail docking significantly improves workplace safety. The Australian dairy industry does not support tail docking and recommends alternative practices to tail docking including switch trimming. The general public, farmers, veterinarians and livestock officers are concerned about the effects of tail docking on the welfare of cows.



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