



AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION
**ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**
PERTH 25-30 MAY

Awards ceremony

Wednesday 28 May 2014, 4.00pm
Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, Perth

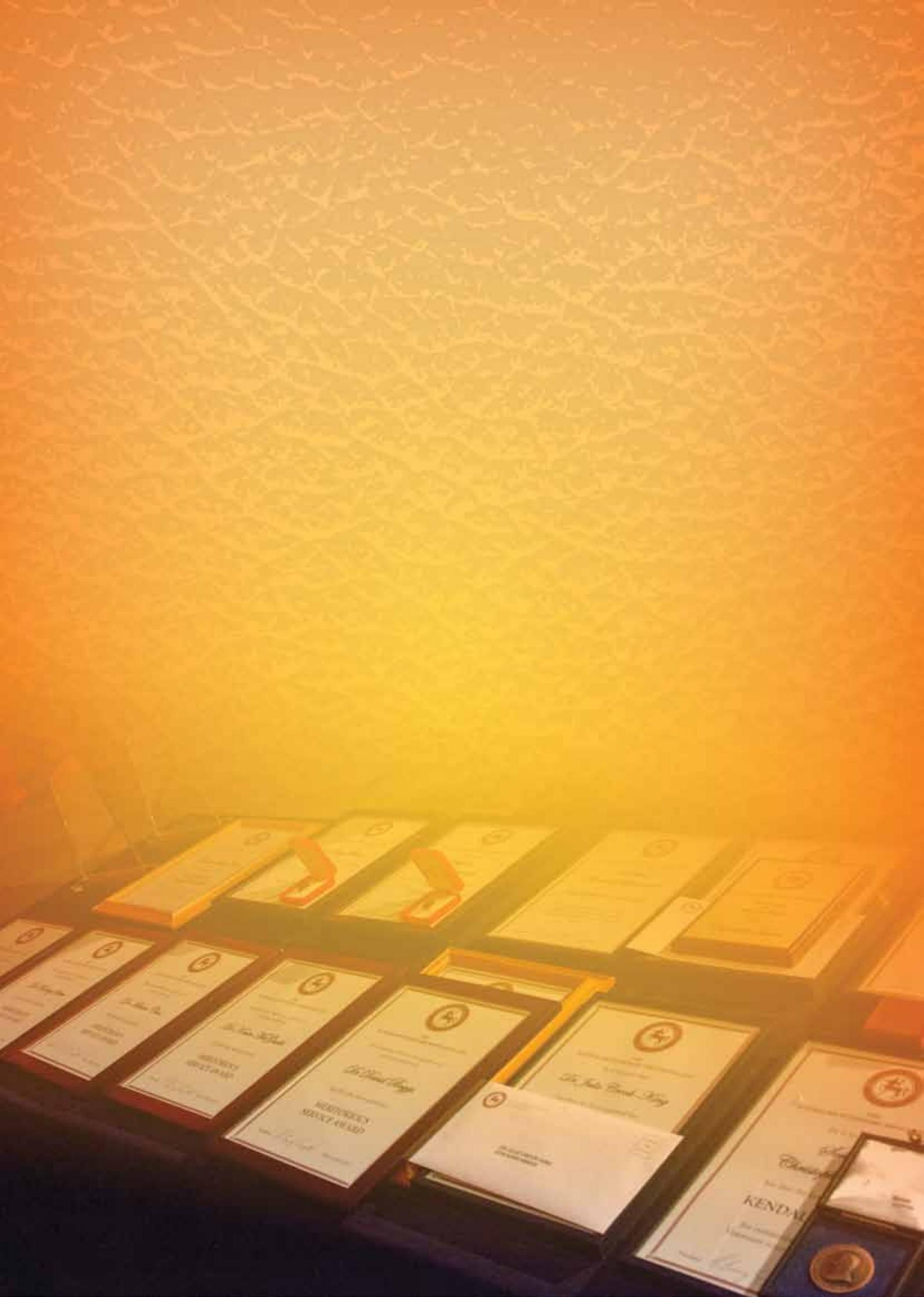


Australian Veterinary Association



Professional development
for Australia's veterinarians

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Gilruth Prize

The Gilruth Prize was established in 1953 to commemorate the name of Dr J A Gilruth, who was Professor of Veterinary Pathology and Director of the Veterinary Research Institute at the University of Melbourne from 1908, Administrator of the Northern Territory 1912–1920, later the first Chief of the Division on Animal Health, CSIRO and an outstanding veterinary authority. This award celebrates veterinary scientists whose work has brought great credit to the profession or made a major contribution to veterinary science in Australia over many years. It is the highest ranking award of the Australian Veterinary Association.



Professor Michael Rickard
BVSc PhD

Throughout his career, Professor Michael Rickard has made significant contributions to veterinary science and animal welfare.

Michael graduated from the School of Veterinary Science at the University of Queensland in 1963. He completed his PhD on *Babesia rodhaini* in 1967, and was awarded the higher degree of Doctor of Veterinary Science by Thesis from the University of Melbourne in 1979.

He lectured in Veterinary Parasitology at Massey University from 1967 to 1969 then became Reader in Veterinary Parasitology at the University of Melbourne from 1969 to 1989. From 1989 till 2001 he was Chief of the Division of Animal Health at the CSIRO. After retiring from the CSIRO he continued working for animal welfare in the research and teaching sector. He was a member and Deputy Chair of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Australian Animal Welfare Strategy Research and the Teaching Sectoral Working Group from 2005 to 2011, as well as the Research and Development Working Group. He is Chair of the Board of the Animal Welfare Science Centre.

During his leadership of the research group, the first recombinant antiparasitic vaccine was developed and commercialized, which is widely recognised as a milestone in the veterinary parasitology. It led to a generation of similar vaccines against a number of different cestode parasites.

He has published 115 research papers and 21 reviews and book chapters, predominantly focussed on the immune response to Taeniid cestodes.

Michael was a member of the AVA's Victorian Division Executive Committee and President of the Central Branch of the AVA's Victorian Division. He also served as President and Council Member of the Australian Society for Parasitology and as a Council Member of the World Federation of Parasitologists. He is a Fellow of the Australian Society for Parasitology (ASP) and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering. Michael was awarded the Bancroft Mackerras Medal of the ASP in 1983, and the Ian Clunies Ross National Science and Technology Award for the Application of Science and Technology in 1991.



Kesteven Medal

The Kesteven Medal was inaugurated by the late Dr K V L Kesteven and first awarded in 1980. It is conferred on Australian veterinarians in recognition of distinguished contributions to international veterinary science in the fields of technical and scientific assistance to developing countries.

The medal is presented alternatively by the AVA and the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists (ACVS).



Dr Mary Young
BVSc MSc PhD

Dr Mary Young's career as a veterinarian exemplifies the role that our profession can play in international veterinary science.

Mary graduated as a Bachelor of Veterinary Science from the University of Queensland in 1973, a Master of Science (Veterinary Pathology) from James Cook University in 1988 and a Doctor of Philosophy (Veterinary Pathology) from the University of Queensland in 1993. Her international career began in 1984 when she moved to the Research Institute for Animal Disease, Bogor, Indonesia.

From 1997 to 2000 Mary worked as a Veterinary Research Scientist at the Central Veterinary Laboratory in Harare, Zimbabwe. She then joined the ACIAR-funded Newcastle disease control project in Mozambique as a Research Officer. In 2002 and 2003, Mary was a Senior Veterinary Officer within Biosecurity Australia during which time her interest in and support of international veterinary science continued. She provided short-term consultancy support to the "Southern Africa Newcastle Disease Control Project" (SANDCP) and in 2004, Mary became the Project Long Term Advisor in Tanzania.

Mary was based in Indonesia for four years from 2006 as a member of the Food and Agriculture Organisation's HPAI Control Program.

Since 2010, Mary has been the Senior Technical Adviser for the KYEEMA Foundation, an Australian NGO that aims to assist rural and semi urban people to address poverty issues through community efforts in the agricultural sector. In this role, she provides technical oversight of all veterinary related programs and assists with monitoring and evaluation. She also provides technical support to colleagues and has mentored four young Australian scientists undertaking volunteer assignments as Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development.

Mary is motivated by a desire to help the most vulnerable livestock producers to achieve a better life and to build the capacity of those who can support these producers in the long term. She is the lead author of the ACIAR monograph "Controlling Newcastle Disease in Village Chickens: A Laboratory Manual". She has also co-authored two other ACIAR monographs and is currently the lead author on a new manual "Veterinary Cold Chain Manual: ensuring effective vaccines" which will be the first of its kind anywhere in the world.



Excellence in Teaching Award

The AVA Excellence in Teaching Award recognises and encourages excellence in veterinary undergraduates by AVA members within Australian veterinary schools. It was instituted in 1997. Nominees are sought from the students and staff of the seven veterinary schools.

Dr Tony Mogg

BVSc (Hons I and University Medal) PhD GCEd (Studies) MMS

Dr Tony Mogg is a Senior Lecturer in Equine Medicine and Associate Dean of Learning and Teaching at The University of Sydney.

He has transformed the traditional passive lecture to the innovative 'flipped lecture' format with great success. Face-to-face lectures and practical sessions are used to stimulate students to explore and challenge their understanding of key principles and develop their essential 'day one' veterinary graduate attributes.

Tony is an active equine specialist who uses his international specialist qualifications in Equine medicine and Veterinary Pharmacology to use a research enriched framework for learning and teaching. His development of student and patient focused learning has provided an outcome-focussed curriculum in which students develop responsibility for the outcomes of their decisions and rapidly learn the consequences that their actions/inactions could have on animal and human health.

For more than four years, Tony has led the Faculty as Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching. The Faculty has continued its reputation for leadership and innovation in learning and teaching, particularly in e-learning and in quality of student support. Other major developments led during this busy time include the implementation of an honours program and the expansion of year 4 practical competency based teaching in large animals at Camden. The Faculty has also established an alumni mentoring program for final year students and developed changes to admissions to enable students to demonstrate their commitment to veterinary science and to attract more rural, low SES and indigenous students.

Tony now 'leads the charge' in the transformation of the veterinary curriculum to a higher order post-graduate, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. Tony has recruited, supported and led a core group of eight of the Faculty's leading teachers, engaging them fully in the challenge of creating an innovative veterinary program, designed to meet the needs of our profession over the next two decades.



President's Award

The AVA President's Award was established in 2006. This prize is awarded by the President and the AVA Board to a veterinarian who makes an outstanding practical contribution to veterinary science or practice in Australia.



Dr Helen Jones

BVSc BEd, MPhil, PhD, GradDipBus, GAICD, FAVA

Dr Helen Jones' research on occupational health and safety, stress and suicide in veterinarians has spurred her into action. Helen and her Western Australian colleagues, including Brian McErlean and Paul Davey run seminars on wellness for veterinarians, which are aimed at reducing stress, depression, and the risk of suicide.

Helen and her colleagues have worked with the Veterinary Benevolent Fund to initiate and run the Wellness Centre at the AVA Conference for the past five years. At the Wellness Centre conference delegates participate in wellness testing, including stress. Helen also initiated the Art and Photography Show within the Wellness Centre to demonstrate that veterinarians can and should have a balanced lifestyle.

Helen convened two AVA Conferences in Perth and was Deputy Chair of the XXII World Veterinary Congress Organising Committee. She was the first woman to be elected National President of the Australian Veterinary Association in 1982.

In the wider community Helen has thrown herself into the efforts to save the African rhino from extinction, finding ways to support a veterinary school in Zimbabwe, and developing the Rotary community markets at Canning Bridge in Perth. Helen was recently named as her Club's first Paul Harris Fellow for her work with Rotary International.

Since retiring as an Associate Professor in Public Health at Curtin University in 2010, Helen has completed a course run by the Australian Institute of Company Directors. She has also finished a book about Australian women veterinarians, which was started by the late Robin Giesecke, for the Australian Veterinary History Society.

Helen is a Fellow of the Australian Veterinary Association.



Don Kerr Student Award

The Don Kerr Veterinary Student Award commemorates the work of the late Don Kerr who died in 1992 while serving as President of the Association. Don was an enthusiastic cattle practitioner and dedicated educator of veterinary undergraduates. The Award is conferred on a final year veterinary student from one of the veterinary schools for academic achievement and exceptional commitment to cattle medicine.



Dr Lachlan Strohfeldt
BVSc

As a veterinary student at James Cook University, Lachlan Strohfeldt showed exceptional commitment and academic achievement in cattle medicine. He achieved outstanding results in his cohort during Years 4 and 5 and was awarded the Australian Cattle Veterinarians' Bovine Health and Disease prize. He also received competitive scholarships from independent judging panels such as the International Stockmans' Education Foundation and Meat and Livestock Australia. In his final year, he received the Beef Cattle Medicine and Production Medal.

Lachlan showed amazing personal motivation during the course and took every opportunity to improve his skill levels and knowledge in cattle medicine. He travelled extensively in Australia during practical placements and visited prominent bovine practices in the US and Canada.

While a veterinary student, he successfully completed additional technical courses in areas such as infection control and biosecurity, Countdown Downunder Milking Management and artificial insemination.

With a keen interest in the AVA, Lachlan has been a student member for four years and is also a member of several special interest groups. He was actively involved in student affairs, including a term as President of the Veterinary Students' Association. Lachlan displays enthusiasm for all things to do with cattle, and in the words of a beef cattle property owner who hosted Lachlan, "He is truly passionate about being the best cattle vet he can be".

Lachlan is destined to become an outstanding cattle veterinarian and a future leader in the Australian veterinary profession.



Fellowship

Fellowship of the AVA is the Association's most senior award for service to the Association and is only given for truly outstanding service that involves a contribution through the AVA Board, Division, Special Interest Group or representing the AVA in the local community.

Dr Andrew Easton

BVSc

Dr Andrew Easton has been an AVA member since his student days and maintains his passion for excellence in the profession in his practices and in his interaction with colleagues, peers and clients.

A person who is not backward in developing and justifying a position on many aspects of the veterinary profession, Andrew has a keen eye for identifying the traps for the unwary in many government and other public policies and trends. A prodigious reader of veterinary journals and opinion pieces, he is always alert to the pitfalls of populist politics and issues that damage the reputation of the profession.

During his term as Queensland Division President, Andrew dealt with the incursion of Equine Influenza, with daily teleconferences, reading the multitude of email and press releases and always keeping the practitioners of Queensland aware of the progress or otherwise of the eradication campaign.

This was quickly followed by the tragedy of the death of two members due to Hendra infection. Andrew was instrumental in urging AVA to accept the need for the incorporation of biosecurity standards in veterinary practice and has continued his quest to improve on the practises and equipment used by veterinarians.

With a passion for equine dentistry, Andrew has designed much of his own equipment. He readily instructs students and colleagues on his rigorously science based approach to the problems of dental science in equine and other patients including lions at the safari park.

Andrew has made an outstanding contribution to the veterinary profession, nationally and especially in his home area of tropical north Queensland.

Dr Julia Nicholls

OAM BVMS PhD (Vet Path) MANZCVS (Feline Medicine)
Charter Member GAICD

Dr Julia Nicholls has been a tireless advocate for her colleagues and for the animals to which they have dedicated their lives.

After graduating from Glasgow University in 1975, Julia completed her PhD in veterinary pathology. In South Australia, she started as an AVA committee member and quickly increased her commitment to the Division as Policy Councillor and Division President. Julia coordinated continuing professional development activities of the Association in South Australia and more recently she served as the President of the Small Animal Practitioner Board.

In 1982, Julia set up her own veterinary practice. In 1987 she became the first woman to serve on the Veterinary Surgeon's Board of South Australia, a role she held for some nine years. During that time she also served as South Australian representative to the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council, a body that she recently re-joined as national AVA representative.

Since selling her business, Julia has continued to contribute to the profession in a number of roles as an Animal Welfare Officer at both Flinders University and University of South Australia. In 2009 she started teaching at The University of Adelaide Veterinary School.

As her career progressed, Julia continued to give back to the community through the AVA and a variety of related organisations ranging from the Animal Welfare League, the RSPCA, and numerous animal ethics committees.

In recent years, Julia has become a valuable part of the senior leadership team within the AVA, first taking on a position on the Board and then as Treasurer and now Vice-President. Julia has also mentored young vets helping them transition to practice.

Julia was awarded a Meritorious Service Award for her work within the Association 22 years ago. Since then, she has only increased her service to the profession.



Meritorious Service Awards

The Meritorious Service Award is given to members who have rendered special or long-term service to the association, its divisions, branches or special interest groups.

Dr Susan Beetson

BSc (Vet Biol) BVSc, PhD

Dr Susan Beetson has been an active member, Treasurer, and conference organiser of AVA's Western Australia Division. She has also been a member, Treasurer and conference organiser for Equine Veterinarians Australia (EVA), a special interest group of the AVA. Sue is now a Company Director and Treasurer of AVA's Board of Directors.

It is Sue's dedication to duty and tireless commitment to detail that are the hallmarks of her involvement with AVA and EVA. EVA's Bain Fallon Conference is now recognised as a first class equine veterinary conference, and Sue has been a key driver of that achievement. Sue's fellow committee members have remarked that the great thing about having Sue involved is that the job gets done – on time, on budget, with minimal fuss. In addition to this, tasks are achieved with a great deal of enjoyment for all involved.

As a clinical veterinary pathologist, Sue's superior skill and knowledge has been highly sought after for many years, both in private clinical practice and as a respected consultant. Sue was involved in academia as a Senior Lecturer at Charles Sturt University and as an Adjunct Professor at Murdoch University.

Sue has provided superb service to EVA, the nation's peak equine veterinary body. She joined the Executive Committee in 2006 and she is also a member of ASAVA and Australian Sheep Veterinarians, which are also special interest groups of the AVA.

In recent years, Sue has made a contribution to the AVA at the highest level as a member of the Board of Directors. In 2013, Sue became the AVA Treasurer.

Dr George Dowling

BVSc GradCert (Public Sector)

Dr George Downing joined the Department Primary Industries, Victoria in Bendigo in September 2003. Since graduating from the University of Melbourne in 1978, he has worked in private practice in Victoria and NSW, government veterinary and sheep work in NSW, and government district work in Tasmania.

As an active AVA member, who served as Branch Secretary and President while at Cootamundra, he was concerned that the Northern Branch of the Victorian Division was not functioning at an appropriate level and on his own initiative George set out to reactivate the branch. He contacted all vets in the area, announcing a meeting in March 2005, and since that meeting, the branch has remained active with strong attendances and regular meetings every few months. George has arranged a variety of excellent speakers over the years, along with the sponsorship needed. This year, the branch even had its own mini conference.

George has been a passionate advocate for responsible prescribing of antimicrobial drugs in agricultural animals, driven particularly by the risks posed to our export industries by careless usage. His interventions have resulted in improved testing and reporting of antimicrobial sensitivities by diagnostic laboratories to ensure the most appropriate drugs are likely to be chosen. He has also implemented surveys of antimicrobial dispensing practices to identify needs for better training of rural practitioners.

Additionally he regularly contributes to the AVA (Victorian Division) newsletter on topics related to the regulation of antibiotic and other veterinary chemical use.



Meritorious Service Awards

Dr David Hucker

BVSc

A longstanding and active AVA member, Dr David Hucker, has contributed above and beyond that of a normal member or committee member.

David has contributed to the AVA through Executive committee membership of the Australian Sheep Veterinarians (ASV) special interest group. He has served as President, Newsletter Editor and currently as Policy Councillor of the ASV. He has been the AVA nominee on several sheep and wool industry committees related to the development of training courses for mulesing operators and other sheep health and production issues.

David has had the unique position of representing the AVA and ASV through his work as an independent auditor of research programs relating to mulesing, mulesing alternatives and flystrike control conducted by Australian Wool Innovation.

He has travelled the world presenting an even-handed scientific voice about mulesing and the alternatives to flystrike control in an often heated debate. His willingness to leave his business and farm to serve the AVA has made his contribution to the activities of both the ASV and the AVA highly valuable.

Dr William (Bill) Harkin

BVSc MACVSc

Dr Bill Harkin believes that the veterinary profession has a proud record of service to the community over a long time span and that the voice of the profession needs to be unified and heard loud and clear via the AVA.

Bill is an experienced employer and mentor of young graduates. The training work he does with veterinary nurse training is well known. Bill is not only a strong advocate for formal veterinary nurse training, he is also an advocate for providing career pathways for experienced veterinary nurses.

He was on the Steering Committee that developed the Diploma of Veterinary Nursing (General Practice) that allows qualified nurses to advance both their nursing and leadership skills. This course has now been accredited into the National Course. Bill has also advised and made recommendations to the Animal Care and Management Training Network on structure and content of veterinary nurse courses.

The Victorian Industry Advisory Group, which Bill inaugurated and chairs, brings together veterinarians, veterinary nurses and representatives from training organisations to liaise and discuss issues affecting veterinary nurse training in Victoria.

While President and as a current member of the AVA Victorian Executive Committee, Bill is a strong, trusted and level-headed voice for the veterinary profession. He has passionately advocated for many veterinary issues over the years on behalf of the profession including Breed Restricted Legislation, which was introduced in Victoria in 2011. Bill attracted much media in his quest to make sure the AVA's opposition to this legislation was well known.



Meritorious Service Awards

Dr Brian McErlean

MVB MRCVS

Dr Brian McErlean passionately believes that veterinarians must embrace a balanced work-leisure-personal lifestyle and believes the depression plaguing many colleagues, while complex, is solvable.

Brian has held many positions with AVA's Western Australia Division. He was also the Veterinary Benevolent Fund's (VBF) WA representative and is now a Trustee.

The effects of his efforts permeate AVA. Its counselling service, conference speakers and the AVA/VBF Wellness Room address veterinary wellbeing in more depth each year.

Brian lectures on suicide prevention as well as on practice and business skills. He also writes mental health and wellness articles for the AVA, the veterinary surgeons board and trade newsletters.

He encourages drug representatives and veterinary nurses to become gatekeepers, alert to colleagues' problems and actively promotes the mentoring of new graduates. Brian also lobbies for resilience and optimism to be in undergraduate veterinary studies so that veterinarians gain skills to cope in practice.

Brian was awarded the Ian Miller Medal in 2013 for services to the AVA's Western Australia Division.

On a daily basis, Brian helps veterinarians to help each other, to live better and prevent tragedy.

Dr Christine Johnson

AssocDipAg BSc (Vet Biol) BVSc

Dr Christine Johnson joined the AVA and its Equine Veterinarians Australia (EVA) special interest group as a student in the mid-1980s. She has been an active member of AVA's Western Australia Division, and has been President, conference convenor and workshop organiser for the EVA. She is actively involved in the EVA education sub-committee and is the EVA representative on the Veterinary and Analysts Committee of the Australian Racing Board.

Christine is dedicated to her profession, the welfare of horses, and improving the rapport between our professional organisation and its stakeholders. She was the instigator in organising a farrier's conference in conjunction with the Bain Fallon conference series, and through her continued dedication, this has now become a popular tri-annual conference attracting over 100 farriers and veterinarians.

As a veterinarian, Christine has developed a reputation as an experienced equine veterinarian, in particular, a race day veterinarian. It is through this work that she has seen the necessity to develop seminars and workshops to improve the relationships between EVA and the industry stakeholders.

Christine has provided superb service to EVA. She joined the Executive Committee in 1991 and her meetings and workshops became the standard for the other state representatives to attain. Her involvement also extended through to the EVA executive committee and in 2001 she was President. In the 11 years after her presidency, Christine has remained an active EVA member.

She moved to western Queensland in 2001 and currently works for Queensland Racing part time at race meetings and the rest of the days in practice or on her cattle property south of Surat.

Dr Samantha McMahon

BVSc

Dr Samantha McMahon has provided a high level of service to the AVA, the Australian Cattle Veterinarians (ACV) special interest group) and the veterinary community, particularly those in rural and remote Australia.

Sam is actively involved in the AVA at all levels – as a member and in leadership roles. Sam has served on the AVA Board, on the ACV Committee as Executive Member, President and is currently Policy Councillor for ACV. She has been an Executive Member and President of the Northern Territory Division for over 10 years. Sam was a founding member of the Australian Veterinary Reserve and is dedicated to participating in emergency animal disease outbreaks, both within Australia and internationally.

Sam is an international leader in delivering veterinary service to remote indigenous communities. She has operated veterinary practices in Katherine Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Howard Springs for the past 17 years. Sam established Aboriginal Community Veterinary Services, a service dedicated to providing veterinary programs and education and consulting services to remote and indigenous communities throughout the Territory and Asia Pacific regions.



Honorary Member

Honorary Members are eminent persons (non- veterinarians) who have been appointed to that position as a token of respect for their services to the Association or to the veterinary profession in general. They enjoy all the privileges of membership in the Association and the divisions, except those of voting and holding office.

Professor Paul Hemsworth

BAGSc (Hons) PhD

Professor Paul Hemsworth has an extensive career researching the behaviour and welfare of farm and other domestic animals. This research has made a significant contribution to the understanding of the behavioural and physiological response by the animal to housing and handling. His research on the social and physical environment of farm animals led to a range of management and housing strategies to overcome behavioural and welfare problems in pigs and poultry.

As Director, Animal Welfare Science Centre, University of Melbourne, since its establishment in 1997, Paul has led multidisciplinary research teams investigating animal behavioural and welfare issues of importance to livestock producers and veterinarians. The unique and innovative methods developed by Paul and his colleagues have identified the major human characteristics, such as, attitude and behaviour, affecting fear responses in farm animals which can significantly limit farm animal productivity and welfare. As a consequence of this research commercial training programmes, for stockpersons, that target key attitudes and behaviours, have been released internationally to the dairy and pig industries. Similar programmes for poultry and abattoir stockpersons will be released in the near future.

Paul is the author of 170 full research papers and has co-authored two editions of 'Human-Livestock Interaction: The Stockperson and Productivity and Welfare of Farmed Animals'. He is the author/co-author of 29 chapters in internationally distributed books on farm animal productivity and welfare, author/co-author of 50 invited papers presented at international scientific conferences and 175 papers presented at Australian and international conferences. He also played a significant role working with the late Dr John Barnett in the stress physiology of farm animals.

As an eminent scientist and teacher, Paul has a long and significant influence on the veterinary profession in Australia.



AVA Practices of Excellence Awards

The AVA and Hill's have developed an annual award to recognise veterinary practices that provide outstanding service to their clients. It rewards and encourages veterinary practices Australia – wide to improve their customer service techniques and overall practice management.

The winners for 2014 are:



Springfield District Veterinary Clinic – Springfield, Queensland

Best small animal veterinary practice

This year, the winner of the Small Animal Award is Springfield District Veterinary Clinic in Queensland. The practice started as a small home-based veterinary clinic at Camira by Dr Jeannet Kessels, practice owner and principal veterinarian. In 2006, Jeannet relocated the practice to its current Springfield site and today the clinic operates with 13 full-time staff.

Jeannet says that something her team is very proud of is their 'Goodles' initiative which is a community program providing golden retriever x poodle puppies to families in Australia and abroad.

"Our Goodles program is about coordinating the breeding of Goodle puppies within the community. But more importantly, it's about raising money for the Timor Children's Foundation, which provides scholarships for students in East Timor. All money raised from the sale of puppies, after costs, is donated to the Foundation. Last year we donated \$50,000," Jeannet said.

"We chose a breed that would be suitable for families with children who have autism. The program benefits our

community and disadvantaged young people in East Timor and it really bonds our staff and gives us a common interest," she said.

Jeannet believes that the key to business success is thinking outside the square.

"I think that people who want to run a successful practice need to do more than just run a veterinary clinic. You need to go beyond the basics of setting up and running the clinic and focus more on developing your staff. We nurture our staff through specific training in areas of accountability, emotional intelligence and leadership, allowing staff to work to their strengths so that they can pursue excellence across all areas of the practice," she said.

Jeannet was thrilled to hear of the Hill's AVAPM Practices of Excellence Award win and is grateful to her staff who she says have a generosity of spirit.

Next year, Springfield District Veterinary Clinic will expand and open a second clinic at Brookwater.



AVA Practices of Excellence Awards



Pacific Vetcare – Coffs Harbour, New South Wales

Best large animal veterinary practice

The winner of this year's Mixed/Large Animal Award is Pacific Vetcare in NSW. The practice first opened its doors in 1973 in Coffs Harbour and then gradually expanded to open two more hospitals, one in Sawtell and the other Woolgoolga, followed by the opening of a branch in Coramba.

Pacific Vetcare redeveloped its Coffs Harbour clinic 5 years ago. Now with a purpose-built facility, the clinic is recognised as one of the best-designed and unique veterinary facilities in Australia. It also serves as a training facility for final-year veterinary science students and Certificate IV veterinary nursing students.

Today, with more than 30 staff across four sites, Pacific Vetcare provides veterinary care to all types of domestic pets and farm animals. In addition to providing farm visits and house calls, staff are also active in promoting wellness and disease prevention programs in the community. The practice is also the main provider of veterinary services to the Coffs Harbour RSPCA shelter.

Practice owners, David Johnson, Allan Hudson and Stephen Deist say that the entire team was excited when they heard of the Hill's AVAPM Practices of Excellence Award win.

"We've told our staff that they've won the award, not us. It is a practice award and we have worked very hard, particularly since we built our new premises in Coffs Harbour, to lift our standards and try to become the best practice in an area which is quite competitive in terms of veterinary services," David said.

David says that what drives the team is their vision to be "the most caring and progressive practice".

"We have a lot of equipment that other practices don't have, and we offer services that others can't offer, particularly in the areas of equine, avian, surgery and ultrasonography. We are attracting a lot of clients from outside our area now through referral, which says a lot about our expertise, our standards and customer satisfaction.

"The team's driving motivation has been to practice excellent veterinary science and enjoy doing it," David said.



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