Regulating of the veterinary profession is in the public interest

The health and welfare of animals, and the associated health and wellbeing of people, are in everyone’s interest. The prevention and control of animal health and welfare issues contributes to a healthier and safer world. Good animal health and welfare also supports economic growth and prosperity. Equally, failures in assuring the health and welfare of animals and public health can have an enormous negative impact on animal populations, individuals and society at large.

The interests at stake require the involvement of well-trained and accountable people. Therefore, the practice of veterinary medicine must be restricted to people who are sufficiently qualified and who work in accordance with relevant scientific, professional and ethical standards.

Regulating the veterinary profession is aimed at protecting the public as well as animal health and welfare, by setting and maintaining standards for veterinary education and professional behaviour. The regulatory process includes restricting admission to the profession to those who are suitably qualified, setting standards for professional behaviour and applying disciplinary measures when necessary. Transparency is assured by a register of suitably qualified veterinary professionals licensed to practice.

Standards for the practice of veterinary medicine are based on science and ethics, objectively justifiable and proportional to the goal to be achieved. Such standards are necessary both to ensure public trust in the veterinary profession and in the interest of the health and welfare of animals and public health.
1. Regulating the veterinary profession is in the interest of the animal(s) concerned, their owner(s) and also very much of society at large. The prevention and control of animal health and welfare as delivered by the veterinary profession contributes to a healthier and safer world. Equally, failures in the delivery of veterinary services impact on each and every one of us. Diagnosing and treating Foot and Mouth disease, recognising a rabid dog, deciding the correct antimicrobial treatment, assessing the safety of food, understanding the needs of the animals, just to mention a few, are complex issues that require the involvement of veterinary expertise.

2. The veterinary profession is one of the liberal professions. These professions can be defined as: those practiced on the basis of relevant professional qualifications, in a personal, responsible and professionally independent capacity by those providing intellectual and conceptual services in the interest of the client and the public.

3. The veterinary profession provides intellectual and conceptual services. It is difficult for the general public to ascertain the quality and efficacy of such services so they must be able to trust the profession. To protect people and animals against unqualified persons and dubious practices, the profession must be regulated.

4. A fundamental pre-requisite for being a member of a regulated profession is:
   - Having relevant professional qualifications;
   - Working in a personal, responsible and professionally independent capacity, in the interest of the client and the public.

5. In order to be admitted to the veterinary profession, the licensing authority (the veterinary statutory body or the Competent Authority (VSB/CA)) validates the person as having the necessary qualification demonstrated by a diploma from a recognised school/university which ensures trust for the public.

6. The veterinary statutory body or the Competent Authority supervises the professional behaviour of the licensed veterinarian and ensures that they comply with the standards of good veterinary practice and professional ethics. In most countries these standards are laid down in a Code of Practice.

7. Veterinarians must respect the standards laid down and suspected infringements are monitored and investigated by the veterinary statutory body. Disciplinary sanctions are taken when appropriate.

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For reasons of transparency and to let the public know who is licensed, an up to date register of licensed veterinary professionals is available.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) considers good veterinary services as a Global Public Good. In its Terrestrial Code, the 180 OIE member countries recognise the regulation of veterinary professionals by an independent and autonomous VSB/CA as essential to good veterinary governance.

Regulating the veterinary profession is an indispensable quality assurance measure to ensure the health and welfare of animals and public health

NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of 44 veterinary organisations from 38 European countries, representing a total of around 240 000 veterinarians. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) strives to promote animal health, animal welfare and public health across Europe.

For further information, consult the FVE website www.fve.org or contact the FVE Secretariat on Tel +32 2 533 70 20 or by e-mail to info@fve.org