

Update on the registration and regulation of large animal veterinary technicians in New Zealand

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Introduction

The regulation and registration of Large Animal Veterinary Technicians (LAVTs) in New Zealand remains a developing area. While no formal decisions have been made to date, the LAVT Committee continues to consider key factors that will shape the future of the profession. This update provides an overview of the primary areas under discussion, including establishing minimum standards, protecting the LAVT title, determining pathways for existing LAVTs, and managing a register. Additionally, the role of voluntary regulation through the Animal Veterinary Professional Regulatory Council (AVPRC) will be outlined.

Minimum standards

A fundamental decision facing the LAVT Committee is the establishment of a minimum qualification standard for those seeking recognition and regulation as an LAVT. The Diploma in Rural Animal Veterinary Technology has emerged as the most likely qualification to serve as this minimum standard going forward, for new technicians. It provides comprehensive, practical training tailored to the needs of the large animal veterinary sector, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. Recognising this diploma as the benchmark will help ensure consistency and competency across the profession.

Title protection and preservation

Protecting the title of LAVT is essential to maintain the credibility and professional identity of those working within the role. The Committee is actively considering mechanisms to reserve the title for individuals who meet the established qualifications and competencies. This will prevent other industry roles, such as AI technicians, laboratory technicians, research technicians, and seasonal workers like teat sealers, or rural animal healthcare assistants, from misusing or diluting the LAVT title.

Grandfathering existing LAVTs

Recognising the valuable experience of current LAVTs who may not meet the forthcoming qualification standard is another key consideration. A grandfathering process is under discussion to allow these individuals to gain formal recognition. Criteria for grandfathering may include a combination of practical experience, time in the industry, and evidence of continued professional development. The aim is to ensure experienced technicians are acknowledged without compromising the integrity of the profession.

Management of a non-qualified list

In instances where individuals do not meet the required criteria to be recognised as an LAVT, the Committee is considering establishing a non-qualified list. This record would differentiate individuals who are not formally recognised as LAVTs, providing transparency and clarity for employers, clients, and other stakeholders. The

purpose is not to exclude workers but to ensure that the LAVT title remains meaningful and respected.

MPI have indicated that having a registered list of LAVTs in New Zealand will be invaluable, should there be another disease outbreak, like *M. Bovis* recently, so that they can include all available people in their incursion response plan, or in natural disaster response.

Voluntary registration and CPD through the AVPRC

Currently, registration is available through the AVPRC, providing a pathway for LAVTs to demonstrate their commitment to maintaining professional standards. It is important to reiterate that registration is voluntary at this stage, although AVPRC are working towards the necessary legislative change to make registration of all NZ allied veterinary professionals mandatory. While participation in AVPRC registration remains voluntary, it serves as a valuable mechanism for ensuring ongoing professional accountability.

The AVPRC requires members to adhere to the LAVT Professional Guidelines, and it has Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements, which promote lifelong learning and competence within the field.

In fact, CPD should be something that all LAVTs do regularly, regardless of if you are qualified or not, or intend to be on the register or not.

LAVT membership falls within the membership of NZVA, allowing you to record your CPD on their online platform. The old system of recording CPD points has been replaced by a new reflective model. CPD should be personalised to suit your plan to keep up to date and be the best LAVT you can - and should also be tailored to your own tastes. There is no point in learning how to BCS deer if you're never intending to work with them!

Recording CPD is more about reflecting on the learning that took place and how you intend to implement it in your practice and can be about any topic that is going to be beneficial. For example, if you have an interesting case that you'd like to share but have never written for a journal, then the learning that you do about writing for journals is CPD – even if it isn't a structured course.

Conclusion

While the LAVT Committee continues to deliberate on these significant decisions, the overarching goal remains the same: to establish a clear, fair, and sustainable framework for the regulation and registration of LAVTs in New Zealand. Through protecting the title, recognising experience, and encouraging ongoing professional development, the future of the LAVT profession will be strengthened.

Further updates will be provided as decisions are made and the registration process evolves. For now, this summary serves as an outline of the discussions currently underway and the commitment to ensuring LAVTs are recognised and supported in their vital role within the veterinary industry.