



Guidelines for the authorisation of a lay person to carry out PREGNANCY TESTING BY ULTRASOUND using a rectal probe in Western Australia under the direction of a registered veterinary surgeon

Background

Under veterinary practices Acts in Australia, pregnancy testing is an act of veterinary surgery in Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia.

Pregnancy testing of cattle in Western Australia is carried out for two main purposes:

- (a) to assist in the management of cattle in a cattle herd; and
- (b) to provide certification in relation to pregnancy for cattle intended for export to certain countries.

For the purpose of certification that cattle intended for export from Western Australia or the Northern Territory to certain countries are not pregnant, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) accepts certification by a state government authorised person. For this purpose, it is sufficient to detect as being pregnant, by means of rectal palpation or ultrasound using a rectal probe, a cow which is 8 weeks or more pregnant. A cow not detected as being pregnant using this criterion can be certified as being not pregnant.

Section 26(4)(b) of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1960* of Western Australia enables the Board to authorise a person who is not a registered veterinary surgeon to carry out, under the direction of a registered veterinary surgeon, an act of veterinary surgery that is specified by regulation.

Regulation 47 of the *Veterinary Surgeons Regulations 1979* of Western Australia specifies pregnancy testing in cattle to be an act of veterinary surgery for the purpose of section 26(4)(b).

Authorisation by the Board

Following consultation with stakeholders, the Board determined the criteria to be used by the Board for the authorisation of a person to carry out pregnancy testing under the provisions of section 26(4)(b).

1. In each instance when cattle are to be tested by an authorised person, the directing veterinary surgeon is to direct the authorised person as to the property, the group of cattle and the date of testing.
2. Pregnancy testing means detecting as being pregnant, a cow which is 8 weeks or more pregnant.
3. Authorisation to pregnancy test DOES NOT include authorisation to:
 - (a) examine a cow and determine the age of a foetus; or
 - (b) examine a cow for the purpose of determining the reproductive health of the cow; or
 - (c) examine a cow for the purpose of the diagnosis of reproductive disease.

4. The Board will authorise a person only if the Board also approves the veterinary surgeon/s who may direct that person.
5. The Board will authorise a person to pregnancy test cattle by ultrasound using a rectal probe on the condition that:
 - (i) the applicant satisfies the Board that they have undertaken and passed a training course in pregnancy testing by ultrasound using a rectal probe equivalent in standard to the RTE4124A or RTE03 courses used for training in pregnancy testing by means of rectal palpation; or
 - (ii) the applicant provides sufficient proof of competency and experience by a disinterested party, approved by the Board in advance of the application, by providing evidence that they possess the relevant knowledge and competencies as listed in the Competencies for Ultrasound Testing which follow;
and
 - (iii) the Board approves the registered veterinary surgeon under whose direction the applicant may operate.
6. The directing veterinary surgeon must be resident in Western Australia, complete the required form of application, and provide evidence of suitability.
7. The directing veterinary surgeon is accountable to the Board for the conduct of the authorised person.
8. The directing veterinary surgeon must maintain records of:
 - (i) the date of each examination;
 - (ii) the name and address of the owner of the cattle;
 - (iii) the property on which the cattle were examined;
 - (iv) the number of cattle examined;
 - (v) the number of cattle determined to be pregnant by the authorised person; and
 - (vi) any advertising by the authorised person for the provision of pregnancy testing.
9. The directing veterinary surgeon is to ensure that a registered veterinary surgeon is available to attend the cattle being pregnancy tested in the event that veterinary expertise is required. This includes, but is not restricted to, injury to a cow (eg rectal tear) during the pregnancy testing.
10. Authorisation will be for a period no greater than one (1) year.
11. Maintenance of authorisation will rely upon the satisfactory performance of the authorised person and the directing veterinary surgeon and compliance with the conditions and restrictions set out in these guidelines.
12. Renewal of authorisation will require the authorised person to provide evidence of ongoing suitability and maintenance of competency.
13. It is the Board's expectation that an authorised person performing pregnancy testing will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with that of a registered veterinary surgeon. This includes any advertising which must be factually correct and relate only to acts of veterinary surgery the person is authorised by the Board to perform.

14. The Board may withdraw the authorisation of an authorised person if the Board, after due enquiry, considers the person to have acted in an inappropriate manner.
15. The Board may withdraw the authorisation of an authorised person who performs an act of veterinary surgery for which they are not authorised, including but not restricted to foetal aging, early pregnancy detection (ie less than 8 weeks), or providing advice on reproductive health or disease and may prosecute the person for performing acts of veterinary surgery when not authorised.
16. The authorisation of the authorised person will automatically cease if their directing veterinary surgeon:
 - (a) ceases to be a registered veterinary surgeon; or
 - (b) has restrictions placed on their registration such that they are no longer eligible to be a directing veterinary surgeon; or
 - (c) refuses to continue to comply with all of the requirements of the Board's guidelines for directing veterinary surgeons.

Maintenance of competency

Maintenance of competency requires evidence of having examined for pregnancy a moving average over a 3 year period of at least 500 cattle per year.

Evidence of activity can be provided by:

- (i) records of export pregnancy testing; or
- (ii) records of production pregnancy testing corroborated by herd records.

The accuracy of the records must be certified by the directing veterinary surgeon.

In the event that a person does not maintain the moving average of at least 500 over a 3 year period, the Board will require re-certification by an RTO.

Maintenance of records by an authorised person

For each group of cows pregnancy tested, the authorised person will maintain a record of:

- (i) the date of the direction by the approved directing registered veterinary surgeon to pregnancy test the cows;
- (ii) the date of the pregnancy testing;
- (iii) the name and address of the owner of the cows;
- (iv) the address of the property on which the cows were pregnancy tested;
- (v) the number of cows pregnancy tested; and
- (vi) the number of cows determined to be pregnant.

Record keeping by the Veterinary Surgeons' Board

The Board will provide a certificate of authorisation.

The Board will maintain a register of authorised persons and the relevant directing registered veterinary surgeons.

Competencies required for persons applying for authorisation

General knowledge

Has knowledge of:

1. the physiology of reproduction of the animal;
2. the stages of parturition in animals;
3. basic animal reproductive physiology;
4. animal reproductive systems;
5. animal embryological development;
6. relevant zoonoses; and
7. recording and reporting systems used in conjunction with pregnancy diagnosis and animal breeding programs.

Occupational Health and Safety

Possesses knowledge of and applies Occupational Health and Safety such that all working routines for animals are carried out in line with the provisions of the relevant Occupational Health and Safety legislation.

Eliminates or minimises Occupational Health and Safety risk by means of:

1. relevant occupational health and safety hazards identification, risk assessment and risk control measures;
2. safe operating procedures;
3. safe manual handling systems and procedures;
4. safe systems and procedures for outdoor work, including protection from solar radiation; and
5. selection, use and maintenance of relevant personal protective equipment.

Animal Health and Welfare

1. Provides empathic care for animals during husbandry operations.
2. Reports clearly, accurately and in a timely fashion on the health and welfare of the animals.
3. Accepts advice and instruction.
4. Works effectively and safely to accurately carry out manual or ultrasound rectal probe pregnancy testing with safety and nil damage to animals or personnel.
5. Complies with all relevant animal welfare legislation, codes and standards.

Pregnancy testing using ultrasound

One hundred percent accuracy in detecting pregnancy in 20 cattle which are 8 weeks or more pregnant when testing by means of ultrasound using a rectal probe.

Record keeping

Keeps clear, accurate records of work carried out.