



Veterinary Surgeons' Board



Authorisation to carry out PREGNANCY TESTING BY RECTAL PALPATION in Western Australia under the direction of a registered veterinary surgeon

GUIDELINES

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, pregnancy testing means detecting as being pregnant, a cow which is 8 weeks or more 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

The Board will apply the following criteria in relation to the authorisation of a person to carry out pregnancy testing by rectal palpation under the provisions of section 26(4)(b).

1. The directing veterinary surgeon is responsible for the direction of the authorised person in relation to the activities and record keeping of an authorised person in their performance of each act of veterinary surgery they perform and are authorised to perform.
2. For the purposes of authorisation, the Board considers the meaning of "direction" to be that given in the *Poisons Regulations 1965* being that "direction" means regular and frequent supervision but does not necessarily imply continuous personal supervision.
3. For the purpose of authorisation, the Board interprets pregnancy testing to mean detecting as being pregnant, a cow which is 8 weeks or more pregnant.

4. 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.
5. The Board will not authorise a person to pregnancy test cattle using rectal palpation unless the applicant submits an application in the required format and provides evidence of competency by means of:
 - (a) a certificate issued by a registered training organisation (RTO) that the person has satisfactorily completed a course equivalent to the nationally accredited training package RTE4124A or RTE03 provided by the Charles Darwin University (CDU) Rural Campus, Katherine, including evidence that the person is able to detect as pregnant, cows which are 8 or more weeks pregnant with an accuracy of 100% in 20 cows OR
 - (b) evidence of recognised prior learning (RPL), a theory examination equivalent to that required by training package RTE4124A or RTE03 provided by the Charles Darwin University (CDU) Rural Campus, Katherine, and evidence that the person is able to detect as pregnant, cows which are 8 or more weeks pregnant with an accuracy of 100% in 20 cows

AND

 - (c) 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 this section.
6. The Board will authorise a person only if the Board also approves the veterinary surgeon/s nominated by the person to direct that person.
7. Authorisation will be for a period no greater than one (1) year.
8. 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.

Directing veterinary surgeon

1. The directing veterinary surgeon must be resident in Western Australia, complete the required form of application, and provide evidence of suitability.
2. The directing veterinary surgeon is accountable to the Board for the conduct of pregnancy testing by the authorised person.
3. The directing veterinary surgeon must maintain access to the records of the authorised person in relation to:
 - (i) the date of the 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.

4. 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. Such an event includes, but is not restricted to, injury to a cow (eg rectal tear) during the pregnancy testing.
5. The Board will withdraw the approval of a directing veterinary surgeon to direct an authorised person if they:
 - (i) cease to be a registered veterinary surgeon
 - (ii) have conditions placed on their registration such that they are no longer eligible to be a directing veterinary surgeon
 - (iii) do not accept to continue to comply with all the requirements of the Board's guidelines for directing veterinary surgeons.

Authorised persons

1. Renewal of authorisation will require the authorised person to provide evidence of ongoing suitability and maintenance of competency.
2. 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 being factually correct and related only to acts of veterinary surgery the person is authorised to perform.
3. The Board may withdraw the authorisation of an authorised person if, after due enquiry, the Board considers the person to have acted in an inappropriate manner.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Authorisation to perform pregnancy testing by rectal palpation does not exempt the authorised person from the provisions of the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*.

8. Maintenance of competency requires evidence of having satisfactorily examined for pregnancy a moving average over a 3 year period of at least 500 cattle per year.
9. 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.
10. In the event that a person does not maintain the moving average of at least 500 over a 3 year period, the Board may require the person to undergo further training, and may suspend the person's authorisation until the person has completed the necessary training and provided evidence of competence.

Record keeping by the Veterinary Surgeons' Board

1. The Board will provide a certificate of authorisation.
2. The Board will maintain a register of authorised persons and the relevant directing registered veterinary surgeons.

These guidelines were endorsed by the Board on 3 December 2009

Competencies required for persons applying for authorisation

General knowledge

Has knowledge of:

1. the physiology of reproduction of cattle
2. the stages of parturition cattle
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

1. 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.
2. Eliminates or minimises Occupational Health and Safety risk by means of:
 - (i) relevant occupational health and safety hazards identification, risk assessment and risk control measures
 - (ii) safe operating procedures
 - (iii) safe manual handling systems and procedures
 - (iv) safe systems and procedures for outdoor work, including protection from solar radiation and
 - (v) 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 by way of manual palpation

The applicant must have satisfactorily completed a course equivalent to the nationally accredited training package RTE4124A or RTE03 provided by the Charles Darwin University (CDU) Rural Campus, Katherine, including evidence that the person is competent with one hundred percent accuracy, in detecting pregnancy in 20 cattle which are 8 weeks or more pregnant when testing by means of rectal palpation.

Record keeping

Keeps clear, accurate records of work carried out.