



## Veterinary Surgeons' Board



### Authorisation of a lay person to carry out pregnancy testing of cattle by rectal palpation

#### Background

Section 26(4)(b) of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act* 1960 (the Act) allows for the authorisation of 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 (the Regulations) specifies pregnancy testing of cattle by rectal palpation to be an act of veterinary surgery which may be performed by an authorised person, for the purpose of section 26(4)(b) of the Act.

The Veterinary Surgeons' Board (the Board) is responsible for administering the Act and is therefore responsible for the process of authorising a person who is not a registered veterinary surgeon, to perform acts of pregnancy testing by rectal palpation.

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 certifying that cattle intended for export from Western Australia 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.

The following guidelines provide details of the process and criteria applied by the Board when considering an application for authorisation.

#### 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) of the Act:

1. Authorisation to perform pregnancy testing by rectal palpation:
  - (a) means authorisation to detect as being pregnant, a cow which is 8 weeks or more pregnant; but
  - (b) **DOES NOT** include authorisation to:
    - (i) examine a cow and determine the age of a foetus; or
    - (ii) examine a cow for the purpose of determining the reproductive health of the cow; or
    - (iii) examine a cow for the purpose of the diagnosis of reproductive disease.
2. Authorisation will not be granted to pregnancy test cattle by 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. Evidence must be submitted 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), and evidence that the person has satisfactorily completed 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.
3. Authorisation will not be granted unless the registered veterinary surgeon nominated to direct the applicant is approved by the Board as the directing veterinary surgeon.
4. Authorisation will be for a period no greater than one (1) year.
5. Authorisation will be maintained subject to compliance with these Guidelines during the period of authorisation. Authorisation may be withdrawn immediately where the Board finds that these Guidelines have not been complied with, or will not be complied with during the period of authorisation.
6. The Board may from time to time review and amend these Guidelines, and post the updated Guidelines on the Board's website at [www.vsbwa.org.au](http://www.vsbwa.org.au). At the time of posting, the updated Guidelines will be the Guidelines with which directing veterinary surgeons and authorised persons must comply. It is the responsibility of the directing veterinary surgeon and the authorised person to ensure they are conversant with the current Guidelines.
7. Authorisation may be renewed where the requirements for authorisation as set out in these Guidelines continue to be met and where the Board is satisfied, by evidence provided by the authorised person, that with reference to the preceding period of authorisation:
  - (a) the authorised person has satisfactorily performed pregnancy testing by rectal palpation and complied with the requirements listed in the section "maintenance of competency";
  - (b) the authorised person has complied with these Guidelines as amended or updated; and
  - (c) the accuracy of the authorised person's written records has been verified by the directing veterinary surgeon.
8. 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.
9. 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, foetal sexing, early pregnancy detection (ie less than 8 weeks), or providing advice on reproductive health or disease.
10. The Board may prosecute a person for performing acts of veterinary surgery for which they are not authorised.

## **Directing Veterinary Surgeon**

1. The directing veterinary surgeon must be resident and registered in Western Australia and must complete the required form. Forms may be obtained from the Board office or the Board's website at [www.vsbwa.org.au](http://www.vsbwa.org.au).
2. The directing veterinary surgeon is responsible for the authorised person in relation to the performance of each authorised act of veterinary surgery.
3. "Direction" means regular and frequent supervision but does not necessarily imply continuous personal supervision.
4. The directing veterinary surgeon must keep a record of each supervision of the authorised person.
5. The directing veterinary surgeon is accountable to the Board for the performance of pregnancy testing by rectal palpation by the authorised person.
6. The directing veterinary surgeon must maintain access to the records of the authorised person in relation to:
  - (a) the name and address of the owner of the cattle;
  - (b) the address of the property on which the pregnancy testing was performed;
  - (c) the number of cattle which were pregnancy tested;
  - (d) the number of cattle determined to be pregnant; and
  - (e) any advertising by the authorised person for the provision of pregnancy testing by rectal palpation.
7. The directing veterinary surgeon must ensure that a registered veterinary surgeon is available to attend 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.
8. The directing veterinary surgeon will have their approval to direct an authorised person withdrawn if they:
  - (a) cease to be a registered veterinary surgeon;
  - (b) have conditions placed on their registration such that they are no longer eligible to be a directing veterinary surgeon; or
  - (c) do not wish to continue to comply with all of the requirements contained in these Guidelines.

## **Authorised Persons**

1. The Board requires that an authorised person performing pregnancy testing by rectal palpation will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with that expected of a registered veterinary surgeon. This includes any advertising being factually correct and relates only to acts of veterinary surgery the person is authorised to perform.
2. The authorised person must maintain an accurate and complete record of:
  - (a) the date and details of the pregnancy testing by rectal palpation;
  - (b) the name and address of the owner of the cattle;
  - (c) the address of the property on which the pregnancy testing was performed;

- (d) the number of cattle which were pregnancy tested; and
  - (e) the number of cattle which were determined to be pregnant.
3. The authorised person must provide the directing veterinary surgeon with access to all records required to be made under paragraph 2 above.
  4. The authorised person must report clearly, accurately and in a timely fashion to a veterinary surgeon any adverse events.
  5. The authorised person must accept advice and instruction from the directing veterinary surgeon.

### **Insurance**

The veterinary surgeons and the authorised person are responsible for their insurance requirements and should seek professional advice on public liability insurance and professional indemnity insurance cover.

### **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 by the pregnancy tester must be certified by the directing veterinary surgeon.

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

### **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 their directing veterinary surgeons.

## **Competencies required for persons applying for authorisation**

### **General knowledge**

Has knowledge of:

1. the physiology of reproduction of cattle
2. cattle reproductive anatomy
3. cattle embryological development
4. relevant zoonoses and
5. recording and reporting systems used in conjunction with pregnancy testing 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 pregnancy testing by rectal palpation with safety and minimal injury to animals or personnel.
5. Complies with all relevant animal welfare legislation, codes and standards.

### **Pregnancy testing by way of rectal 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. Evidence must be submitted 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.