



Summer Issue December 2013

IN THIS ISSUE

Registrar's Reflections	1
Seasons Greetings	1
Congratulations	1
Registration renewals	2
Amending clinical records	2
Dried chicken treats linked to kidney disease in Australian dogs	2
From the inspectors' pen – the storage and use of S8 medications	3
Necropsies – When are they necessary?	4
Cat Act 2011 and Dog Act Amendments 2013	4

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the following veterinary surgeons who have recently been registered as veterinary specialists:

DR GUY LESTER

Equine Medicine

DR CRISTY SECOMBE

Equine Medicine

DR RACHAEL SMITH

Equine Surgery

DR COURTNEY NORTH

Small Animal Medicine

REGISTRAR'S REFLECTIONS

On 4 December 2013 I had the enjoyable task of registering 38 new veterinary graduates from Murdoch University's College of Veterinary Medicine and attending the formal registration and prize giving ceremony afterwards. The Chair of the Board, Dr Punch welcomed the graduates to the profession, offered them some advice on life as a veterinary surgeon and led them through the Veterinarians' Oath. A copy of Dr Punch's welcome speech and the Oath are on the Board's website www.vsbwa.org.au/.

I urge you to have a look at Dr Punch's speech, not only for some sage advice for working in the profession but also for some interesting insights into how the profession has changed since the first graduates from Murdoch University Veterinary School, as it was known then, graduated in 1979.

Dr Punch gave some examples of how things have changed and this jogged my memory of one example. I remember in the late 1970's attending a reproduction lecture and being told by the lecturer that in the previous year he had confined his comments on feline reproduction to "use two bricks" but this year he had expanded the material to one full lecture!

Again, congratulations to the class of 2013 who graduated as veterinary surgeons and welcome to the profession.

Just a reminder that if you wish to work as a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse in 2014 and have not renewed your registration as yet, please do so as soon as possible, and definitely by 31 December 2013. Due to the office shut down telephone renewals will not be available after midday on 24 December 2013.

Finally, I would like to wish everyone a wonderful Christmas and all the best for the coming year.

Seasons Greetings

The members and staff of the Veterinary Surgeons' Board wish everyone the best for the festive season and a happy, healthy and prosperous new year.

The Board's office will be closed from 12 noon on Tuesday 24 December 2013 until 8.30am, Thursday 2 January 2014.





REGISTRATION RENEWALS

By now all registered veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and body corporates should have received their annual renewal notice. If you haven't received a renewal notice please contact the Board office.

The absolute deadline for the payment of your registration fee is 31 December 2013. As of 1 January 2014, veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who have not renewed for 2014 will not be able to legally work as a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse in Western Australia.



AMENDING CLINICAL RECORDS

While considering a recent complaint, the Board noticed that the clinical record provided by a veterinary surgeon for the animal that was the subject of the complaint differed from the clinical record that had been provided earlier to the client.

While the Board found that the veterinary surgeon had not behaved unprofessionally with respect to the treatment of the animal, altering clinical records in response to an investigation by the Board, if proven, could be considered unprofessional.

On being requested to provide an explanation for the differing clinical records the veterinary surgeon explained that another veterinary surgeon had assisted in the treatment to the animal and had been tardy in writing up the clinical record to record their part of the treatment.

The Board noted that the amendment to the clinical record added further detail but did not alter the basic facts of the animal's treatment and accepted the veterinary surgeon's explanation.

The Board advised the veterinary surgeon and the veterinary manager of the practice that veterinary surgeons should write up clinical records as soon as possible, preferably on the same day, after an animal is treated.

The Board recognises that sometimes it may be necessary to add information to a clinical record and advises that when retrospective comments are added that veterinary surgeons record the date the amendment was made and by whom on the actual clinical record.

DRIED CHICKEN TREATS LINKED TO KIDNEY DISEASE IN AUSTRALIAN DOGS

Proximal renal tubulopathy has been reported in Australian dogs with markedly increased frequency since September 2007

Researchers who reviewed cases of 108 dogs (2007 to 2009) in Australia that developed kidney disease after eating chicken jerky treats made in China concluded that the treats probably contained a toxic substance.

The findings appear in the September 2013 issue of the *Australian Veterinary Journal*.





FROM THE INSPECTORS' PEN – THE STORAGE AND USE OF S8 MEDICATIONS

The storage and use of S8 medications continues to be an area of confusion and non compliance. Below are some of the most frequent questions that the Board's inspectors are asked when they visit veterinary practices.

In a nutshell, how should S8s be stored and used?

- Only a veterinary surgeon can open the S8 safe or put recently purchased S8s in the safe.
- Only a veterinary surgeon can administer an S8 drug within the clinic or hospital.
- Minimal quantities of S8s should be stored as many practices are broken into every year in WA.
- The methodology for the administration of S8s to patients is straight forward: The veterinary surgeon should open the S8 safe, administer the drug, sign the register and return the unused drug to the safe.
- Veterinary surgeons going out on call can take S8s with them as long as they keep them on their person or in a doctors bag which is with them at all times. On return, the bag or S8 drug must be placed back in the S8 safe.

What are the common mistakes that veterinary surgeons make with the S8 register?

Mistake 1 : Only showing bottle use - It is mandatory to show the balance of each S8 in the register. The balance in the register should equal the total quantity of drug in the safe.

Mistake 2 : Only signing the transaction register at the end of the day - The transaction register is to be signed at the time of S8 use.

How often do I need to balance the transaction register with the stock?

It is mandatory to do so at intervals of not more than one month. The inspectors recommend every 3 weeks and more frequently in busy practices with multiple staff.

Can a registered nurse administer an S8 in the presence of a veterinary surgeon?

No.

Can an S8 be injected into a drip bag for overnight or 24hr use?

Yes, if reasonable amounts are dispensed and the bag is labelled.

Is the Health Department concerned about the misuse of any S8 in particular?

Yes, Ketamine is a particular concern because of its potential for misuse. It is for this reason the inspectors request that you keep the quantities of Ketamine in storage to a minimum and keep it balanced to the millilitre.

What do I do if I believe S8s are being stolen from the practice?

It is not your job to find the culprit. However not reporting it to the appropriate authority can lead to a Board enquiry. You are required to report theft of S8s to the Police, Department of Health and the Board.

Do thieves break-in to practices to steal S8s?

In shopping centres thieves commonly enter through the ceiling. There has been a case where thieves broke in and put a chain around the free standing safe and pulled it through the building!

If I have expired S8s that I wish to dispose of, how do I do so and comply with legislation?

The Poisons Regulations 1965 state that you may take these for incineration to a pharmacist or have them collected by a person authorised by the Health Department. Ask for a receipt and staple it into the S8 transaction register.

Where do I get an S8 transaction register?

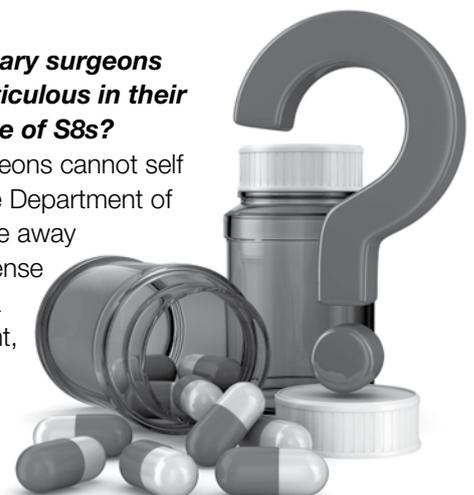
They are available from the veterinary wholesalers. HA 14 and HA 176 registers are compliant.

How long do I have to keep the transaction records?

7 years.

Why do veterinary surgeons need to be meticulous in their storage and use of S8s?

If veterinary surgeons cannot self regulate then the Department of Health could take away the right to dispense drugs. There is a familiar precedent, medical doctors.





NECROPSIES – WHEN ARE THEY NECESSARY?

The Board has considered a number of complaints against veterinary surgeons where the animal has died and where the cause of death has not been established clinically. In these cases a lack of a definitive diagnosis may make it difficult for the Board to establish whether a veterinary surgeon's treatment and care of an animal was appropriate.

An anaesthetic death, sudden death in previously healthy animals and suspected poisonings are situations where a necropsy should be offered. If an unexpected death of an animal occurs while it is in the care of a veterinary surgeon it is especially important that a necropsy is offered. While it is good medical practice to offer necropsies in these circumstances, they are also the situations that are the most likely to result in the owner making a complaint to the Board.

Ideally an independent veterinary surgeon should be sought to perform a necropsy. However, the Board is of the view that a veterinary surgeon of good repute and competency should be able to provide an unbiased opinion.

Obtaining permission for a necropsy on an animal is often not a comfortable conversation, but should be offered when appropriate and noted, if declined, in the clinical record. A necropsy may be the only way to determine the cause of death and provide closure to an animal owner struggling with the loss of their pet.

CAT ACT 2011 AND DOG ACT AMENDMENTS 2013

The Board has received a number of queries from veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses as to who may microchip cats and dogs.

Since November 2013 when the full Cat Act 2011 and the Dog Act Amendments 2013 took effect a registered veterinary nurse may microchip a dog or cat, sign the prescribed paperwork and lodge it with a microchip database company without the supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon.

For further details about microchipping cats and microchip implanters see the website below.

www.dlg.wa.gov.au/Content/Legislation/ResponsibleCatownership.aspx

For species other than cats and dogs, only a registered veterinary surgeon or a registered veterinary nurse under the supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon may insert a microchip.



THE VETERINARY SURGEONS' BOARD OF WA

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