Veterinary Statutory Bodies: Their roles and importance in the good governance of Veterinary Services

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Agenda

I. Introduction
II. Definition
III. Basic roles
   a) licensing and registration
   b) setting and monitoring of standards for professional services and of
   c) standards for professional conduct
IV. Optional roles
V. Legal framework
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The most important part of Veterinary Services is undoubtedly their personnel; in particular abilities, skills and qualifications of people.

Confidence and trust of any Veterinary Service relies heavily upon the level of competence and credibility of its human ressources - both in the public and private fields.

The total of highly trained technical personnel such as Veterinarians commonly forms what is called a profession.
Each profession seeks three major goals.

- To deliver high quality professional services.
- To adhere to publicly orientated ethic standards.
- To maintain some degree of autonomy as a legal body of members with common status, rights and obligations.

These objectives are best achieved by establishing a professional body → **Veterinary Statutory Body**
Furthermore it is important

- to address existing **disparities** of veterinary registration, accreditation and monitoring procedures between many countries incl. relevant legislation.
- to develop a harmonised approach to the training and regulation of the profession in order to facilitate **international mobility** of veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals.
- to improve in general the **participation of private veterinarians** and their associations in supporting the activities of Veterinary Services.
- to create one collective **voice of the profession**.
II. Definition

*Terrestrial Animal Health Code Glossary (2011)* defines, ‘*Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB)* means an autonomous authority regulating *veterinarians* and *veterinary para-professionals.*’

This implies a VSB
- per se is not a part of the Veterinary Services.
- nevertheless has direct influence on performance and quality of VS.
- is not a loose professional association nor a labour union nor a cartel.
- Should be autonomous from undue political and commercial interests.
- as an authority must have a sound legal basis.
III. Basic roles of a VSB

A VSB should cover at least the following three responsibilities (as defined in Chapter 3.2 Evaluation of VSB)

a) to regulate veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals through licensing and/or registration of such persons;

b) to determine the minimum standards of education (initial and continuing) required for degrees, diplomas and certificates entitling the holders thereof to be registered as veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals;

c) to determine the standards of professional conduct of veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals and to ensure these standards are met.
III. A) Licensing and/or registration

Should include the following

- mandatory **notification** of the begin and end of any professional activity,
- issue of a permit or a formal **endorsement** with or without time restriction and with or without subject to limitation (e.g. only for work under supervision),
- rules for professionals from **other countries**.

- All of the above also applies for veterinary para-professionals. It is important to indicate the respective levels of **responsibility** with which they may be legally entrusted.
III. B) Professional standards

Defining professional standards should

- be a joint exercise of the VSB with the Veterinary Services, the legislative branch of Government, the academic education establishments and in consultation with stakeholders,
- take into account the OIE standards for efficient Veterinary Services,
- take into account the OIE recommendations for the veterinary core curriculum (day 1 competence) and
- take into account OIE minimum standards for continuing education (under development)
III. C) Professional conduct I

A codified *standard* of conduct and members obligations should include

- specific *responsibility of the profession* for animal health as a global public good, for human health in the context of zoonoses and for animal welfare.
- general *considerations* on confidentiality, mutual respect etc.
- mandatory work *documentation*.
- mandatory *continuing education*.
- commitment of all veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals to *support* government agencies.
III. C) Professional conduct II

- An autonomous professional jurisdiction under the auspices of the VSB may deal with disciplinary matters - supplementary and independent to proceedings in a regular court of law.

- Offences against code of conduct would include issuing false certificates and statements, abuse of position, bribery etc.

- Professional sanctions should include fines, compulsory retraining, publication of case, temporary suspension or permanent withdrawal of professional license.
IV. Optional roles of the VSB

Further tasks beneficial to all members of a VSB could include

- Rules for *advertising* and guidance for general setup and management of practice
- Guidance and rules on *fees* for professional services
- Procedures for voluntary *dispute settlement* among professionals and between professionals and third parties
- Provisions for *health insurance, medical care and pension schemes*
- Guidance and provisions for *liability* insurance
- Expressing *common opinions* of the profession on sensible topics and thereby e.g. support unpopular programs which are ultimately in the public interest or necessary for national development.
V. Legal framework I

In May 2012 OIE adopted a new chapter 3.4 on *Veterinary legislation*. It includes provisions relevant to the role of the VSB.

General matters
- Introduction and objectives
- Definition

Specific matters
- Competent authorities
- *Veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals*
- Laboratories in the veterinary domain
- Health provisions relating to animal production
- Animal diseases
- Animal welfare
- Veterinary medicines and biologicals
- General principles
- The drafting of veterinary legislation
- Human food production chain
- Import and export procedures and veterinary certification
V. Legal framework II

Article 3.4.6: Veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals

**Veterinary legislation** should provide a definition of veterinary medicine/science to address

1. **Prerogatives** of veterinarians and of the various categories of veterinary para-professionals
2. Minimum initial and continuous educational requirements and competencies for veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals
3. Conditions for recognition of the qualification for veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals
4. Conditions to perform the activities of veterinary medicine/science
5. Exceptional situations under which non-professionals may undertake professional activities.
Article 3.4.6: Control of veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals

Veterinary legislation should provide a regulatory basis and therefore should

1. describe the general system of control
2. describe the various categories of veterinary para-professionals with their respective training, qualification, tasks and extent of supervision.
3. prescribe the powers to deal with conduct and competence issues including licensing requirements
4. Provide for the possibility of delegation of powers to the VSB
5. Where powers have been so delegated, describe the prerogatives, the functioning and responsibilities of the mandated body.
Article 3.2.12 deals with the Evaluation of a VSB and provides an overview of the different elements of a VSB. An evaluation would in particular consider the

1. legislative basis, autonomy and functional capacity
2. membership representation
3. accountability and transparency of decision-making
4. financial sources and financial management
5. programmes for training and for continuous professional development for veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals
VI. Conclusions

Establishing a VSB will

➢ ensure **quality** in the delivery of professional services.
➢ ensure **commitment** of all veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals and strengthen the voice of the profession.
➢ combine both private and public sectors of the profession into one **efficient Veterinary Service**.
➢ increase **credibility** of the Veterinary Service.
➢ be a future orientated step in the context of modern government development.