WVA POSITION ON VETERINARY PARA-PROFESSIONALS

INTRODUCTION

Veterinary para-professionals assist veterinarians in the performance of their duties, and may carry out animal health procedures as part of a veterinary health network.

The duties of veterinary para-professionals vary throughout the world as do their titles, including as veterinary nurse, veterinary technician, veterinary technologist, veterinary assistant, and animal health technicians. The scope of practice for veterinary para-professionals varies by jurisdiction, and by educational qualification and may require formal certification. Some jurisdictions allow veterinary assistants with minimal formal education and on-the-job training to support the veterinarian only under direct supervision. In other countries or regions, veterinary para-professionals may have advanced training and education and can perform a range of duties without direct veterinary supervision but they work within a veterinary health network. Ideally, para-professional educational and training qualifications should be formalized and an associated registry board should be developed and overseen by the Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB).

WVA POSITION

Veterinary para-professionals should conduct their duties under the guidance or direction of a veterinarian or within a veterinary health network.

Veterinary para-professionals with advanced education and training should be regulated by national or state level veterinary authority or VSB.

Qualifications for higher level veterinary para-professionals must include formal education and training programs that, preferably, are monitored nationally by the veterinary authority or VSB.

DISCUSSION

The importance of infectious animal diseases on human and animal health highlights the need for a well-trained veterinary workforce, including both veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals, whose ethics, capacity and competence are overseen by a national or state veterinary authority.

The WVA recognizes that, especially in remote areas, where there may be limited access to veterinary services, primary level services may be provided by veterinary para-professionals working as outreach partners for veterinary clinics or veterinary authorities.

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1. The World Organization for Animal Health’s (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code states that, “Veterinary Para-Professional means a person who, for the purposes of the Terrestrial Code, is authorized by the veterinary statutory body to carry out certain designated tasks (dependent upon the category of veterinary para-professional) in a territory, and delegated to them under the responsibility and direction of a veterinarian. The tasks for each category of veterinary para-professional should be defined by the veterinary statutory body depending on qualifications and training, and in accordance with need.”