**VCNZ Statement on the Routine Induction of Calving in Dairy Cattle**

**Introduction**
Routine induction of calving as a management practice in dairy cattle has significant potential to undermine New Zealand’s market access assurances. It also raises questions about whether veterinarians’ authorisation of the required restricted veterinary medicines (RVMs) meets current residue control standards or the public’s animal welfare expectations.

The Government’s position is that “As a routine management practice, induced calving poses a significant threat to the dairy industry’s and indeed New Zealand’s hard won international reputation for high animal welfare standards.” Because New Zealand trading partners may buy milk products from different regions of the world, they have a growing expectation that all milk is produced to a globally accepted standard. The use of routine inductions as a management tool places New Zealand outside these standards.

Consequently, the dairy industry, NZVA and VCNZ, with the support of the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), have been working to phase out routine inductions of calving for management purposes.

A previous version of this statement, setting out VCNZ’s expectations of veterinarians, was published in 2011, following the issue of the joint NZVA, Federated Farmers, DCANZ and Dairy NZ “Operational Guidelines: Induction of Calving”

Despite this the results of an MPI audit, which were reported in February 2013, revealed that some veterinarians failed to comply with the VCNZ Standard, by (i) routinely inducing more than 4% of the herd without dispensation, (ii) failing to report their induction activities to Dairy NZ, and (iii) maintaining inadequate records. The audit also revealed that induction rates are significantly higher in some regions of New Zealand than in others.

This revised Standard sets out VCNZ’s current expectations of veterinarians in relation to the routine induction of calving in dairy cattle. It should be read in association with the “Operational Guidelines: Induction of Calving”, which set out in more detail and provide a more technical perspective on the expectations around induction of calving.

VCNZ not only expects that veterinarians will be familiar with, and will comply with, the technical requirements of the Guidelines, but will also comply with the Council’s required standards of professional behaviour. Willful non compliance with this Standard or falsifying records to mask the level of inductions performed are considered serious matters that are likely to result in disciplinary action.

Veterinarians, who have concerns about their ability to comply, are expected to seek advice from appropriate sources, particularly VCNZ, NZVA, or supply company representatives.

**Requirements**
Veterinarians must not exceed the maximum threshold (currently 4.0% of the client’s herd) without the client having applied for and successfully obtained written dispensation from their dairy supply company to exceed the threshold. In such
circumstances, the veterinarian must be satisfied the client has a management plan (as agreed with the supply company) showing how the number of inductions can be reduced back to the agreed threshold level within an acceptable time period.

When approached by a client regarding inductions, veterinarians must:
- review the previous year’s induction records to ensure that, if the level of inductions in the previous year exceeded 4%, the farmer (i) appropriately sought and obtained dispensation to do so and (ii) is working in compliance with the previous year’s management plan
- where inductions in the prior year were performed by another veterinary practice, contact the client’s previous veterinarian to obtain the prior season’s induction records, including management plans where these were required
- decline to proceed with the inductions requested if the client does not consent to obtaining the previous season’s records.

Veterinarians must report their induction activities to Dairy NZ using the reporting form “DCANZ/ DairyNZ/ NZVA Record of Routine Induction of Dairy Cows – Operational Plan” (the ‘Triplicate form’), appending an ‘Induction List’ which identifies all induced cows to the appropriate copies of the form.

Records must be provided to dairy farmers, clearly identifying the ear tag numbers of individually treated cows, the trade names of induction RVMs and the quantities and dates of individual treatments including their withholding period (WHP).

Technical requirements – from Industry “Operational Guidelines: Induction of Calving”

Veterinarians must also:
- have met with the owner/manager/person-in-charge to agree and sign off the induction list and management plan no later than 60 days before the start of inductions
- keep the necessary records - those detailing RVM authorisation and those records required to demonstrate compliance with the relevant dairy company’s Risk Management Plan and make these available for audit as required
- ensure that the planning has commenced sufficiently in advance of the initiation of the induction programme to ensure that cows meet required minima of body condition and that sufficient feed is available
- ensure that, at the time of the first induction injection, the cows to be induced: will be between 3 and 8 years old (inclusive); no more than 84 days (12 weeks) from their expected calving date; and no less than 56 days (8 weeks) from their expected calving date
- advise their clients that induced cows must be well fed and should be offered at least the ration for lactating cows, i.e. daily dry matter intake of high quality feed, equivalent to 4% of body weight
- ensure that potential candidate cows for induction have been pregnancy tested either by ultrasound examination (by a competent and experienced operator) or manual palpation performed at an appropriate time when the stage of pregnancy can be accurately estimated; noting that the client also needs to be advised that if, at any stage during the programme a cow is suspected not to be pregnant, her pregnancy status must be re-verified
- advise their clients who are purchasing pregnant cows and who want to induce them after purchase, that they will need to provide the relevant documentation (i.e. veterinary certificate with pregnancy information) to confirm that the cows are eligible for induction
- consider the availability and experience of farm staff to ensure that induced animals can be cared for properly
• ensure that induced cows have been marked clearly for the management of both welfare risks (ability to identify and respond rapidly to symptoms of ill health in treated animals) and residue risks (ability to identify treated cows easily during milking routines)

• advise their clients that following the initiation of an induction programme, the treated cows must be inspected at least every 8 hours

• have, at the time that the induction list and the management plans are agreed, discussed the plans for calf euthanasia, including the methods and the necessary competency of identified personnel that will undertake the task

• advise their clients that induced calves that are born alive must be euthanised immediately in an humane manner and disposed of according to relevant territorial authority requirements

• advise their clients that the milk from induced cows must be withheld from supply for human food (including colostrum supply) until at least 4 days after the cows have calved, regardless of what has occurred prior to calving.

Note:  The use of the word “must” in the VCNZ Code of Professional Conduct and related VCNZ Statements indicates the minimum standard which all veterinarians are required to adhere to and may be measured against.

Statement first issued by VCNZ on 6 September 2011
Reviewed and amended, date