



# Policy on additional registered qualifications and the use of post nominal and courtesy titles

## 1 Definitions

Additional qualifications are qualifications which have been approved by the Veterinary Council for entry on the Register of Veterinarians.

Post nominal titles are letters placed after the name of an individual to indicate that they hold qualifications, offices and honours or are members of organisations.

A veterinary specialist is a veterinarian with approved post graduate qualifications and experience who has been registered as a specialist by the Veterinary Council of New Zealand.

Courtesy titles are titles with no legal validity which are applied or assumed through custom, courtesy, or association, for example Mrs, Mr, Dr, Sir, Lady

## 2 Criteria for the inclusion of additional qualifications on the Register of Veterinarians

A qualification will be approved for entry on the Register if:

- it has relevance to veterinary practice; and
- has been awarded following successful completion of a course of training or study by a body recognised by the Council

A wide interpretation of relevance to veterinary practice will be taken.

A pass in a licensing/registration examination is not considered an additional qualification and will only be included on the Register if this was the basis for New Zealand registration.

Civilian and military decorations and Fellowships of the Royal Society of New Zealand will also be approved for inclusion on the Register of Veterinarians.  
(refer to Council minutes of 2 March 2011)

### 2.1 Format for recording qualifications on the Register

The Council's practice is to:

- record the abbreviated name of the qualification, the date of the award and issuing authority, together with any distinctions or honors gained, for the primary qualification by which registration has been gained eg BVSc Massey 2002 (Dist)
- record only the abbreviated name of any additional qualifications together with any distinctions or honors gained eg BSc (Hons)

## 3 Guidance on the use of post nominal titles

The Code of Professional Conduct requires veterinarians to act in a manner that promotes the public's trust and confidence in the profession. In promoting services and

products, veterinarians must act fairly, represent their capability and competence accurately, not exaggerate the claim or comparison of the service or product over another or overstate their skills and knowledge by using misleading descriptors.

The over use of post nominals can be confusing to the public and create an inflated view of a veterinarian's skills and knowledge.

As such the Council recommends to veterinarians when considering the public display of post nominal qualifications and honorary titles to limit these to:

- Undergraduate or postgraduate veterinary qualifications and New Zealand National Registration Examinations by virtue of which registration or specialist registration is awarded eg BVSc Massey 2004 or BVSc Belgrade 1993, NZNVE 2005
- Qualifications approved by the Veterinary Council as additional qualifications for inclusion on the Register of Veterinarians
- Civilian and military decorations and Fellowships of the Royal Society of New Zealand

Veterinarians choosing not to limit the public display of information in this way must ensure that qualifications are separated from other post nominal titles. For example, with letterhead paper, by placing qualifications at the top of the page and memberships and affiliations at the bottom.

#### **4 Use of the title “Specialist”**

The title 'specialist' may only be used by veterinarians who hold specialist registration with the Veterinary Council of New Zealand.

The Veterinarians Act, s33, provides that *'no person, other than a specialist, may use in connection with his or her business, trade, employment, calling, or profession any words, initials or abbreviations of the title "specialist" that are intended to cause, or that may reasonably cause any person to believe that the person using those words, initials or abbreviations is a specialist'*

Unless all veterinary practitioners working out of a practice are registered veterinary specialists or are undergoing a recognised specialist training programme under the direct supervision of a registered veterinary specialist, the trading name of the practice may not contain the word 'specialist' or any derivation of it. Such a practice may for instance be designated a Referral Centre.

#### **5 Guidance on advertising particular interest areas**

Veterinarians may advertise their areas of particular interest, but, unless they are registered as a specialist should do so in conjunction with a common descriptor e.g. veterinarian with a particular interest in equine health.

#### **6 Use of courtesy title “Doctor”**

Veterinarians may use the courtesy title 'Doctor' provided that in doing so there is no inference or suggestion that they hold a PhD (when they do not) or are a medical practitioner.

The legal requirements for the use of the title are that:

- there must be no inference or suggestion that the user is a medical practitioner or qualified to practise general medicine unless registered as such under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (section 7, HPCA Act and section 20, Summary Offences Act 1981)

- in the use of the courtesy title, the veterinarian must not purport to hold a doctorate or additional academic qualifications over and above those already held (section 20, Summary Offences Act 1981)

Veterinarians can ensure they meet the statutory requirements by qualifying the title 'Dr' with a descriptor. For example Dr John Doe, veterinarian.

Retired veterinarians are entitled to continue to use the courtesy title "Dr" provided they do so with the descriptor 'retired veterinarian'

## **7 What this guidance means**

- Membership of professional bodies (such as MRCVS) will no longer be approved for inclusion on the register, unless achieved by examination.
- Memberships, honorary titles and 'non approved' additional qualifications will not appear on the public register and veterinarians are encouraged to refrain from advertising them in their own material. Veterinarians choosing not to limit the public display of post nominal titles in this way must separate approved qualifications and civilian/military decorations from other titles
- Veterinarians holding additional qualifications and titles which do not meet the s2 criteria for inclusion on the register are encouraged to have these removed from the register.
- No veterinarian may use the title 'specialist' or infer that they are a specialist, unless they hold veterinary specialist registration with the Veterinary Council
- Veterinarians are entitled to use the courtesy title "Dr" provided that in doing so there is no inference or suggestion that they hold a PhD (when they do not) or are a medical practitioner.
- Retired veterinarians can continue to use the courtesy title "Dr" provided they do so with the descriptor 'retired veterinarian'

2 March 2011