



## Guidance on the 2017/18 Annual Practising Certificate (APC) Application and Workforce Survey

Online renewal is available during the 'bulk' APC renewal process in February and March. We email veterinarians in early February inviting them to apply online. This includes login details.

You'll need a hard copy (paper) application:

- if you're applying for a practising certificate during the year
- if you wish to pay by cheque
- if you're unable to complete the online application

### 1. Who should submit an APC application?

You need to submit an APC application with the relevant fee, if you:

- wish to practise as a veterinarian in New Zealand from 1 April 2017 (fee required).
- wish to remain on the public Register of Veterinarians in a non practising capacity (fee required)
- are permanently retired from practice but wish to remain on the public Register of Veterinarians (no fee required)
- wish to be removed from the Register of Veterinarians (no fee required)

### 2. Who needs an APC?

If you're already registered with the Veterinary Council and wish to practise from 1 April 2017 you must hold a practising certificate.

The Veterinary Council defines practice in this context as wider than clinical practice to include reporting or giving advice in a veterinary capacity, regulatory and compliance functions, teaching, consultancy, research and management roles, given that such roles influence clinical practice and impact on the public interest. A key question to ask when considering whether you need an APC is "Does the work I am doing carry or convey the expectation that I am a veterinarian?"

Note that if you're not seeking to return to practice in New Zealand until later in the year, you can delay renewing your practising certificate until that time – see Section 3 (c) below.

It's illegal to practise without holding a current practising certificate. Those who do so are liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to \$10,000.

Other consequences of not holding a current practising certificate are that you cannot carry out certification and prescribing activities or undertake significant surgical procedures. You're also unlikely to be covered by your indemnity insurer. If you're insured with VPIS you won't be covered for events which occurred when you didn't hold a current practising certificate.

#### **Don't allow your practising certificate to expire before applying for a new one.**

The commencement date of your APC is recorded on the online Register of Veterinarians and as such visible to all, including insurers, veterinary medicine wholesalers and employers.

**It's your professional responsibility, not your employer's, to renew your practising certificate.**

### 3. Completing the APC application

#### a) Question 1: Personal and Contact details

We collect personal information from you so that we can administer the provisions of the Veterinarians Act and undertake an Annual Workforce Survey. In collecting and handling personal information we comply with the requirements of the Veterinarians Act 2005 and the Privacy Act 1993.

The Veterinarians Act and associated regulations require certain information about registered and practising veterinarians to be included on the Register of Veterinarians (the Register) and made publicly available. This includes your name, registration status and qualifications. The Act also requires veterinarians to provide the Council with current contact and practice addresses. We will only make your contact details publicly available with your consent.

Only one address is currently recorded on the Register of Veterinarians. As such many veterinarians choose to use their practice address as their contact address.

The Register is available as an online searchable facility on the Council's website.

#### *Changes to your Register entry*

To change the name you're registered under, or have qualifications added to your register entry, you need to send us certified documentary evidence.

The copies of your documents must be certified or notarised as true copies of the originals by a Notary Public or Justice of the Peace (refer to the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory for those in your area) or a barrister or solicitor.

Please download and complete the relevant form [here](#) and send to us with your certified documents.

#### b) Question 1.1: Public Register information

The Council will only publish your contact address, the name of your practice or employing organisation, your phone, and e-mail details if you agree to this. As such Question 1.1 seeks your permission to publish these details. Please complete this question carefully bearing in mind that if you tick "yes" the relevant information will be available online to the public.

#### c) Question 2: Intentions for 2017/18

Please indicate your practice intentions for the 2017/18 practising year. If you intend practising in New Zealand from 1 April 2017 you must hold a current practising certificate.

(Refer to section 2 above)

If you're not intending to practise in New Zealand during the practising year ending 31 March 2018, or intend resuming practice later in the practising year, please select one of the other options. Refer to the Council's website at

[www.vetcouncil.org.nz/annualPracCert.php](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/annualPracCert.php) for a copy of the application form and [www.vetcouncil.org.nz/fees.php](http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/fees.php) for details on the prorated APC fees.

#### *What's the difference between non practising, retired, and removal from the Register?*

None of these categories entitle you to practise as defined in section 2 above. Practice includes treating animals and authorising restricted veterinary medicines.

However with non practising status:

- your details remain on the public (non practising) Register of Veterinarians
- you remain current on Council issues and requirements through receipt of regular Council publications and documents
- you continue to receive an annual practising certificate application.

The retired category is for permanently retired veterinarians. This allows their details to remain on the public (non practising) Register for no fee. However those who wish to receive Council communications must pay the non practising fee of \$18.

If you don't intend ever practising in New Zealand again, you can apply to have your name removed from the Register of Veterinarians. If at some time in the future you change your mind you will need to submit a new application for registration together with the required documents and fee.

#### **d) Question 3: Recency of Practice**

To be issued with a practising certificate the Council must be satisfied that you meet minimum practising standards which include recency of practice requirements.

You need to provide full details of your practice intentions, work history and CPD activities if:

- you want to resume veterinary practice after a break of three or more years; or
- you haven't practised within one year of completing the course requirements for your primary veterinary qualification; or
- you haven't practised within one year of passing an approved registration examination or assessment programme; or
- you've commenced work in a field of veterinary activity you've never practised in or haven't practised in for three years or more; or
- you want to commence work in a field of veterinary activity you've never practised in or haven't practised in for three years or more

We recommend that you use a detailed CV format for sending information about your work history and CPD.

Please click [here](#) for a copy of the Council's Policy on Recency of Practice and feel free to contact us (04 473 9600 or [vet@vetcouncil.org.nz](mailto:vet@vetcouncil.org.nz)) if you need further information.

#### **e) Question 4: Overseas Practice**

If you've been practising overseas since you were last issued with an APC, the Council needs to be satisfied that no issues arose in the overseas jurisdiction which might affect your eligibility for a New Zealand practising certificate.

If you've practised outside New Zealand during the year commencing 1 April 2016, and didn't provide a letter of good standing (LGS) on your return to New Zealand, please immediately arrange for a LGS to be sent directly to us from each overseas jurisdiction you practised in.

This requirement also applies to those veterinarians who are currently practising overseas but wish to be issued with a New Zealand practising certificate. Note that you may also be required to provide a second (current) LGS on your return to New Zealand; as letters of good standing are only valid for 3 months.

#### **f) Question 5: Fitness to Practise**

Before issuing you with an APC the Council must be satisfied that you're fit to practise. Matters that may bring a veterinarian's fitness to practise into question include mental or physical conditions (such as neurological, psychiatric, depressive or addictive disorders and physical deterioration due to injury, disease or degeneration), adverse disciplinary findings, formal competence enquiries, criminal convictions and any investigations that may result in disciplinary or criminal proceedings.

If you answer yes to any of the questions in this section please send full details in a separate sealed envelope marked "Confidential" to the Registrar, with your name and registration number noted; or email [registrar@vetcouncil.org.nz](mailto:registrar@vetcouncil.org.nz). You'll need to include copies of disciplinary findings and orders, competency findings, conviction notices and

medical reports where relevant. All sensitive information disclosed will be dealt with very carefully, observing confidentiality and privacy principles.

#### *Health Conditions*

You must disclose any mental or physical condition **with the potential** to affect your fitness to practise. If you're in any doubt declare it, or contact the Council Deputy Registrar (Operations) on 04 473 9600 for advice.

Please provide full details of your condition and its duration in a separate sealed envelope; or email the Registrar at [registrar@vetcouncil.org.nz](mailto:registrar@vetcouncil.org.nz). You have the option of providing at this time, any hospital discharge reports, together with the name and contact details of your treating health practitioner. The APC application asks for your consent to the Registrar contacting your treating practitioner(s) for further information regarding about your condition. You may choose not to consent at this stage, preferring instead for the Registrar to contact you first. If you select this option, there may be a delay in issuing your APC.

Health declarations are managed by the Registrar in consultation with the Council's Health Advisory Group. Our approach is non-judgmental, rehabilitative and confidential, except in extreme cases where the veterinarian refuses to co-operate and the public interest is threatened.

Our general experience is that no further action is needed for the majority of APC health declarations. In a small number of cases a voluntary agreement may be put in place, with this early intervention enabling veterinarians with a treatable illness to keep practising while receiving treatment.

Any correspondence with you concerning responses to the fitness to practise section will be sent to your contact address in envelopes marked "Private and Confidential." You may wish to choose an alternative physical or email address for correspondence on any fitness to practise issues.

#### **g) Question 6: Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

The Council has prescribed participation in CPD as a minimum practising standard for the issue of an APC. All practising veterinarians must participate in relevant CPD activities. Detailed guidance on the Council's CPD framework requirements is available on our website at:

<http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/documentation/CPDInformationforVets.pdf>

You need to retain detailed records of your CPD activities for 7 years, which may be required if you're selected for compliance monitoring.

For this APC application you need to declare the CPD points you accumulated in the year ended 31 December 2016.

However, you need to bear in mind the total requirement is at least 60 relevant CPD points for the period 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2016, with at least 15 points in both the collegial learning activity (CLA) and continuing veterinary education (CVE) areas, and this is what will be examined if you are selected for a CPD audit.

If there are individual circumstances which have made it difficult for you to comply with the CPD requirements, or if you'd like guidance on how to best meet the CPD requirements, contact us about this either by writing to the Deputy Registrar (Operations), VCNZ, PO Box 10-563, Wellington 6143, or emailing [despina.arathimos@vetcouncil.org.nz](mailto:despina.arathimos@vetcouncil.org.nz).

You don't need to contact us with an explanation for not meeting the CPD requirements if any of the following apply to you:

- you're a new graduate (i.e. completed the course requirements for your primary veterinary qualification within the last 12 months), or you passed an approved registration examination or assessment programme within the last 12 months; or
- you've already told us that you commenced or resumed practice during the year ended 31 December 2016
- you've already approached us about your restricted practice and limited CPD opportunities, and we have approved a lesser amount of CPD and conditions on your practice.

#### Message for veterinarians selected for CPD audit

If you've been selected for a CPD audit, we will contact you in early January asking you to send us your CPD records by 31 January.

We can't finalise your APC application until we've concluded your CPD audit. If there are delays (and provided you've submitted your CPD records and a complete APC application) we can extend the validity of your current practising certificate past 31 March. We'll let you know if this is needed.

#### **h) Question 7: Compliance with Minimum Practising Standards**

Before issuing a practising certificate the Council needs to be satisfied that the veterinarian concerned satisfies minimum practising standards (MPS).

To date the Council has prescribed MPS in relation to:

- Fitness to practise
- Competency – including recency of practise
- Continuing professional development
- Professional requirements - the Code of Professional Conduct ('the Code')

Veterinarians declare, as part of their APC application, that they understand the requirements of the Code of Professional Conduct. To better inform this annual declaration and remind veterinarians of the key requirements, we've developed a number of MPS checklists detailing the standards considered most necessary to protect the public interest.

**In this APC renewal round we're piloting compliance with the [Records and Communication and Informed Consent](#) checklists - but only for veterinarians in clinical practice.**

We're using these 2 checklists in the pilot because communication, informed consent and record keeping are recurring themes in many complaints. In future the plan is to focus on 2 – 3 different standards each year and to extend these to non clinical areas of practice.

We sent the 2 checklists to employers and veterinarians in October explaining that:

- we're piloting the introduction of compliance with MPS in this APC round
- all veterinarians **in clinical practice** will need to indicate whether they comply with the standards set out in the checklists as part of the APC renewal process
- veterinarians should complete the checklists **before** the APC renewal round
- the completed checklists need to be saved with CPD records, and completing them can be claimed as a CPD activity
- those unable to comply because of practice protocols and policies should raise this with their employers or senior colleagues in the first instance - and with us if unable to resolve at the local level
- we're taking an educative approach. Inability to meet the standards won't prevent the issue of a practising certificate. However we will be in touch with the

veterinarians concerned to understand why; and offer help in meeting the standard.

We will evaluate the results of this pilot round to establish:

- the current level of compliance
- the reasons for noncompliance
- whether the standards are realistic; and
- the resources needed to manage this new feature of the APC renewal process.

**i) Declaration: Section 8 (Section 9 online)**

We require all veterinarians to personally complete the APC application and to do this carefully and honestly. We're likely to treat false declarations or representations as a disciplinary matter.

**j) Fees and Payment: Section 9 (Section 10 online)**

*Rebate for early completion of APC application and payment*

The fee for renewal of your practising certificate is \$559(incl. GST) and must be received by **29 March 2017** to ensure your legal right to practise from 1 April 2017. This fee can be rebated to \$533 (inc. GST) **only** if you have submitted your application and the fee has been deposited into the Council's bank account by the end of the business day on **28 February 2017**. Full payment (\$559) is required (no negotiation) if payment and/or submitted application arrives at any point after 28 February 2017.

*Direct Credit Option*

You can pay by direct credit or credit card (or cheque if submitting a hard copy application). Our BNZ bank account number is 02-0506-0072992-000.

If paying by direct credit, whether online or by submitting a hard copy application, you must:

- complete all the relevant fields in the APC application
- include your registration number as the reference on the direct credit authorisation so that we know whose fee is being paid
- (if submitting a hard copy) send the completed APC form to the Council at the same time as payment is made.

*Direct Credit or Cheque Option for Employers*

Similar authorities to the Council don't accept bulk payments made by employers; requiring practitioners to make individual payment and claim back from their employer. This is because:

- it's the individual practitioner's responsibility to renew their practising certificate
- the task of matching payments to APC applications is very time consuming when the information submitted by employers is incorrect
- the task of matching payments is complicated when online renewal is offered, unless employers make payment to the Council before the online renewal option is made available. Otherwise double payment by employers and veterinarian employees is an issue, with the accompanying need for refunds.

So, we prefer veterinarians to take individual responsibility for applying and paying for their practising certificate application and claim back, from their employer if they need to.

However, for the 2017/18 APC renewal, we will continue to accept bulk direct credit payments in situations where employers wish to pay the APC fees of **10 or more veterinarians** renewing online. This is subject to payment being made to the Council's BNZ bank account 02-0506-0072992-000 **before 31 January 2017** and an excel

spreadsheet with the names, registration numbers and amounts direct credited for each veterinarian being provided to [vet@vetcouncil.org.nz](mailto:vet@vetcouncil.org.nz) on the same day as the bulk payment is made. If payment isn't made, and/or the details aren't provided to us by 31 January the veterinarians renewing online will need to make individual payment and claim back from their employer.

Employers wishing to pay the APC fees of **10 or more veterinarians**, who can't meet the above 31 January timeframe should ring Margriet Philipsen on 04 473 9600 to discuss other options.

### **(k) Workforce Survey: Section 10 (Section 8 online)**

The Council appreciates your co-operation and values your contribution in completing this survey. The information you give us is used to monitor workforce trends and provides a valuable contribution to workforce development and planning. It won't be published in a form that can identify individual respondents.

Complete relevant questions 10.2 – 10.7 only if you were engaged in veterinary practice (which includes non clinical work) in New Zealand during the year ended 31 December 2016. (Refer to section 2 above).

*Question 10.2:* We need your physical workplace location so that we can produce accurate data on the geographical distribution of the workforce. Please enter the physical address of the workplace you mostly practiced from in 2016 and include the post code. In the online APC system this question has been pre-populated with the details you provided last year. Please review these and either confirm by clicking the 'save and continue' button or modify.

*Question 10.3:* This asks for details on your employment type(s), role(s), work type(s) and the hours you work per week by work type. The online survey provides the responses you gave last year for employment type(s), role(s) and work type(s). You may wish to refer to these in completing this question.

- If you have difficulty identifying a typical week estimate the % of time spent over the year in each work type and apply this to the average hours worked per week
- There are 4 sections in the online APC application (columns in the hard copy form) to record your employment type, role and work type and the hours worked by work type. If you have only one employment type, role and work type you will only need to fill in one section/column
- If you need more than the 4 sections/columns provided, record details for the work types you work the most hours in, and enter any additional hours worked per week in the box provided
- If you select **OT (other) as a code please specify what this is in the relevant box**
- Please **use the detailed work type codes. Only use the 'collapsed' categories of MX, PA and RG if it is not possible to record all your work types or if too difficult to assign hours worked to each work type.**

*Questions 10.4 – 10.7:* These questions are relevant for both clinical and non clinical veterinarians given the definition of practice includes activities such as reporting or giving advice in a veterinary capacity, regulatory and compliance functions, teaching, consultancy, research and management roles.

**If you wish to practise in New Zealand from 1 April 2017 you must answer all questions in the application, assent to/or sign the declaration and make the payment.**

**If not applying online, the completed application and fee payment must be submitted at the same time. The issue of your APC will be jeopardised if you fail to answer all the questions; don't sign the declaration; or pay the fee without also returning the completed application.**