



Use of Titles Policy

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1. Definitions

The Veterinary Practice Act 2003 ('Act') (s3) states that

'Veterinary surgeon' means

- (a) A person with primary registration under this Act; or
- (b) A person with deemed registration under this Act who provides veterinary treatment or engages in conduct as a veterinary surgeon in this State.

A **'specialist'** means a person registered on the specialist register.

'Speciality' means a branch of veterinary practice declared by the Board, by notice in the Gazette, to be a specialty

'Qualified person' in relation to veterinary treatment, means a person authorised by or under the Act or any other Act to provide that treatment.

2. Purpose

The Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons requires veterinary surgeons to conduct themselves in a manner that will maintain or enhance the reputation of the profession.

A veterinary surgeon must not practise veterinary surgery in a manner that would be likely to bring the practice of veterinary surgery into disrepute.

A veterinary surgeon must not assume a name or description that would be taken by a reasonable person as meaning that the veterinary surgeon holds a qualification, or has experience in, veterinary science, surgery, or medicine unless the veterinary surgeon holds that qualification or has that experience.

3. Use of certain titles or descriptions prohibited

A person who does not have general registration, specialist registration or registration in a particular specialty under the Act, **must not** use a prescribed word, or its derivatives, to describe themselves or a service that they provide. Doing so will carry a maximum penalty of \$20,000.

A person must also not hold themselves or another person out as a veterinary specialist without such registration. Doing so will also incur a penalty of \$20,000 or imprisonment for up to 6 months.

Veterinary surgeons who are not registered specialists but who are in government service or other similar circumstances, where a term is used which could be interpreted as inferring specialist qualifications but is a job title or description, and there is no commercial benefit derived from the use of the term by the individual or their employer, for example 'Fish pathologist' or 'Clinical pathologist', are permitted.

A person **must not**, in the course of advertising or promoting a service that he or she provides, use a prescribed word, or its derivatives, to describe a person who is engaged in the provision of the service but who does not have general registration, specialist registration or registration in a particular specialty under the Act. Doing so incurs a maximum penalty of \$20,000.

The title 'specialist' and abbreviations of 'specialist' may only be used by veterinary surgeons who hold specialist registration by the Veterinary Surgeons Board of South Australia.

Prescribed word means-

- a) In relation to general or specialist registration under the Act
 - (i) Veterinary surgeon; or
 - (ii) Veterinary specialist; or

- b) In relation to registration in a particular speciality under the Act –
 - (i) The words comprising the name of the speciality; or
 - (ii) The words comprising the name under a corresponding law of a corresponding speciality; or
 - (iii) Any other word or expression prescribed by the regulations.

4. Guidance on use of terms ending in '-ist'

Care must be taken when using terms ending in '-ist,' as such terms can convey to the public that the bearer is a specialist.

Titles that have medical equivalents (e.g. cardiologist, dermatologist) are well known by the public as medical specialities. These are likely to convey that the veterinary surgeon using the title is a specialist, and these titles should be avoided.

Veterinary legislation in Australia and New Zealand strictly regulates using terms like 'specialist' or 'registered specialist', 'expert' or 'special interest'. Veterinarians must only represent themselves as specialists if the Board has approved specialist registration.

Fellows of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists (ANZCVS) or Diplomates of a European or American College cannot call themselves a specialist in Australia or New Zealand without first receiving an endorsement from Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc. (AVBC) Advisory Committee on the Registration of Veterinary Specialists (ACRVS) followed by approval of specialist registration by a veterinary board/council.

Using terms like ‘dermatologist’ or ‘oncologist,’ is also prohibited without specialist registration.

5. Specialists in training

Terms such as ‘resident’ or ‘intern’ may be confusing to members of the public who are more familiar with these terms in a medical context.

The term ‘intern’ may only be used by a veterinary surgeon who is enrolled in a structured training program under the supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon specialist at a veterinary school.

The term ‘resident’ may only be used by a veterinary surgeon who is enrolled in a structured training program accredited or recognised by the AVBC, under the supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon specialist, with a view to becoming eligible to sit examinations to qualify as a veterinary surgeon specialist.

VSBSA recommends that these terms be used with a descriptor, e.g. ‘Veterinary Surgeon Resident.’

6. Use of term ‘consultant,’ ‘professional/particular interest in’

The meaning of the term ‘consultant’ varies according to context.

A ‘*consultant to*, ‘*professional interest in...*’ and ‘*particular interest in...*,’ a certain group or club does not imply specialisation and is therefore **acceptable**.

A ‘*consultant in*’ or ‘*special interest in*,’ or ‘*cat/dog expert*,’ in a certain veterinary field may imply specialisation in that field and therefore use of this title **should not be used**.

Use of terms which define the branch of veterinary medicine in which a veterinary surgeon **provides their services**, such as ‘Veterinary Ophthalmology Services’ or ‘Equine Dentistry Services,’ are permitted. Terms that imply that a veterinary surgeon has individual specialist status **must not** be used.

7. Guidance on advertising and describing particular interest areas

In the course of advertising or promoting a service they provide, person **must not** use a prescribed word, or its derivatives, to describe themselves or a service that they provide. Doing so will carry a maximum penalty of \$20,000

Veterinary surgeons may use descriptors such as ‘Veterinary surgeon with a **particular interest in...**’ Use of the terms such as ‘cat vet’, ‘reptile vet’ and ‘bird vet’ are acceptable, as they imply that the vet only sees those species, not that the veterinary surgeon is a specialist in those areas.

8. Referrals

A veterinary surgeon may refer a case to another veterinary surgeon who is not a registered specialist, but the referring veterinary surgeon and the second treating veterinary surgeon **must ensure** that when the client is referred to a second treating veterinary surgeon who is not a specialist, the client is fully aware of the veterinary surgeon’s registration status.

9. Use of the courtesy title 'Doctor'

In Australia and New Zealand, the title 'Doctor' or 'Dr' is an optional courtesy title that can be used for registered veterinary surgeons. Those with a doctorate may choose to add the post-nominal '[PhD](#)'.

If the title is used, it should be followed by the person's name and words/abbreviations intended to indicate that the person is a veterinary surgeon. There must be no inference or suggestion that the user is a medical practitioner or qualified to practise general medicine unless registered as such.

Retired veterinary surgeons are entitled to continue to use the courtesy title 'Dr' provided they do so with the descriptor 'retired veterinary surgeon.'

10. Specific Examples

Veterinary Surgeons when using postnominals for Memberships and Fellowships, **must ensure** that the client is fully aware of the veterinary surgeon's registration status, and that it does not relate to specialist registration. This applies to referrals also.

(a) [MRCVS](#)

Veterinary surgeons who have worked in the United Kingdom will have used the post-nominal 'MRCVS' while registered with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS).

Use of the post-nominal 'MRCVS' is only permitted in Australia and New Zealand if the veterinary surgeon has gained membership of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons by virtue of successful completion of the RCVS Statutory Examination.

If a veterinary surgeon retains registration with the RCVS while practising in Australia or New Zealand, the post nominal cannot be used if based solely on UK registration status and fee payment.

(b) [Membership and Fellowship – ANZCVS](#)

The ANZCVS awards Membership and Fellowship following examination in various disciplines. Guidelines for post-nominal use include specific rules for members and fellows, including the addition of subject names in brackets.

(c) [American and European Board Qualifications](#)

Veterinary surgeons with Diplomate status from the American Board of Veterinary Specialties (ABVS) or the European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS) should adhere to the relevant guidelines on post-nominal use from the awarding Colleges.

If you are no longer a financial member of an association as above, you must not use the postnominals.

11. Correct Order of Post-Nominals

The appropriate order for using post-nominals is as follows:

- Commonwealth honours and awards
- University degrees (pre- and post-graduate)

- Appointments (e.g., Justice of the Peace)
- Fellowships and Memberships of professional or academic bodies

12. Expert witness

Should a registered veterinary surgeon be required to provide evidence in court, they may correctly be described as an expert witness, and it is not necessary for the veterinary surgeon to clarify this term during legal proceedings.

13. Practice Names

There are additional requirements where the name of a veterinary practice can give the impression all veterinary surgeons working there are specialists. For example, 'Dental Veterinary Specialists' or 'Equine Surgeons.' In these circumstances, veterinary surgeons who are registered veterinary specialists, interns or residents may be employed at the practice.

14. Professional Conduct

If found that a veterinary surgeon has not adhered to this policy, this could amount to professional misconduct.