

## Registration of veterinarians and para-professionals in Lesotho

To be presented at the Seminar of deans of veterinary faculties and registrars of the veterinary statutory bodies.

Arusha, Tanzania, 2-4 September 2009

## Background

- During outbreak of Rinderpest in South Africa in 1896 first veterinarian was seconded to Lesotho from Cape Colony to control spread of the disease; it was eventually eradicated in 1920.
- First Mosotho veterinarian; Dr. Napo Raditapole was employed as state veterinarian in 1952 after finishing secondment in Ghana.
- It was only in 1973 when Veterinary Surgeons Act was enacted; the Act provides for establishment of Lesotho Veterinary Council, registration of veterinary and para-veterinarians as well as all matters related to veterinary profession.

## Background

- Ever in the history of Lesotho there have been only 24 Basotho nationals who graduated as veterinarians.

## Part I Establishment and composition of the Council

- The Director of Veterinary Services; who shall be chairman *ex officio*.
- Two veterinary surgeons elected at the meeting of not less than two-thirds of the total number of Lesotho veterinary surgeons .

## Tenure of office

Every elected member of council shall hold office for the period of three years, but shall be eligible for re-election

The office of elected member shall be vacant if:

1. He/She dies; or
2. He/She resigns his/her by notice in writing given to the chairperson; or
3. He/She ceases to be a registered veterinary surgeon.
4. Illness or absent from Lesotho or incapacitated by any other cause, another member can be elected.

## Meetings of the Council

The Council shall meet at least once a year.

## Part II Registration of Veterinary Surgeons

- The registrar shall keep a register of veterinary surgeons in accordance with the provisions of this Act.
- The registrar shall keep the register of para-veterinary personnel mentioned in the fifth schedule who have acquired special training and knowledge in matters relating to the treatment or prevention of physical defects or diseases of animals
- The registrar shall act as secretary to the Council.

## Application for registration

- Application for registration shall be made to the registrar in the form set out in the second schedule, by veterinary surgeons, and in the form set out in the sixth schedule by para-veterinary personnel.
- The Council shall consider every application for registration and if satisfied that the applicant is qualified to be so registered shall direct that he/she be registered as veterinary surgeon accordingly.

## Publication of annual list and provisions as evidence

The registrar may as soon as conveniently may be, after 1<sup>st</sup> day of January in each year compile and cause to be published in the gazette a list containing the names and qualifications of all veterinary surgeons who were registered on the 31<sup>st</sup> day of December last preceding.

## Qualifications for registration

- Degree, diploma, certificate granted after examination by a university or veterinary medical school
- 1. Evidence of character
- 2. Registration of additional qualifications
- 3. Removal of names from register
- 4. Restoration of names to the register

## Part III-Effect of registration

- Right to practice and sue for fees
- Possession and sale of poisons
- Validity of certificates
- Fees irrecoverable by unregistered persons  
(No persons shall be entitled to recover in any court of law any fee or charge for performing any veterinary operation, or for giving any veterinary advise, or acting in a manner as a veterinary surgeon or for practicing in any case veterinary surgery unless he/she was at the time a registered veterinary surgeon)

## Part IV Provisions relating to discipline.

- Inquiry into misconduct
- Affidavit of allegations of misconduct
- Appearance of veterinary surgeon
- Evidence at inquiry
- Power to summon witnesses and order production of documents
- Disobedience to summons to give evidence
- Inquiry in absence of veterinary surgeon
- Judicial Assessor
- Representation by legal practitioner
- Procedure after order
- Appeals

## Provisions relating to discipline

### Offences by unregistered persons

1. Subject to provisions of subsection (4) any person who, not being registered whether for reward or otherwise practices veterinary surgery, shall be guilty of an offence.
2. Any person who, not being registered, wilfully and falsely;
  - Pretends or by any means holds himself/herself out to be a veterinary surgeon whether registered or not; or
  - Takes or uses the title of veterinary surgeon, veterinarian, veterinary practitioner or any other name, title, addition or description calculated to suggest that that he/she possesses a degree, diploma or qualification relating to veterinary surgery which he does not in fact possess, shall be guilty of an offence
3. Any person who uses any description in connection with any business carried on by him/her, being a description calculated to lead to the belief that he/she or any person for the purposes of the business possesses any veterinary qualifications which he/she in fact does not possess, shall be guilty of an offence

## Penalties (unregistered persons)

### Any person guilty of an offence

- Against sub-section (1) or (2) shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months or to a fine not exceeding two hundred maloti
- Against sub-section (3) shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding one hundred maloti, and in the case of continuing offence to a further fine not exceeding twenty maloti for each day on which the offence continues.

## Fraudulent registration

- Any person who wilfully makes or produces false certificate, representation or declaration, either orally or in writing shall be guilty of an offence; and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding two hundred maloti or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding twelve months

## Current status of veterinary professionals

- Currently there are 26 veterinarians registered with Lesotho Veterinary Council
- There are 15 state veterinarians of which 11 are basotho nationals and 4 expatriates
- There are 4 private veterinarians
- There are 215 para-veterinarians in Lesotho; of which 150 are employed by the government and 65 are in the private sector

## Challenges (Act)

- Veterinary Surgeons Act No.13 of 1973 is outdated; penalties do not correspond with current developments rendering it ineffective as a deterrent to those that break the law such as impostors

## Challenges (Service delivery)

- There is veterinary skills shortages as the number of veterinarians is far too low for animal populations in the country.
- Lack of interest for basotho students to pursue veterinary profession; currently there is only one student studying to be a veterinarian.
- There is a new trend of veterinarians from other countries using Lesotho as a stepping stone to enter South Africa; they work briefly in Lesotho, while exploring job opportunities in South Africa

## Way Forward

- We need to provide better remuneration packages and working conditions to retain skills that we already have.
- There is a need for aggressive recruitment for expatriate veterinarians as some positions remain vacant for long periods of time.
- We need to intensify our efforts to encourage young basotho to study veterinary profession; government needs to offer scholarships to those who want to pursue veterinary profession.

## Way forward

- There is a need for proper career guidance as most students have wrong perceptions that veterinary profession does not have many opportunities like other professions.
- There is a need to review Veterinary Surgeons Act to make necessary amendments that are in line with current developments
- There is a need for regional collaboration and quality control of veterinary professionals needs to be standardised
- Veterinary legislation and registration of veterinarians and para-professionals should be harmonised in SADC region

THANK YOU  
MUCHAS GRACIAS  
KE EA LEBOHA