

**VETERINARY STATUTORY BODIES IN
AFRICA: NIGERIA**

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SUMMARY

Nigeria is one of the 37 Member Countries of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) in Africa that have been listed to have a Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB) that has wholly or partly conformed with the OIE definition of a VSB (Article 3.2.12 of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code). This VSB of Nigeria is the Veterinary Council of Nigeria (VCN) and it exercises its statutory authority over the entire country. The major deficiency of the VCN is the lack of statutory power to regulate the Veterinary Para-professionals (VPPs). Efforts to amend the Veterinary Surgeons Act, 2004 are on-going to remedy this deficiency.

Keywords

**Africa – Veterinary Council of Nigeria – regulation- Amendment –
Veterinary Para-professionals – Veterinary Statutory Body –
Compliance.**

ESTABLISHMENT OF VETERINARY COUNCIL OF NIGERIA

- **Veterinary Council of Nigeria(VCN) is the Veterinary Statutory Body(VSB) of Nigeria.**
- **First established through the Veterinary Surgeons Ordinance(VSO) of 1952.**
- **The VSO was amended to become the Veterinary Surgeons Decree(VSD) No. 37 of 1969.**
 - **VSD of 1969 expanded the powers of VCN to include accreditation of Veterinary Education Establishments(VEEs); and**
 - **defined the sources of funding of VCN**
- **VSD of 1969 underwent piece-meal amendments thereafter all of which were harmonised into the Veterinary Surgeons Act(VSA) CAP V3, LFN, 2004.**
- **Further attempts to amend the VSA of 2004 have not been successful.**
 - **Making laws is difficult in Nigeria, especially when such emanates from none members of the National Assembly (NASS).**

FUNCTIONS OF THE VETERINARY COUNCIL OF NIGERIA

The main statutory mandate of VCN consists of:

- **Determining standards of knowledge and skill to be attained by persons who seek to be registered as Veterinary Surgeons and raising those standards from time to time.**

The VCN achieves these through:

- **Accreditation of the VEEs(Faculties/Colleges of Veterinary Medicine); and**
 - **Continuing Education programmes for registered Veterinary Surgeons.**
- These are of two types:**

- ✓ **The Fellowship Diploma Programme of the Postgraduate College of Veterinary Surgeons Nigeria (CVSN); and**
- ✓ **The Annual Continuing Education Seminars for Veterinary Surgeons.**

➤ **Registration and Licensing of Veterinary Surgeons (Public, Private, Academic, Military, Police and others)**

Nigeria has only one VSB that registers all Veterinary Surgeons and registration is of two forms:

- **Direct Registration for graduates of Veterinary Medicine from VCN accredited VEEs; and**
- **Registration by Examination for graduates from VEEs that are not accredited by VCN and this often involves examination of the applicants.**

➤ **Determining and maintenance of ethical standards;**

➤ **Maintenance of discipline among Veterinary Surgeons;**

➤ **Other professional registrations:**

- **Veterinary Practicing Premises; and**
- **Registration of additional professional qualifications**
- **All forms of professional registration attract a fee**

➤ **Maintenance of the Veterinary Register and updating it after every two years.**

- **There are 6,678 registered Veterinary Surgeons in the Veterinary Register (6,590 of these are in the general list and 88 in the foreign list).**

MEMBERSHIP OF THE VETERINARY COUNCIL OF NIGERIA

Membership of the VCN is composed of:

➤ Ex-officio members namely:

- Director of the National Veterinary Research Institute (NVRI);
- The Director of the Federal Department of Veterinary and Pest Control Services (Chief Veterinary Officer of Nigeria/OIE Delegate); and
- The Deans of accredited VEEs.
 - ✓ currently there are 9 accredited VEEs.

➤ Eight registered Veterinary Surgeons elected from and by members of the professional association, the Nigerian Veterinary Medical Association (NVMA).

- Tenure of elected members is five years renewable for another tenure of five years on merit.
- The VCN and NVMA are different organizations even though the two maintain a very cordial relationship.

➤ One member appointed by the supervising Minister to represent each of the 36 States of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

- 37 of such members in all.

➤ Members of VCN elect a President and Vice President from among themselves with the approval of the Minister.

- The tenure of office of the President and Vice-President is three years in the first instance and renewable for another term of two years.
- It is pertinent to point out that the Veterinary Surgeons Act empowers the Minister to give directives of general nature or those relating to particular matters to VCN for compliance.

FUNDING OF THE VETERINARY COUNCIL OF NIGERIA

The main sources of funding to VCN are:

- Budgetary allocation from the Federal government; and
- internally generated revenue (IGR).
 - IGR comes from:
 - ✓ professional charges (registration fees, annual retention/Practicing License fees, registration of additional qualifications, registration/annual renewal of Veterinary practicing premises, VEE accreditation fees, Continuing Education charges;
 - ✓ material sales; and
 - ✓ rent.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE VETERINARY COUNCIL OF NIGERIA

This consists of:

- **The members of the VCN who constitute the governing board.**
 - **Responsible for providing policy guidelines for the administration of the Parastatal.**
- **The President of VCN.**
 - **Is the ceremonial head of the Parastatal;**
 - **He determines when Council meetings are to hold(as provided by the VSA, 2004;**
 - **Is the Chairman of all Council meetings;**
 - **Is the Chairman of the Disciplinary Tribunal; and**
 - **He gives instructions to the Registrar as the law provides.**
 - ✓ **In the absence of the President, the Vice President presides over VCN meetings.**
- **The Registrar of VCN.**
 - **Is appointed by VCN as a public servant;**
 - **Has a tenure of four (4) years in the first instance and renewable for another term of four years at the discretion of Council;**
 - **He is the Chief Executive Officer (responsible for the day to day running of the Parastatal); and**
 - **He implements both VCN and government policies.**
- **Zonal Offices.**
 - **The VCN has six zonal offices located in each of the geopolitical zones of the country.**
 - ✓ **Headed by Assistant Registrars appointed by VCN;**
 - ✓ **Coordinate the activities of VCN in the zones; and**
 - ✓ **Report to the Registrar.**

COMPLIANCE WITH OIE DEFINITION OF A VSB

- **The VCN has not fully conformed with the OIE template for a VSB.**
 - **The OIE Mission report on Nigeria (2011) identifies the lack of statutory mandate for the regulation of VPPs to be the major deficiency of the VCN.**
- **Efforts in the past to amend the VSA, 2004 to provide for the regulation of the VPPs have not yielded the desired results.**
- **Arrangements are on to re-submit the Bill for the amendment of the VSA, 2004 to the National Assembly (NASS).**
 - ✓ **I thank Dr. David M. Sherman who accepted to critique this amendment Bill at no financial cost.**
- **The VCN is also reaching out to all stakeholders including the VPPs for support of this amendment Bill in the NASS.**

CONCLUSION

- The OIE has provided a VSB model for member countries to conform with.
 - ✓ This is for the overall good governance of Veterinary services.
- This Conference on the Role of the VPPs in Africa should provide further impetus for Member Countries of OIE in Africa who are yet to fully conform with the OIE definition of a VSB to do so.
 - ✓ This should not just be to fulfill all righteousness but as an imperative.
- The VCN is taking all necessary steps to have the VSA, 2004 amended in order to provide for:
 - ✓ The regulation of the VPPs; and
 - ✓ To strengthen other areas of its mandate.
- The VCN will also key-in to other opportunities that OIE has made available to VSBs to improve their functional capacities such as the Twining programme.

REFERENCES

1. **Veterinary Surgeons Ordinance, 1952**
2. **Veterinary Surgeons Act, 2004**
3. **OIE Mission Report Nigeria, 2011**
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5. **OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, 2015**



Thank You All