



## The Hong Kong Veterinary Association

January 19<sup>th</sup> 2015

Dear Bills Committee Member,

The Hong Kong Veterinary Association is supportive of the Veterinary Surgeons Board proposed amendment to increase the number of members from ten to nineteen members. However, our association is strongly against any views to reduce the ratio of veterinarians to laypersons on the board.

The Veterinary Surgeons Boards mission is stated; *“The mission of the VSB is to safeguard the health and welfare of animals and interests of animal owners through the development and improvement of professional standards, regulation of ethical standards, registration of veterinary surgeons, and diligent exercise of disciplinary control of the professional activities of registered veterinary surgeons”*.

In our view, it is essential that the mission of the board can only be carried through by experienced veterinary surgeons within Hong Kong. We recognise the need for independent laypersons within the board to provide a non-veterinary view on matters concerning the development of the profession. However, the role of the veterinarian is very complex, as it compasses numerous aspects of veterinary disciplines as well as being mindful of the emotional and financial aspects of the owners of the animals. To possess the skills needed to understand these complex interactions takes years of veterinary training and clinical experience. We strongly believe that a reduction in the ratio of veterinarians to laypersons will jeopardize the ability of the board to make decisions regarding the profession in an efficient and appropriate manner. It is imperative that the mission of the Veterinary Surgeons board is not overlooked. We feel that the current debate in the ratio is placing too much emphasis on the role of the investigation committee’s rather than the more important role of developing the profession, through the setting of standards and education.

In regards to the preliminary investigation committee (PIC), the association believes that it is currently taking too long to investigate preliminary complaints at this level. Some investigations taking up to 3 years is unreasonable for both the defendant and the plaintiff. It is further unreasonable to expect a layperson, who, without veterinary training or expertise is considered to make judgments regarding the clinical veterinary management that an animal has been given. The PIC’s duty is to determine if a defendant’s actions were considered to be below the **“standard expected amongst veterinary surgeons”**. A detailed understanding of up to date veterinary therapies is therefore required in order to determine what **“standard expected amongst veterinary surgeons”**. The Hong Kong Veterinary Association supports the proposed increase in the number of members on the PIC committee to three members. However, it is critical that the additional member is an experienced veterinarian and not a non-veterinarian. As it would be unreasonable for non-veterinarians to form a consensus for what is **“the standard expected amongst veterinarians”**. For the reasons mentioned above, it is imperative that the veterinary surgeons board is given more resources to meet the demands of the profession and the people of Hong Kong. However, these resources need to be carefully considered (i.e. two veterinary surgeons on the PIC) in order for the Veterinary Surgeons Board to meet these demands in a fair and efficient manner for all parties.