

Clerk to Bills Committee on Veterinary Surgeons Registration (Amendment) Bill 2014,  
(Attn: Miss Meisy KWOK)  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central Hong Kong

Fax: 2869 6794 Email: bc\_151\_14@legco.gov.hk

January 19, 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would once again like to express my support for the following amendments to the Veterinary Surgeons Registration (Amendment) Bill 2014

- (1) Maintenance of the 2:1 ratio of vets to lay people on the Veterinary Surgeon's Board
- (2) Election of 6 vets from the veterinary profession
- (3) Maintenance of the 2 vets and 1 lay person makeup of the PIC

**I am writing in strong support of a Veterinary Surgeons Board comprised of a majority registered veterinary surgeons, with a minimum ratio of 2 veterinary surgeons to 1 lay person. I also strongly encourage that the veterinary community in Hong Kong be allowed to self-regulate with regard to fee structure, allowing pet owners to make choices about the level and quality of veterinary care they receive. The favorable resolution of these two issues is paramount to the successful future of veterinary medicine in Hong Kong, and inarguably serves in the best interests of the health and well-being of Hong Kong's pets.**

I have been a licensed veterinarian since 2003, and a board certified specialist in small animal surgery since 2008. I have practiced in the state of New York (USA) and North Carolina (USA), and have been practicing in Hong Kong since 2011. I have been actively involved in teaching labs and lecturing throughout the United States, China, and Southeast Asia, and have had detailed knowledge of veterinary practices, regulatory boards, and the perception of our profession in all of these geographical locations.

**Hong Kong is currently in a very unique and important position with regard to global standards of veterinary practice. Veterinary medicine in China and Southeast Asia generally lags years to even decades behind the standard of the profession in North America,**



TEL 聯絡電話 +852 [REDACTED]  
FAX 傳真號碼 +852 [REDACTED]

Australia, and Europe. Hong Kong stands out as having the potential to be a beacon for the profession in all of Asia. The veterinarians here are exceptionally motivated to practice high quality medicine. We are devoted to improving veterinary medical standards, devoted to our clients and patients, and we continue to work on the establishment of a collaborative medical environment where each patient, at the choice of the pet owner, has access to the best possible medical care.

The cost of providing veterinary medical care in Hong Kong is among the highest in the world. Hong Kong veterinarians must not only pay amongst the highest rent in the world, but are often required to import drugs and consumables from Australia, Europe, or North America. The cost of drugs and consumables alone is often two to three times the cost of the same materials for practices in the United States, where the veterinary market is mature enough to allow bulk and discounted purchase of veterinary goods. Hong Kong veterinary practice owners pay international shipping fees, customs fees, wire transfer charges, and must account for spoilage of stock given the difficulty with which some drugs are sourced. Still, the fees that veterinarians in Hong Kong charge to owners are in line with those in Western countries, despite our overwhelming costs. For purposes of example, the following table summarizes the price of veterinary consults in different locations within North America (all prices have been converted to HKD):

Table 1: Summary of fees for scheduled consultations and emergency visits in several North American cities (values in HKD).

City	Practice Type	Scheduled Consult Fee	Emergency Consult Fee	Source
New York, NY	General	452	663	Dr. Zareen Mistry
Long Island, NY	General	546	780	Dr. Niccole Varen
Louisville, KY	Specialty	1014	1014	Dr. Joya Griffin
Calgary, Alb	Specialty	1404	1170-2730	Dr. Aylin Atilla
Honolulu, HI	Specialty	1170	804	Dr. Erika Burns
Memphis, TN	Specialty	897	1170-2730	Dr. Danielle Bayliss
Miami, FL	Specialty	702	1560	Dr. Jonthan Kreissler



[Redacted] Road  
[Redacted] Hong Kong

TCL 聯絡電話 +852 [Redacted]  
FAX 傳真號碼 +852 [Redacted]

This table affirms that Hong Kong consultation fees are well within the ranges set forth in North America, often in areas where the general cost of living is significantly lower than that in Hong Kong.

Using North American states and provinces further for the purpose of example, the following table outlines several state veterinary medical boards and their number of total members, veterinarians, and lay persons serving on the board. **The ratio of veterinarians to non-veterinarian members averages 2.6:1. If veterinary nurse members are considered as part of the veterinary community rather than lay persons, that ratio is, more realistically, 3.7:1.**

Table 2: Composition of several veterinary medical boards in North America.

STATE or PROVINCE	# Veterinarians on Board	# Lay People on Board	Total # Board Members
New York	7	2 Vet Nurses, 1 Lay person	10
Hawaii	5	2	7
Alberta	8	2	10
Tennessee	6	1 Vet Nurse, 2 Lay persons	9
Massachusetts	3	1	4
Florida	5	2	7

I challenge any person to find any veterinary medical board in the Western world with a 1:1 ratio of veterinary surgeons to lay people on the governing board. For that matter, the governing board of any organization should consist mainly of experts on the given subject matter, with a relatively small contingent of non-experts to represent other interests within that board.

In both veterinary and human medicine throughout the world, it is unlawful for lay people to make medical decisions or to prescribe medical treatment for any patient. These tasks are designated only for licensed, trained professionals. How can an effective governing board allow the opposite?

"The mission of the VSB is to safeguard the health and welfare of animals and interests of animal owners." With regard to a governing body, I must ask, **what better individuals to represent the interests of animals on any veterinary board than those individuals who have dedicated their lives to protecting, treating, and caring for animals through**



TEL 聯絡電話 +852  
FAX 傳真號碼 +852





**mastery of veterinary medicine?** We veterinarians tend to be our own worst critics. We want to push each other to become the best possible clinicians and communicators. But we make decisions based on **informed medical knowledge, research, experience, and statistics**. I cannot overstate the importance of using science, rather than emotion, to determine courses of action within a medical profession.

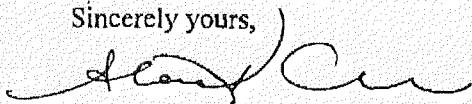
I would like to refocus attention on the future of veterinary medicine in Hong Kong. If the veterinary community is allowed to self-govern, using modern medical knowledge and literature rather than emotion or bias, Hong Kong has the potential to become a powerful center of veterinary medicine in Asia. Clients and other veterinarians could come from the entire region to seek expert advice and treatment from our very own veterinary medical professionals. But we must be allowed to make our own treatment decisions. We must be allowed to cover our costs. **We must be allowed to offer clients the highest quality, cutting edge technology, and not be paralyzed by the fear of high costs, business failures, or uninformed, ill-intentioned litigation.**

What do the pet owners of Hong Kong want? It is my experience that the pets of Hong Kong have become more than just pets. They are valued and adored family members. Clients want **choice**. Clients want Hong Kong to be able to offer the very best veterinary medical facilities in the world. With the current imbalance toward a 1:1 vet to lay board composition, and discussion surrounding vet fees, we simply will not be able to progress forward as a profession. Hong Kong may find itself stuck decades-behind the Western world, as veterinary medicine continues to develop around us.

In summary, the veterinary surgeons of Hong Kong must be allowed to self-regulate. The future of the profession in Hong Kong depends on it.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any additional insight or discussion.

Sincerely yours,



Alane Kosanovich Cahalane, DVM, MA  
Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Surgeons – Small Animal  
CEO, Veterinary Specialty Hospital of Hong Kong



TEL 聯絡電話 +852 [REDACTED]  
FAX 傳真號碼 +852 [REDACTED]

