

**Proposals to amend Schedule 2  
to the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance (Cap. 529)  
to Facilitate Clinical Training of Veterinary Students**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. Why is there a need to change the legislation?**

The scope of current exemptions under Schedule 2 to the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance is not wide enough to cover all veterinary acts on which local veterinary students need to be trained as part of their Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme. Therefore there is a need for amendment of the legislation to keep pace with development of the veterinary sector in Hong Kong.

**2. What is the change to the legislation under the proposed amendment?**

It is proposed to add a new provision in Schedule 2 to the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance, to permit any person who is in full time study of a veterinary programme at a local or Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong recognised veterinary school, college or institution, to practise acts of veterinary surgery under the direct and continuous supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon as part of the training requirement under that veterinary programme.

**3. When will the new legislation come into effect?**

Our aim is to submit the subsidiary legislation for amendment of Schedule 2 to the Legislative Council in early 2021. If the subsidiary legislation is passed, the new regulation will come into effect in mid-2021.

**4. How is the proposed amendment derived? Is it comparable with regulations in overseas places?**

In formulating the amendment proposals, we have made reference to the legislation and practices of other places where veterinary schools recognised by the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong are located. The veterinary students of these places could perform veterinary acts under the supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon as required by the veterinary programme for training purpose. In general, the definition of "veterinary student" exempted in the legislation of these places is student from local or relevant authority recognised veterinary schools.

In addition, we have referenced the legislation of some places and included in the proposals that veterinary students must be in full time study of a veterinary programme and can only perform veterinary acts required by that programme. This makes the exemption clearer and more stringent, so as to safeguard animal welfare and the interests of users of veterinary services.

**5. Who will be exempted to perform veterinary acts under the proposed amendment?**

Under the proposed amendment, any person who is in full time study of a veterinary programme at a local or Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong recognised veterinary school, college or institution is exempted.

**6. What is a veterinary act, as defined under the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance?**

A veterinary act is common terminology for an act of veterinary surgery or providing a veterinary service as defined under the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance. In simple terms, it refers to the diagnosis and medical and surgical treatment of animals.

Interpretation under the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance:

“Veterinary surgery” is defined to mean “the art and science of

veterinary surgery and medicine and, without limiting the foregoing, includes –

- (a) the diagnosis of disease in, and injuries to, animals including tests performed for diagnostic purposes;
- (b) the giving of advice based on such diagnosis; and
- (c) the medical or surgical treatment of animals including the performance of surgical operations thereon.”

“Veterinary service” is defined to mean “doing or performing any act or attending to any matter the doing or performing of which or the attending to which forms part of the generally accepted practice of veterinary surgery”.

**7. Under the proposed amendment, what veterinary acts are allowed to be performed under the direct and continuous supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon?**

Under the proposed amendment, a person who is working under the direct and continuous supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon can perform any veterinary acts as part of the training requirement under the veterinary programme he or she is studying.

**8. I am only in the first year at a veterinary school recognised by the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong; can I still undertake the veterinary acts under the proposed amendment?**

It is the responsibility of the supervising registered veterinary surgeon to determine what veterinary act can be performed by the person under his or her direct and continuous supervision. The responsible registered veterinary surgeon should consider a person’s knowledge, techniques, skill level and any other relevant attributes in making the determination.

**9. Is a veterinary student allowed to conduct surgical procedures under the proposed amendment?**

Under the proposed amendment, a person who is working under the direct and continuous supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon can perform any veterinary acts as part of the training requirement under the veterinary programme he or she is studying and that may include a surgical procedure. It is the responsibility of the supervising registered veterinary surgeon to ensure the person has the knowledge, techniques, skills and other relevant attributes to undertake the veterinary acts under his or her direct and continuous supervision.

**10. Does the supervising registered veterinary surgeon need to have a certain level of qualification or experience?**

All supervising veterinary surgeons must meet a minimum requirement to become registered and maintain registration and there is no additional qualification or experience required. However, they must ensure they have sufficient experience and competence to supervise veterinary students to conduct any veterinary acts.

**11. How would the standard of veterinary care to animals be maintained with the amendment of the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance?**

To ensure the standard of veterinary care to animals is maintained, it is proposed that veterinary students must perform any veterinary acts under the direct and continuous supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon. The supervising registered veterinary surgeon should ensure the student has the knowledge, techniques, skills and other relevant attributes to perform any veterinary acts. Besides, the “Code of Practice for the Guidance of Registered Veterinary Surgeons” published by the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong requires a registered veterinary surgeon to seek consent from a client before a person who is not a registered veterinary surgeon could perform any exempted veterinary acts on the client’s animals. If the animal owner has any concern, he /she could refuse to give such consent.

**12. Who is responsible in the case of any harm caused to a pet or an animal by a veterinary act performed by an individual working under the direct and continuous supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon and what action can the owner take in such circumstances?**

Should the individual performing the act fail to do it in full accordance with Schedule 2, the pet owner may lodge a complaint with the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong (VSB). Depending on the initial evidence available, the VSB may refer the case to the Police for investigation and consideration as to:

- (i) whether the individual performing the act should be prosecuted for breaching the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance (i.e. performing veterinary acts without registration), and
- (ii) whether the veterinary surgeon concerned should be prosecuted for aiding, permitting or suffering a lay person to perform such act.

In addition, the VSB gives guidelines to registered veterinary surgeons who are directing or supervising the individuals whilst they are performing the act. Any breach of the CoP may lead to disciplinary action against the registered veterinary surgeon by the VSB. Clients who are not satisfied with the treatment or care of their pet undertaken by a veterinary surgeon may raise the issue with the VSB, provided that they furnish their personal information and details of the case. A complaint can be lodged by post to the Secretary/Veterinary Surgeons Board, 5/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

### **13. Who should I contact in case I wish to know more?**

For any further enquiries, please contact the Technical Services Division of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department:

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