

# National Board Report

A Quarterly Newsletter of the National Board Examination Committee for Veterinary Medicine

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## Experiencing NAVLE

On Thursday, August 24, I viewed an actual version of the NAVLE at a Prometric testing center here in Bismarck. Earlier this year, the NBEC invited licensing board members to participate in a trial run of the NAVLE during one week in August, to be sure everything was working properly before the actual administration begins in November. I decided that I should participate, too, and I thought *National Board Report* readers would be interested in my experience.

My test was scheduled to begin at 8 am, and I arrived at the Sylvan Learning Center 30 minutes early, as instructed on my scheduling permit. The person in front of me was signing in to take a physical therapy exam, and the person after me was there to take the Graduate Record Exam. When Rose, the proctor, saw my orange scheduling permit, she said, "you must be the vet." She noted that candidates for the US Medical Licensing Examination, also prepared by the NBME, all have orange colored permits. Of course, this was the first NAVLE she had administered and, because Bismarck is a long way from any veterinary school, maybe the only one she will ever give.

Rose did not know that I wasn't a "real" candidate, only that I was there to take the NAVLE. She checked my photo ID, making sure the name on my drivers license matched the name on my scheduling permit. She asked me to put my cellular phone in a locker. She took my photograph with a digital camera. She looked up the NAVLE in her test administration manual, which she had obviously already read,

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## NAVLE: Coming Soon

The North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) will be offered to candidates for the first time beginning November 20. Administered at testing centers operated by Prometric, Inc., the NAVLE will replace both the National Board Examination (NBE) and the Clinical Competency Test (CCT) as the measure of entry-level competence to practice veterinary medicine in North America.

All NAVLE candidates must be approved to take the examination by a licensing board, and they must apply for the examination using the procedure preferred by that board. The NBEC's web site, <[www.nbec.org](http://www.nbec.org)>, contains a list of board application preferences. If the board prefers that candidates submit their NAVLE application form and fee directly to the NBEC office (and most do), candidates can do so until the September 20 deadline, which is 60 days prior to the opening of the test window. Candidates applying through boards that want to collect the NAVLE application form and/or fee themselves, must apply by the deadline established by that board. Some board application deadlines have already past, but many boards will accept applications until September 20.

Certain candidates may have the option of applying on-line and paying the NAVLE fee by credit card. We have experienced delays in getting the system up and running, but we hope to have it ready soon. If so, it will be announced on the NBEC's web site. Only candidates applying through boards that want them to send the NAVLE application and fee directly to the NBEC will be able to use the on-line option.

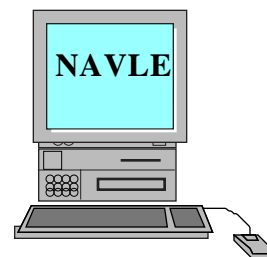
Once the NBEC office receives the NAVLE application form, the fee, and notice from a

licensing board that the candidate is eligible to take the NAVLE, we will forward that information to the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) and they will mail scheduling permits to candidates. The permits, which will be sent in October, will allow candidates to call Prometric and schedule the exam on any day during the testing window (November 20 - December 16) at the Prometric testing center of their choice. A list of centers where the NAVLE will be offered can be found at <[www.2test.com](http://www.2test.com)>.

Once candidates are approved to take the NAVLE, they can take it at any testing center in North America. Their initial score will be reported to the board through which they applied. Scores for candidates testing during the first window will be reported to boards by the end of January 2001. Boards will report scores to candidates.

The NBEC web site also contains a computer based practice version of the NAVLE, using 60 sample questions. Candidates are encouraged to try the practice exam before they show up at a Prometric center to take the real thing. The practice exam is designed to be downloaded to the user's own computer. After extraction by the unZip utility, it runs under Windows. It should also run on Macs using Windows emulation software.

Candidates and boards may direct questions about the NAVLE to the NBEC office at 701-224-0332 or [mail@nbec.org](mailto:mail@nbec.org).



## NBEC Meets in Salt Lake City

The NBEC and the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB) held meetings at the Hotel Monaco in Salt Lake City in July in conjunction with the AVMA Annual Meeting.

At its meeting on July 23, the AAVSB voted to establish its own certification program for graduates of non accredited veterinary schools, and asked the NBEC to develop two new examinations to support it. As noted in the last issue of the *National Board Report*, the AAVSB had asked the AVMA to transfer responsibility for the present Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG) program to the AAVSB. Because the AVMA would not agree to such a transfer, the AAVSB decided to proceed with plans to establish its own program. Once the AAVSB made its decision, the NBEC formally agreed at its meeting on July 24 to develop the two new examinations.

The first examination, to be prepared in the coming year, will focus on content that is taught in accredited veterinary schools but not tested directly on the NAVLE. These include areas such as anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, microbiology, and pathology. This examination, which will be called a qualifying examination, will be designed to assess whether the candidate's educational background is equivalent to that of a graduate of an accredited school. Under the AAVSB's new program, all candidates from non-accredited

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## From the Past: History of the NBEC

### Number 16 in a Series

The NBE was first administered to Canadian candidates in 1957, only three years after its first use in the US. Five candidates took the NBE in Canada that year. However, formal involvement of Canadian veterinarians in the National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (NBVME) and its successor organization, the NBEC, would have to wait 35 years.

Because French is an official language in Canada, the use of the NBE and CCT (and now NAVLE) in Canada has required translation of the examinations into French. The first mention of a French version of the NBE appears in the minutes of the August 1957 meeting of the NBVME, where it is noted almost in passing: "Quebec board had requested examination be translated into French." No further mention of this was made in the minutes until March 1969, where it is again noted casually: "Correspondence was discussed regarding the translation of the National Board Examination into French." The minutes of the January 1981 NBEC meeting state that "the Canadian VMA representatives reported on their use of the NBE, including translation into French."

The French translation of the NBE (and later, the CCT) was prepared by the Canadian National Examining Board (NEB). Prior to 1993, the French translation was made using previously administered versions of the NBE and CCT, but beginning that year, the French and English versions were the same.

Translation of an examination involves more than a word-for word rendering from one

language to another. The preferred term is adaptation, meaning the goal is for the examination in the target language to be equivalent in all respects to the same examination in the original language. Credit must be given to the skilled translators who have accomplished this important work over the years.

English forms of the NAVLE have been sent to Canada for translation, and the resulting French versions will be available at Prometric testing centers in Canada.

Canadian veterinarians began attending NBVME meetings as guests in the mid 1970's, and began participating in item review meetings beginning in the 1980's. However, it wasn't until the NBEC reorganized prior to its incorporation as an independent organization in 1994 that a representative of the NEB became an official member of the NBEC. Dr. Adrian King-Harris was the first NEB representative, and Dr. David Sandals fills that position now.

The profession can be proud of the fact that its licensing examinations are common between the US and Canada. Indeed, veterinary medicine is a model in this respect for other professions. This level of cooperation is the result of years of hard work and open communication.



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## Salt Lake City Meeting

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schools will be required to pass the qualifying examination.

The other examination will be a new clinical skills assessment, designed to replace the present Clinical Proficiency Examination (CPE). Like the CPE, the clinical skills assessment will be a hands-on practical examination, testing things like animal handling, surgery, and communication skills. The new clinical skills assessment will be required of all foreign graduates except those who have completed a year of evaluated clinical experience at an accredited or approved veterinary school, either before or after graduation. The NBEC will strive to have this new examination ready for use in two years.

Candidate access to testing centers was an item of concern raised during the meeting. The NBEC has since sent a memo to each NAVLE school contact person, outlining progress made in this area. Many veterinary schools do not have a local Prometric center. The NBME has set up a special "hot line" to help schools deal with scheduling issues.

The highlight of the meeting was the presentation of the second NBEC Award to Dr. Sam Strahm. Dr.

Strahm, who served on the NBEC from 1972 to 1989, guided the organization through a major reorganization and oversaw development of the Clinical Competency Test (CCT). A complete press release on the award presentation can be found on the NBEC's web site.

NBEC officers for 2000-2001 include Dr. Nancy Collins, Chair; Dr. Norman LaFauce, Chair-Elect; Dr. Roger Magnusson,

Secretary-Treasurer; and Dr. R.B. Baker, Past Chair. For the first time in memory, there were no changes to the NBEC membership for the coming year. All four members whose terms were expiring (Drs. Magnusson, Draper, and Hopkins, and Ms. Jones) were reappointed by their respective organizations.

The next NBEC meeting will be in San Diego on Saturday, January 20, 2001.



Dr. Sam Strahm (right) receives the NBEC Award from NBEC Chair Dr. R.B. Baker. The award is a print by Bismarck artist Gary Miller entitled *Dakota Harvest*, depicting two draft horses pulling a hay wagon in the face of an advancing thunderstorm.

## NBEC Staff Profile: Tonee VanderVliet

Tonee VanderVliet is the other half of the two-person NBEC office. Tonee began working for the NBEC in September 1998. She now spends three quarters of her time on the NBEC, and works one quarter time for the North Dakota Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.

A native of Bismarck, Tonee moved to Ft. Collins, CO when she was three. There, she became active in 4-H, showing rabbits, lambs, and her quarter horse. While attending the Front Range Community College, she received certification in Animal Technology. She then transferred to Colorado State University, where she received a bachelor's degree in equine science in 1996. Tonee and her husband Joe moved back to North Dakota in 1997.

Tonee has a variety of work

experience in veterinary medicine, both in Colorado and in North Dakota. Prior to joining the NBEC, she worked at the Midway Veterinary Clinic in Mandan, ND, where one of her jobs was to manage the city animal shelter.

Tonee enjoys the relative peace and quiet of the NBEC office. For the past month or so, she has been spending most of her time with the NAVLE candidate database. For the North Dakota Board, she is responsible for license renewal for veterinarians and technicians. She likes working with veterinarians, veterinary students, and veterinary technicians.

Tonee and Joe recently purchased a new home on small acreage north of Mandan. They have a dog and a cat. Joe is a firefighter



for the City of Bismarck.

In her spare time, Tonee and Joe enjoy camping, fishing, shopping, and spending time with family and friends.

## Experiencing NAVLE

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because portions of it were highlighted, and then explained how the exam was structured (six blocks of 60 items, with 65 minutes per block, and 45 minutes of total break time). She asked me if I had a lunch with me that I would like to store in their refrigerator (I didn't tell her that I didn't plan to stay there that long). She told me where the restroom was. She reviewed the NAVLE security procedures, and reminded me that the testing room was under video surveillance (there was also a window between her office and the testing room, so she could see all five of the testing stations from her desk). After that, she gave me two marking boards, two dry erase markers, and a set of ear plugs (in case it was noisy in the testing room, which it wasn't). Her assistant then escorted me into the testing room, and set me up at station number 3. After keying in my code number (which was printed on my scheduling permit), the NAVLE came up on my monitor.

I had already tried the computer based practice version of the NAVLE that is available on our web site. The practice version looks just like the real thing. Therefore, I was familiar with how to move from item to item, mark items for review, and check the amount of time remaining. Nevertheless, the first part of my exam was a tutorial that demonstrated all these things. Then, it was on to my first block of questions.

To say that I aced the exam would be gross exaggeration. It has been over 25 years since I graduated from veterinary school, and I have not been involved in clinical veterinary medicine since then. I did know many of the microbiology and public health questions, though (that's what I used to teach). At the end of each block of 60 items the computer asked me if I wanted to take a break, but I plowed right through all 360 items without getting up. I don't think a break would have helped me very much!

After I completed all the blocks, the computer presented me with a short survey, where I could comment on the testing experience.

The NBEC and the NBME designed the survey so we can know how candidates like computer based testing, and so we can address any concerns that are raised.

After I finished the short survey, my NAVLE was over, and I went back to the registration desk. Rose was surprised that I had completed the 7.5 hour NAVLE in a little more than two hours! I then explained who I was and we talked for a while about computer based testing and Prometric.

All in all, my experience was very pleasant. The center was clean, neat, well equipped, and efficient. The staff were knowledgeable, friendly, and professional. I came away totally impressed, both with the quality of the NAVLE and with the quality of the Prometric testing center. I hope that all NAVLE candidates have an equally good experience. In the coming months, we will be doing all we can to see that this is the case.

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