

# National Board Report

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## Reflections on NAVMEC

Many good ideas about the future of veterinary medical education were expressed at last month's NAVMEC meeting. Here are a few that relate to the NBVME.

*Why do we need a licensing examination at all? Why isn't graduation from an accredited school sufficient for licensure?* Such an approach works in some countries. In North America, every profession that I know has a licensing or certification examination that requires candidates to demonstrate a certain minimum level of competence before they can be licensed. It's hard to imagine veterinary medicine differing from all other professions in this regard.

*Why don't we have a national license?* In the US and Canada, licensure is a state/provincial function. Standardized licensure criteria (including school accreditation, foreign graduate certification, and licensing examination content and passing scores), license by endorsement, interstate compacts, and similar measures can enhance mobility of licensees, but national licensure is simply not a realistic goal for any profession.

*Why should all licensure candidates have to pass a multi-species examination?* One NAVMEC presentation introduced the idea of a "menu-driven NAVLE" where candidates could be tested on those areas relevant to their chosen area of practice focus. Limited licensure was not part of the proposal. This is an intriguing idea, but it will require a great deal of review and development if it is to be seen as a workable alternative.

John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD  
Executive Director

## July NBVME Meeting Report

The NBVME held its summer meeting in Las Vegas July 16-18. The location was chosen to allow members the opportunity to attend the third national meeting of the North American Veterinary Medical Education Consortium (NAVMEC) July 14-16. The NAVMEC meeting focused on accreditation, testing, and licensure, and how these activities impact veterinary medical education. The NBVME is a sponsor of NAVMEC, and NBVME member Dr. Mike Thomas serves as vice-chair of the NAVMEC Board of Directors. Dr. Jay Hedrick, NBVME Chair-Elect, was invited to give a stimulus presentation at the Las Vegas meeting, and he and Drs. Linda Blythe and John Boyce participated in a panel discussion. Dr. Hedrick's presentation outlined for the 200-plus attendees what the NBVME is (an independent nonprofit testing organization) and what it does (provides examinations to licensing boards and other entities in veterinary medicine).

During the NBVME's Executive Session, the board approved a budget for 2010-2011, projecting income of \$3.0 million and expenses of \$2.5 million. The board agreed that the NAVLE fee for the 2011-2012 testing cycle would remain \$550.

Dr. Dennis Feinberg reported on the outreach visits to licensing boards. Including a visit to Arizona in August, a total of 44 boards will have been visited since the program began in June 2008. A key to the success of the outreach program has been the interaction between NBVME members and members of the licensing boards. Several recommendations from these vis-

its will be considered by the NBVME in its strategic planning session.

Until now, the NAVLE has been available only at Prometric testing centers in the US, US territories, Canada, and countries where there is an AVMA-accredited veterinary school (presently England, Scotland, The Netherlands, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand). Candidates testing outside North America pay an additional overseas testing fee to cover costs associated with delivering the examination in other countries. Recently, some overseas NAVLE candidates have been unable to obtain a visa to travel to a country where the NAVLE is offered. The board reviewed information provided by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME), indicating that its US Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) is available at Prometric centers in many other countries. The board agreed to begin offering the NAVLE at any Prometric center that also offers the USMLE, as soon as those arrangements can be made.

The board appointed Drs. Julie Fixman, Helen Tuzio, Benjamin Darien, and Dale Boyle to new three-year terms on the Examination Development Advisory Board.

Dr. Mike Thomas was recognized by his colleagues for nine years of service to the NBVME, including two years as Chair.

NBVME officers for 2010-2011 are Drs. Jay Hedrick, Chair; Rick Tubbs, Chair-Elect; Ben Franklin, Secretary-Treasurer; and Linda Blythe, Immediate Past Chair.

## STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATED

At the end of the July business meeting, the NBVME met to review and update its strategic plan. Mr. Michael Barrett, who served as a facilitator when the present plan was adopted in 2007, assisted the board with the update.

Prior to the meeting, Mr. Barrett conducted an hour-long telephone interview with each NBVME member. At the meeting, the board reviewed the present strategic plan and agreed on which action items from that plan had been accomplished. They then reviewed and rated an extensive list of potential priorities, narrowing the list down to those critical few to be addressed in the next two years.

No changes were made to the mission, vision, and values statements. Three of the four strategic objectives were retained: continuous improvement of assessment instruments, organization effectiveness, and outreach to constituent organizations. The board added a new strategic objective: new initiatives. Specific priorities were identified under each of the four strategic objectives. Among them are possible changes to the NAVLE scoring process, defining the NBVME's role in assessing core competencies identified by NAVMEC, delineation of the NBVME's relationship with the NBME, succession planning, outreach efforts to veterinary schools, and exploring the possibility of developing new examinations to meet the needs of licensing boards and other constituents.

## NAVLE E-Permits Coming This Fall

These days, airline passengers can check-in online and print their own boarding passes. A similar process will be used by NAVLE candidates beginning with the fall 2010 testing window, with the introduction of e-permits.

Previously, the NBVME office mailed each NAVLE candidate a printed scheduling permit. Candidates used the information on the permit to make their testing appointment with Prometric, then took the permit to the testing center on the day of their examination. The NEB office mailed

permits to Canadian candidates. Candidates who did not receive the original permit, or who misplaced their permit, had to have a duplicate sent to them, often at considerable cost—and in some cases delaying their examination.

With the e-permit system, the NBVME office will send an e-mail message to each candidate that includes instructions on how they can access and print their own permit from a secure web site. If they misplace the permit before their test date, they can print a duplicate.

## What Is the NBVME? Second in a series

One of the consistent findings of the licensing board outreach visits was a relative lack of understanding on the part of licensing board members of what the NBVME is and what it does. Given that licensing boards spend most of their time dealing with regulatory matters and disciplinary cases rather than national licensing examinations, that is not particularly surprising. However, we thought it would be helpful to have a series of brief articles in the newsletter dealing with this topic. We will not duplicate the detailed history of the NBVME that appeared in a 17-part series in the *National Board Report* from May 1996 through November 2000. Past issues of the newsletter are available at [nbvme.org](http://nbvme.org).

The NBVME was created by the AVMA in the late 1940's. At that time, each state had its own licensing examination and there was no national examination. The first National Board Examination was offered in 1953. The NBVME became the National Board Examination Committee (NBEC) in 1980 and continued to function as a committee of the AVMA until 1994, when it incorporated as an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. The NBEC separated from the AVMA at the end of 1995, and the office moved to Bismarck in 1997. The NBEC reverted to its original name, NBVME, in 2001, reflecting its status as an independent organization, which it has been for almost 16 years.

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Dennis A. Feinberg, DVM; Linda L. Blythe, DVM, PhD, *Past Chair*; Joyceanne Fick, *Public Member*; Benjamin Franklin, Jr., DVM, *Secretary-Treasurer*; Meg Glattly, DVM; Gary D. Gackstetter, DVM, MPH, PhD; Thomas B. Hairgrove, DVM, DABVP; Jay Hedrick, DVM, *Chair*; Jayne Jensen, DVM; Sylvie Latour, DVM; Lila Miller, DVM; John D. Tait, DVM, MBA; Rick Tubbs, DVM, MS, MBA, DACT, DABVP, *Chair-Elect*. John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD, *Executive Director*

# Qualifying Examination Pool Review

A two-day review of items from the Qualifying Examination (QE) item bank was held at the NBME office in Philadelphia August 11-12. A total of 21 basic science faculty members from 19 different veterinary schools participated in the review, which is done to ensure that the items in the pool are suitable for use on future examination forms. The group reviewed approximately 1,800 items, working in teams covering the five main content areas of the examination (anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, microbiology, and pathology).



Standing: Drs. Gayle Johnson, James Herman, Wayne Schwark, Hari Goyal, Sawkat Anwer, Linda Blythe, John Pascoe, Laura Hardin, Rick Vuillet, Dan Brown, Anne Zajac, Jon Patterson, Segun Dipeolu, Hermann Bragulla, and Lynne Kushner. Seated: Drs. Larry Engelking, Nongnuch Inpanbutr, Judy Klimek, Beth Spangler, Leslie McLaughlin, and Murli Manohar.

During the review, the participants were asked to identify items that would be suitable for use as sample items. The goal is to make about 100 new sample items available to QE

candidates, to help them become familiar with the kind of items that are on the examination. The participants were also asked to review the present QE test blueprint and to offer recommendations for updating it.

Finally, the meeting participants were asked to share their thoughts on the idea of a new "NAVLE Step 1" examination covering basic veterinary medical sciences. Their responses will be collected and forwarded to the NBVME members for review in January.

## New NBVME Member: Dr. John Tait

As noted on page 1, Dr. Mike Thomas completed his service on the board at the July meeting. His successor, appointed by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), is Dr. John D. Tait of Guelph, Ontario.

Dr. Tait is a 1986 graduate of the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph. He also holds an MBA from McMaster University and is a Certified Financial Planner.

After graduation, Dr. Tait worked as a small animal practitioner and practice owner in Ontario. He also worked for Antech/VCA, and as head examiner for the Canadian National Examining Board's Clinical Proficiency Examination. Since 1998, he has worked for the

Ontario Veterinary College, first as director of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital and subsequently as an assistant professor and externship coordinator. Dr. Tait also is a managing partner of the Ontario Veterinary Group, which operates eight companion animal practices, and he serves as an adjunct professor at the Atlantic Veterinary College and the Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

Like Dr. Thomas (and Dr. Dennis Feinberg), Dr. Tait is a past president of AAHA, serving in that capacity from 2009-2010.

Dr. Tait is a volunteer consultant for guide dog training for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.



In his spare time, Dr. Tait enjoys skiing, fitness training, and cooking.

## NBVME Examination Updates

### NAVLE®

The application deadline for the November-December 2010 NAVLE testing window was August 1, and a total of 3,788 candidate eligibility files have been processed and submitted to the NBME. As noted on page 2, beginning this fall, NAVLE candidates will use "e-permits" to make their testing appointments.

NAVLE Self-Assessments, consisting of 200 items formatted like the actual examination, continue to be available for purchase on the NBVME's web site for \$50 each. The score report includes a prediction of future NAVLE performance based on the candidate's performance on the Assessment. A third form of the Assessment will be available this fall, in addition to the two forms that have been available since 2008.

Copies of the 2009-2010 NAVLE Technical Report were mailed to each of

the NBVME's constituent organizations and to each licensing board earlier this month. The report is also available on the NBVME's web site, as is a separate 2009-2010 candidate performance report. A total of 4,381 candidates took the NAVLE during the 2009-2010 testing cycle, including 3,061 criterion candidates. The passing rate for criterion candidates at graduation (including those who passed on their first attempt in the fall, and those who failed in the fall but passed on repeating the examination in April) was 98%.

### Qualifying Examination

The Qualifying Examination (QE), a 300-item web-based basic science examination, is the step three requirement of the Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence (PAVE). The NBVME office has made arrangements to administer the QE to 213 candidates at 11 locations on September 16. Future QE administra-

tions are planned for January 20 and May 12, 2011. The 2010-2011 QE Bulletin of Information for Candidates is available on the NBVME's web site. Copies of the 2009-2010 QE Technical Report were mailed to all licensing boards that accept PAVE certification earlier this month. The report is also available on the NBVME's web site.

### Veterinary Clinical Skills Assessment (VCSA)

The VCSA is a two day hands-on examination of clinical and communication skills, used as an option for step four of the PAVE program. The next administration is planned for January 8-9, 2011 in the veterinary technology facilities at Cedar Valley College in Dallas, Texas. Candidates apply for the VCSA through the AAVSB office. A Technical Report on the VCSA, covering all administrations to date, was mailed earlier this month to licensing boards that accept PAVE certification.