

National Board Report

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

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Let's Get It Right

The message came through loud and clear. As noted on page two, when NBEC members were asked to identify what the NBEC must do to succeed, the number one item on the list was to ensure that the NAVLE works right the first time it is given. November 2000 sounds like a long time from now, but it's only a little more than a year and a half away. I can report that many people are working to ensure that the NAVLE does, indeed, work right the first time.

The ten members of the Examination Development Subcommittee are evaluating items in the item bank, working on an item classification system that will ensure that each form of the NAVLE covers important content areas, and directing the work of 25 newly appointed item writers. The item writers met recently in Philadelphia for an item writing workshop.

Also assisting in the development of items for the NAVLE is the Professional Examination Service (PES). Now that the final versions of the NBE and CCT have been developed, PES has agreed to work this year to develop items for the NAVLE that contain graphic information. Given that 10% of the NAVLE items will contain some type of graphic information, this will be a great help.

Licensing boards recently received a mailing from the NBEC outlining some of the administrative details for the NAVLE program. Additional information will be forthcoming in future mailings, in this newsletter, and on the NBEC web site (<http://www.nbec.org>).

John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD
Executive Director

Board Sets Exam Fees, Dates

At its meeting in Phoenix, Arizona on January 14, the NBEC made several important decisions regarding the new North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE).

Fees

The NBEC set the fee for the NAVLE at \$325. In most cases, candidates will pay this fee directly to the NBEC, rather than to the test vendor or the licensing board, as is done with the NBE and CCT.

The \$325 fee compares with the present fee for the NBE (\$165) and CCT (\$140). Since the NAVLE will replace both the NBE and CCT, this represents an increase of \$20 from the present fees, which have been constant since 1995. "The \$325 fee represents an increase of less than 7% over a period of five years, but it will allow the NBEC sufficient income to support future examination research and development projects," said NBEC Secretary-Treasurer Dr. Nancy Collins.

Presently, the NBEC directs payment of \$40 per candidate from each CCT to the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB), to help the AAVSB fund its activities. Last year, the NBEC authorized the transfer of the examination score reporting database from the Professional Examination Service (PES) to the AAVSB. Beginning in 2000, the AAVSB will derive sufficient income from the score reporting service to allow the NBEC to retain all candidate fee income to support its own programs. Because Canadian candidates have not been assessed the \$40 amount designated for the AAVSB, the NAVLE fee for Canadian candidates will be \$60 more than the fee for the present examinations, compared with \$20 more for US candidates.

Dates

The NAVLE will be administered during a four week window in the fall and a two week window in the spring. The NBEC set dates of November 20-December 16, 2000 and April 9-21, 2001 for the first two windows. Equivalent dates will be used for subsequent administrations. Candidates with expected graduation dates in May-June will be allowed to take the NAVLE for the first time on any day during the preceding November-December testing window. Candidates graduating at other times will be able to take the NAVLE for the first time during the testing window six months prior to their anticipated graduation date.

Score data

The AVMA Council on Education, the body responsible for accreditation of veterinary schools, has asked the NBEC for access to candidate score data, to allow it to satisfy the US Department of Education's requirements for a recognized accrediting body. The Council presently requires veterinary schools to provide score data on their own graduates, but has asked the NBEC to provide score data from all candidates in order to simplify the process. The data will not be used to compare colleges, but will be used to evaluate the essentials of accreditation and to track candidate performance over time. The NBEC voted to cooperate with the Council to work out a mechanism to facilitate reporting the score data the Council needs, subject to approval by the NBEC's legal counsel and input from the deans. Score data reported to the Council will not contain the names of individual candidates.

Next meeting

The NBEC will meet on Tuesday, July 13 in New Orleans.

NBEC Looks to the Future

The NBEC met for an afternoon planning session in Phoenix on January 14. The planning session, moderated by NBEC member Dr. Don Draper, allowed the NBEC an opportunity to assess where it is as an organization and where it would like to be in the years to come.

In addressing the question of what specific benefits the NBEC provides to its customers and end users, the consensus was that:

- the NBEC provides standardized, reliable, valid and legally defensible examinations;
- the examinations are cost effective and facilitate movement of veterinarians from one jurisdiction to another because they are used by all licensing boards in North America;
- the licensing examinations assure society that veterinarians meet minimum standards of competence.

Members were asked to identify key areas in which the NBEC will have excel in order to succeed in the future. Responses included:

- ensuring that the NAVLE works properly the first time it is given;
- continuing to monitor the environment relative to minimal competence to practice;
- hiring excellent people to support the NBEC's programs and providing opportunities for professional development;
- communicating with all constituents;
- being open to change;
- continuing to strive to produce examinations that are cost effective.

Future planning sessions will focus on identifying the NBEC's stake holders and reviewing NBEC members' visions of the future.

From the Past: History of the NBEC Number 12 in a Series

The National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (NBVME) was formed in 1954, and operated under the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). In the early 1970's the board began a critical evaluation of its structure and mission. A steering committee was appointed by board president F.D. Wertman to look into this. Chaired by Dr. B.E. Hooper, the committee included Drs. D.T. Albrecht, R.B. Talbot, and N.W. Piper. The committee's report to the NBVME in July 1976 was a landmark in the history of the organization. The committee's findings and recommendations included:

- "the NBVME does not exist as a legal entity. The existence of this body is based on tradition and a constitution and bylaws which were never filed." To remedy this situation, the committee recommended that "immediate attention be given to drafting a new constitution and bylaws."
- "As currently constituted, the NBVME has a very bad organizational structure." The board had 31 members, but only those elected to the Executive Committee had any real authority. In addition, the committee felt that the interests of licensing boards were not being met under the NBVME structure.
- "The stated purpose of the board in the non-legal constitution is unrealistic." The committee asked whether the board should continue to operate under the AVMA, affiliate with the American Association of Veterinary State Boards, or have "independent status."

At the board's July 1977 meeting, a constitutional review sub-committee was appointed, consisting of Drs. D.T. Albrecht, B.E. Hooper, and S.E. Strahm. Dr. E.R. Ames provided AVMA staff support. The committee was charged with submitting a report to the board in 1978, which would address the concerns identified by the steering sub-committee.

The committee presented draft operating guidelines to the board in 1978. These guidelines created a new organization called the National Board Examination Committee (NBEC), to replace the NBVME. The NBEC had only 11 members, with all of them having an equal role in the organization. The draft guidelines were approved by the NBVME in July 1978, by the AVMA Executive Board in November 1978, and by the AVMA House of Delegates in 1979. The NBVME conducted its last business under the old constitution in January 1980, and the NBEC met for the first time during the AVMA Annual Meeting in Washington DC in July 1980.

In 1977, the NBVME considered "seeking legal counsel concerning the advantages and disadvantages of establishing the NBVME as an entity separate from the AVMA," but the new NBEC was organized as a committee of the AVMA Executive Board. Independence for the NBEC was 17 years away.

Next issue: Examination blueprint revisions

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The purpose of the *National Board Report* is to educate, to inform, and to communicate information about the objectives and programs of the NBEC. The opinions and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official opinions, views, or policies of the NBEC or any of its members, unless expressly so stated.

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NBEC Looks at Clinical Proficiency Examination

Last August, the NBEC wrote to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), expressing an interest in assuming responsibility for the Clinical Proficiency Examination (CPE). During the NBEC's January meeting, this issue was again discussed, and the committee agreed to send a letter to the AVMA Executive Board prior to the Board's April meeting, restating the NBEC's interest in the CPE.

The CPE is presently a four day practical clinical skills examination, given as part of the certification program of the Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG). It is designed to assess whether graduates of non-accredited schools have clinical skills equivalent to those of graduates of accredited schools. The CPE is offered at two veterinary schools in the United States and four in Canada. In Canada, the CPE is also required for candidates who cannot pass the NBE and/or CCT in two attempts.

There is at this time an 18

month backlog of candidates waiting to take the CPE, a situation causing great concern to the ECFVG, licensing boards, and candidates. The backlog exists because the number of candidates seeking to take the CPE exceeds the number of positions available at the test sites. Because of the time and effort involved in administering the examination, and the challenge of standardizing the examination across multiple test sites, efforts to find additional sites have not met with great success.

The NBEC sees the CPE as a logical addition to its list of responsibilities, because the NBEC's sole purpose is to provide quality licensing examinations for the profession. The NBEC's proposal to the AVMA calls for the NBEC to assume responsibility for the administration of the present CPE program while at the same time developing a new CPE that would be more efficient to administer. Development of the new CPE would be done in cooperation with an outside testing organization, to

ensure that the new examination met established professional standards for validity, reliability, and cost effectiveness.

The American Association of Veterinary State Boards, the AVMA Council on Education, and the AVMA Task Force on Foreign Veterinary Medical Education have expressed support for the NBEC's request. The NBEC is hopeful that the Executive Board will approve the request in April.



NBEC Member Profile: Ms. Jenna Jones

The role of a public member on a professional licensing board is a difficult one, because it is a challenge to find someone who can adequately represent the interests of the public and who also has some knowledge of the profession. Ms. Jenna Jones of Phoenix, Arizona fills the role of NBEC public member admirably.

A native of Phoenix, Ms. Jones graduated from Baylor University with a degree in business administration in 1988. She then moved back to Phoenix, where she works as an insurance adjuster for personal and commercial lines at the Scottsdale Insurance Company.

Ms. Jones was appointed to the Arizona State Veterinary Medical Examining Board as a public member in 1996, and presently serves as the board's chair. Her service on the Arizona board led to her being named by the American Association of Veterinary State Boards as the NBEC's public

member the same year. Although she does not participate in the review of items for the NBEC's examinations, she is a full participant in all other NBEC activities.

In her spare time, Ms. Jones is a member of the Junior League (a charitable organization) and also likes to spend time with her three Labrador retrievers, whom she calls "the boys". Recently, she and her dogs became involved in a companion animal therapy program, visiting local nursing homes and hospitals where they help to foster the human-animal bond. Ms. Jones also likes tennis, softball, and golf.

Ms. Jones enjoys her role as an NBEC member, and appreciates the opportunity to help the NBEC fulfill its mission to protect the public's interest by providing licensing boards with high quality standardized examinations.



Ms. Jenna Jones and two of her "boys" hiking near Telluride, Colorado.

NBEC Honors Pat Jones

At its January meeting, the NBEC took time to recognize Dr. J. Patrick Jones, Executive Vice President of the Professional Examination Service (PES). The January meeting was the last time that the NBEC would participate in the final review of the NBE and CCT, so the committee thought it was appropriate to honor Dr. Jones at that time. The committee presented Dr. Jones with a book with the following inscription: "In appreciation for outstanding service to all those involved in the national licensing examination program in veterinary medicine, 1987-2000."

The NBEC's over 40 year relationship with PES will end next year with the last administration of the NBE and CCT. The NAVLE will be developed with the National Board of Medical Examiners. The NBEC appreciates the ongoing cooperation of Dr. Jones and his colleagues at PES during the transition.



Dr. Michael Groves, NBEC Chair (left) and Dr. Pat Jones, PES Executive Vice President, at the NBEC meeting in Phoenix, Arizona on January 14.

December Exam Stats

A total of 2,819 candidates took the NBE on December 7, 1998. Criterion candidates (first time test takers who are seniors at accredited veterinary colleges) achieved a mean scaled score of 527; 425 is the national passing score. Non-criterion candidates (all other candidates from accredited colleges, including repeating candidates) had a median scaled score of 386, and foreign trained candidates achieved a median score of 329. The passing rate for criterion candidates was 91.4%, up 3.5% from the December 1997 figure.

For the CCT given on December 8, criterion candidates had a mean scaled score of 502.5 (425 is passing), non-criterion candidates made 468, and foreign trained candidates 364. A total of 2,834 candidates took the CCT in December. Like the NBE, scores from criterion candidates on the December CCT were somewhat higher than those of the previous year (87.6% passed vs. 86.6% in December 1997).

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