

National Board Report

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

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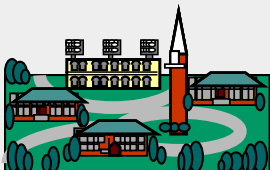
Clarification

Earlier this year, several NBEC members reported independent conversations with different people, each person saying that they had heard that the NBEC was interested in taking over the accreditation function of the AVMA Council on Education. The fact that several people were saying the same thing indicates that this story was fairly widespread.

Let me state this as clearly as I can: the NBEC has absolutely no interest in accrediting veterinary colleges. Further, the NBEC has never even discussed this idea in the thirteen years that I have been associated with it. The NBEC's sole purpose is to develop high quality examinations for use by licensing boards. It would be a serious conflict of interest for the NBEC to have anything to do with the accreditation of veterinary colleges.

The NBEC has always tried to operate in the open. Minutes of each meeting are distributed promptly to each of the organizations represented on the NBEC. Our annual report and audit are also mailed to each of those organizations. We send this quarterly newsletter to over 300 people, and all the back issues of the newsletter are posted on our web site. If people need information about any of the NBEC's activities, they are encouraged to call us and share their questions, comments, and concerns directly with us.

John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD.
Executive Director



NBEC Responds to AAVSB Request for New Foreign Graduate Examinations

At a special NBEC meeting in Philadelphia on April 12, the NBEC expressed a willingness to support the efforts of the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB) to create a new foreign graduate certification program, by developing two examinations to be used to evaluate graduates of non-accredited veterinary schools. The NBEC agreed in principle to develop a new examination that would focus on pre-clinical or basic science skills. The other NBEC examination would be a hands-on practical examination to assess a candidate's clinical skills, similar to the present Clinical Proficiency Examination (CPE).

The intent of the pre-clinical examination would be assessment of educational equivalence in areas like anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and other basic science subjects not presently covered by the NAVLE.

The AAVSB would like to assume responsibility for the certification of graduates of non-accredited schools, a function presently performed by the AVMA, through the Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG). If transfer of the ECFVG

program can not be accomplished, the AAVSB, acting on the direction of its member boards, is prepared to begin its own foreign graduate certification program. The AAVSB's new program would require candidates to pass a pre-clinical examination and a clinical skills examination. However, candidates who had completed a year of clinical training at an accredited veterinary school would not be required to take the clinical skills examination.

Under the AAVSB program, the NAVLE would be removed from the foreign graduate certification program. Candidates successfully completing the other steps in the program (application, English proficiency examinations, pre-clinical examination, and clinical skills examination, would receive their certificate. At that point, they would be eligible to take the NAVLE and apply for licensure.

At press time, leaders of the AVMA, AAVSB, and NBEC are scheduled to meet in Schaumburg on June 19 to discuss these and other issues.

Last NBE and CCT Administered

On April 11-12, a long chapter in the NBEC's history ended when the National Board Examination (NBE) and Clinical Competency Test (CCT) were administered for the last time.

It is impossible to recognize all the individuals who contributed their time and talents to the development of these examinations over the years. However, to all the dedicated people who wrote

questions, reviewed items, set passing standards, established policies, administered examinations, and interacted with candidates, our thanks for a job well done. Special recognition must be given to the staff of the Professional Examination Service for excellent service to the veterinary profession through the delivery of these examinations for the past 46 years.

New NAVLE Information Available

New information on the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) is now available to licensing boards and candidates.

The new NAVLE Candidate Information Bulletin was recently printed, and a supply of bulletins was shipped to each licensing board in North America the week of May 15. The ECFVG office also received copies of the new bulletin. The bulletin contains information on the NAVLE, 60 sample questions, a NAVLE application form, a list of licensing boards, and a VIVA score report form.

Two electronic versions of the NAVLE bulletin were added to the NBEC's web site (www.nbec.org) in early May. The bulletin is available in a plain text version and in Adobe Acrobat "pdf" format, which can be downloaded and printed.

The web site will be updated in the coming weeks to add a computer-based practice version of the NAVLE (using the same 60 sample questions), a video tour of a Prometric testing center, and the on-line NAVLE application form.

The NAVLE is now listed on the Prometric testing site (www.prometric.com) as well as on Prometric's test center locator site (www.2test.com). Candidates can now identify testing centers where the NAVLE will be available beginning in November.

From the Past: History of the NBEC

Number 15 in a Series

In the last issue of the *National Board Report*, we discussed the history of providing schools with information on how their students perform on the national licensing examinations. After denying several previous requests for score reports, the National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (NBVME) finally authorized the preparation of school score reports in 1978. Dr. Norman Hutton, who represented the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) on the NBEC, was instrumental in getting the score reports finalized. The minutes of the NBEC's July 1984 meeting indicate that PES was authorized to send score reports to each accredited school, listing the performance of each school's candidates compared with the national average. At no time were the candidates identified; only composite data were provided.

All was not well, however. At its January 1987 meeting, the NBEC reviewed complaints about misuse of the school score reports, including their use to rank schools and concerns that scores on the national examination were not an appropriate measure of the quality of a school's curriculum. After an intense discussion, the NBEC voted to discontinue providing score reports to schools.

The AAVMC soon responded to the situation by clarifying what the reports would contain, and assuring the NBEC that schools would not use the score reports for ranking purposes. The NBEC voted at its July 1987 meeting

to reinstate the score reports to schools.

Providing score reports to schools not accredited by the AVMA was another matter, however. A request from Ross University for scores of its candidates was denied by the NBEC in July 1985. The NBEC denied a similar request in January 1992. At its meeting last month, the NBEC again voted to provide score reports only to accredited or approved schools.

As the body responsible for accreditation of veterinary schools, the AVMA Council on Education (COE) has an interest on how students from various schools do on the national licensing examinations. Again, there has been concern on the part of the NBEC and licensing boards that the information could be misused by comparing one school to another.

In the 1980's, a national interest in outcomes assessment began to develop. In July 1987, the NBEC reviewed a request from the COE for summary score reports, but voted against the proposal. The Council submitted a revised request the following year, but it was tabled by the NBEC at its January 1989 meeting.

A new request from the COE for summary score data was considered by the NBEC in January 1999. This time, the NBEC voted to provide the data, and the NBEC is close to finalizing an agreement with the AVMA. The score data will not identify schools by name. The COE will use the data to assist in evaluating its accreditation essentials.

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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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July NBEC Meeting To Honor Dr. Sam Strahm



Dr. Samuel E. Strahm, who served as a member of the NBEC from 1972 through 1989, will receive the second NBEC Award during the NBEC's meeting in Salt Lake City on Tuesday, July 25. The meeting will be in the Paris A room of the Hotel Monaco, located at 15 West 200 South. The meeting will begin at 8:30 am. The AAVSB meetings will also be held at the Hotel Monaco. All interested persons are invited to attend the meeting.

NBEC To Explore New Clinical Skills Examination

At its April 12 meeting, the NBEC spent time discussing options for a proposed new clinical skills examination. As reported in the previous issue of the *National Board Report*, the NBEC is exploring the possibility of developing such an examination, which would assess skills not tested by the NAVLE. Initial plans were for an examination to be given to graduates of non-accredited schools. Eventually, the examination could be offered to all licensure candidates.

In Philadelphia, the NBEC heard presentations from staff of the National Board of Medical Examinations (NBME) on two of their current projects to assess clinical skills of licensure candidates in human medicine. These include a new computerized case simulation examination now being given to physicians as part of Step 3 of the US Medical Licensing Examination,

and a standardized patient examination now being developed for administration as part of Step 2.

While in Philadelphia, the NBEC also visited the office of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates to see the facility where they administer their standardized patient examination.

After reviewing the options, the NBEC decided to begin to look into developing a computerized case simulation examination examination for veterinary medicine. Such an examination would assess clinical problem solving skills. This issue will be discussed further at the NBEC's July meeting in Salt Lake City.

NBEC Staff Profile: Dr. John Boyce

Over the past several years, this series has profiled NBEC members. We have now covered all of them, so it's time to tell a little about the staff.

Dr. John Boyce has served as Executive Director of the NBEC since 1995. From 1987 to 1995, when the NBEC was still a committee of the AVMA, he was AVMA staff consultant to the NBEC.

A native of Detroit, Michigan, Dr. Boyce graduated from Cass Technical High School before enrolling at Michigan State University, where he received his DVM degree in 1974. After veterinary school, he served two years in the US Army Veterinary Corps at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Washington, DC. The GI bill helped him finance his postgraduate education at the University of Tennessee, where he received his PhD degree in microbiology.

Dr. Boyce taught microbiology at the School of

Veterinary Medicine at Purdue University from 1980 to 1987, and then made a career change when he joined the staff of the AVMA in Schaumburg, Illinois. At the AVMA, he provided staff assistance to the Council on Research, the Animal Welfare Committee, the Panel on Euthanasia, and several other groups, including the NBEC.

In 1995, the AVMA decided that the NBEC needed to complete its separation from the AVMA. At that time, Dr. Boyce chose to leave the AVMA to work only for the NBEC. Because there was then no longer any need to remain in expensive and congested suburban Chicago, he and his family began to look for another place to live and work. The move to Bismarck occurred in January 1997.

Dr. Boyce and his wife Susan have three children, Rebecca, Nathaniel, and Jeremiah. Family responsibilities take up much of his free time, but he enjoys playing the piano and keyboard at church,

serving as church treasurer, working on cars, and taking occasional sightseeing and hunting trips in North Dakota and Montana.

"The NBEC is a great organization to work for. We are focused on our mission of providing high quality examinations, and there are lots of exciting and challenging opportunities on the horizon that should keep all of us busy."



Species Specific Examinations Now Available from NBEC

The NBEC's two species specific examinations will be available to licensing boards directly from the NBEC office beginning July 1.

These examinations, in small animal and equine practice areas, were previously prepared and scored for the NBEC by the Professional Examination Service (PES). With the end of the NBEC's contract with PES for the National Board Examination and Clinical Competency Test, the NBEC voted to bring the species specific examinations in-house, to allow them to continue to be available to licensing boards.

The NBEC would like to update these examinations in the future. However, at least for the coming year, we will continue to offer the present examinations to boards for use in disciplinary cases,

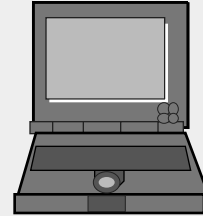
and in cases where the board needs to evaluate the knowledge of licensure candidates who may have been out of school for some time or who have not been in active clinical practice.

Each examination consists of 100 multiple choice questions, and is accompanied by an NBEC-recommended criterion referenced passing score.

The new arrangement should make it easier for boards to order and schedule these examinations. Boards interested in using the examinations should contact the NBEC office.

New E-Mail Address

The NBEC's primary e-mail address is changing. E-mail addressed to mail@nbec.org will continue to reach us, as will mail addressed to Dr. Boyce at boyce@nbec.org and to Tonee VanderVliet at tonee@nbec.org. However, the old nbec@tic.bisman.com address, which we have used since we moved to North Dakota in 1997, will not be valid after June 30. Our new e-mail service will be provided by Earthlink.



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