

National Board Report

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

Volume 3 Issue 2

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May, 1998

A New Office

Since the NBEC separated completely from the AVMA in December 1995, the office has been located in my home. The advantages of a home office are many, especially with children in school. However, the NBEC was simply running out of space in the home office. That, and the fact that the NBEC office soon will be taking on additional responsibilities associated with the new examination program, prompting a search for a "real" office earlier this year. We looked at several offices in downtown Bismarck before settling on a small suite on the second floor of a building on the corner of Broadway Avenue and Fifth Street. We now have plenty of room, and won't have to think about moving again for a long time. Other tenants here include several law firms, an optometrist, the North Dakota Board of Medical Examiners, and the USDA. I understand the building used to be a JC Penney store, and that it had the first escalator in Bismarck.

Moving is never easy, but this time our mailing address (Post Office Box), telephone number, and fax number remained the same, making it less disruptive than it would have been otherwise. Our new street address is 418 East Broadway Avenue, Suite 250, Bismarck, ND 58501. I am usually in this office from 8am to 3pm, Central time. I also maintain a small office at home, where I can usually be reached after 4pm at 701-221-9056.

John R. Boyce
Executive Director

NAVLE Update

As announced in the last issue of the *National Board Report*, the NBEC has selected the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) to develop the new computer-based North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE). Although plans for the new examination are still being developed, here is a brief update.

When will the NAVLE be implemented?

Present plans call for the NAVLE to be administered for the first time in November 2000. This means that the last administration of the National Board Examination (NBE) and Clinical Competency Test (CCT) will be in April 2000.

When will candidates be able to take the exam?

The NBEC will strongly recommend to licensing boards that only graduate veterinarians or veterinary students within six months of anticipated graduation be allowed to take the examination. This recommendation is being made to ensure that an accurate passing score

can be computed, to help promote examination security, and so that all candidates who take the examination are in the best position to pass it, i.e., those with some senior year clinical experience.

Will the exam be administered on a common testing date, as with the NBE and CCT?

No. Candidates will be able to take the examination at their convenience within established testing windows. Exact dates have not yet been established, but it is anticipated that there will be a four week window in November and December, and a two week window in April.

Where will the exam be offered?

Candidates will be able to take the examination at one of hundreds of computer testing centers located throughout North America. Present plans call for the NAVLE to be given at test centers operated by Sylvan Prometric. Sylvan sites are located in most cities, and new sites

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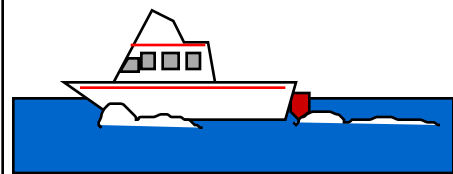
The NBEC's office is on the second floor of this building, the City Center Plaza, on the corner of Broadway Avenue and Fifth Street in downtown Bismarck.

Baltimore Meeting Set for July 28

The NBEC's summer meeting will be held on Tuesday morning, July 28 during the AVMA Annual Meeting in Baltimore. The general session, which is open to all interested persons, is scheduled from 8:30 am to noon in the Gibson Room of the Renaissance Hotel. The AAVSB's annual meeting will be Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning, also in the Renaissance Hotel.

One of the items on the NBEC's agenda will be the appointment of members to the new Examination Development Subcommittee (EDS). The EDS will assume many of the development responsibilities for the NAVLE now done for the NBE and CCT by the PES Consultant Advisory Board. However, the EDS will report directly to the NBEC, rather than to the examination vendor. EDS members will serve as content experts, and will be appointed to represent various segments of the profession.

Other items on the agenda will include an update on plans for the NAVLE (a contract with the National Board of Medical Examiners will be signed by then), and possible NBEC involvement in the development of a proposed new practical examination for use in evaluating foreign veterinary graduates.



From the Past: History of the NBEC

Ninth in a Series

No issue generated as much debate for the NBEC, for so many years, as the idea of a common testing date. Perhaps due to a strong states rights orientation of many of the licensing board representatives, and an accompanying suspicion that the national board examination was the first step toward national licensure, licensing boards were remarkably reluctant to agree on a common testing date, or even whether the idea of a common date was a good one.

As stated in a previous article in this series, in the first few years of the NBE, a candidate could take the same examination on different dates in different jurisdictions. Although multiple forms of the NBE were soon developed to mitigate this problem somewhat, concerns over examination security prompted the Board to pass a motion in 1960 to work toward a common date.

At the July 1967 meeting, it was reported that eight states gave the NBE on the common "date" of June 2-8, and the minutes note that "after considerable discussion, the Board agreed to push for a common date somewhere during the first two weeks of June." Subsequently, Dr. W.T.S. Thorp, NBVME President, sent a letter to all licensing boards informing them that June 12-14, 1968 would be the common date, thought it was apparent that many states gave the NBE on other dates.

In 1971, a second common date period in May was established, and a reduced testing fee was offered to boards that used either the June or May dates. In 1973, 11 states administered the NBE during the

common date period in May, and 17 gave it in June.

Continuing concerns over examination security led the NBVME to vote in July 1973 to reduce the period to only two days in May and two in June for 1974 and 1975, and to begin to give the NBE on only one date in June, beginning in 1975.

The next year, the Board voted to begin to offer the NBE in December in addition to the spring date(s).

The minutes of the July 1975 meeting note that the NBVME authorized three administrations for 1976, May 11-12, June 8-9, and December 14-15, in spite of the fact that the AVMA Executive Board had recommended that there be only one spring and one winter date.

The committee continued to struggle with the problem of a common date throughout the late 1970's. Ongoing discussions between the NBVME, the AAVSB, the AVMA, and the veterinary colleges failed to establish a consensus. A July 1976 report by a special steering committee, composed of representatives of all parties, concluded that it was "more important to have the test available to all states than it is to have a single examination date."

Finally, in 1980, the present policy of two common dates each year was adopted, and in 1981, the dates were set as the second Tuesday in May and December. It only took 21 years!

Next issue: The beginnings of the CCT.

The *National Board Report* is published quarterly by the National Board Examination Committee for Veterinary Medicine, P.O. Box 1356, Bismarck, ND 58502. Phone: (701) 224-0332, fax: (701) 224-0435, e-mail: nbec@tic.bisman.com.

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AAVSB To Issue Exam Score Reports

Earlier this month, negotiations between the NBEC and the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB) concluded with the signing of an agreement between the two organizations that gives the AAVSB the authority to report national examination scores to licensing boards on behalf of candidates seeking additional licenses to practice. Presently, score reports are issued by the Interstate Reporting Service, a division of the Professional Examination Service (PES) in New York.

Initial examination scores (NBE, CCT and, beginning in 2000, NAVLE) will continue to be reported by the vendor directly to the licensing board where the candidate took the examination.

The AAVSB wanted to include the score reporting service as a component of its planned Veterinary Information Verifying Agency (VIVA). Ultimately, VIVA will offer a "one stop shop" for

veterinarians seeking licensure in additional jurisdictions. Candidates will be able to submit their credentials to the AAVSB, and the AAVSB office will forward their packet of information to the desired board(s) in the proper format. The packet will include an examination score report and a report from the AAVSB's Disciplinary Database.

The transfer of score records from PES to the AAVSB should be completed by late summer. It will involve combining thousands of candidate records, presently maintained in three separate databases, into one new database. Once this task is accomplished, AAVSB staff should have easier access to the data, and should be able to produce score reports more efficiently. The NBEC office will also maintain a copy of the score database. PES has pledged to cooperate fully during the transfer.

Negotiations on transferring the score reporting service began at the NBEC's January meeting, and

involved a task force of three NBEC members (Drs. James Brace, Norman LaFauce, and Roger Magnusson) and three AAVSB members (Drs. Sonny Corley, James Dalley, and Wayne Rehn).

Income generated through the operation of the score reporting service will remain with the AAVSB, allowing the NBEC to phase out financial support for the AAVSB from candidate examination fees, beginning in 1999.

NBEC Chair Dr. Catherine Cross notes, "the agreement between the NBEC and the AAVSB is a positive move for both organizations, and will allow each of us to focus our efforts and resources on our primary mission."

Information on the new score reporting service will be included in this summer's revision of the NBE and CCT Candidate Information Booklets. Additional information will be forthcoming from the AAVSB office.

Examination Study Materials: What's Available?

Candidates frequently ask, "How can I best prepare to take the NBE and CCT?" The answer depends to some extent on who is asking. For example, a senior student at an accredited veterinary school, an international veterinary graduate, and a veterinarian who has been in practice for 15 years will likely need to approach the examinations differently.

All candidates should begin by reviewing the NBE and CCT Candidate Information Booklets. These booklets contain a great deal of useful and up to date information about how the exams are structured and scored, and how scores are reported. In addition, they contain information on ordering the only official examination preparation materials available: practice versions of the NBE and CCT. The practice NBE consists of 285 items selected from the NBE item bank, and the two practice CCT's are actual examinations used in 1993 and 1996. Candidates can complete these

examinations at home, send their answer sheets to PES, and receive diagnostic score reports. The practice examinations can help candidates become familiar with the format of the examinations and identify areas of potential weakness.

The candidate information booklets are revised each August, and copies are given by licensing boards to all candidates registering to take the NBE or CCT. Additional copies are available free of charge from the NBEC office, the ECFVG office, or from PES.

For candidates seeking a greater variety of practice questions, Mosby publishes a five volume set of NBE-style questions, and a two volume set of diagnostic problems similar to those used on the CCT. While these books are not endorsed by the NBEC, they might be helpful for candidates who like to study by reviewing practice questions.

In addition to sample questions, standard veterinary textbooks and journals can serve as

useful study aids. The subject matter areas addressed by the NBE and CCT are outlined in the candidate information booklets. Candidates who may be weak in a particular area, or who may have been out of school for several years, might want to consider using materials of this type.

Finally, there are several other examination preparation and review programs available from private individuals. The NBEC does not endorse any of these, but some candidates have found them useful. For additional information, contact the NBEC office.

The new computer-based NAVLE will be accompanied by a practice diskette for candidates to use to help them become familiar with how the examination is presented. For examination content, however, the same kinds of review materials used for the NBE and CCT should be helpful for the NAVLE.

NAVLE Update

(continued from page 1)

are being added every month.

How will the NAVLE differ from the NBE and CCT?

Like the NBE, the NAVLE will be a multiple choice examination. Unlike the NBE, however, the NAVLE will include graphic information (such as photographs and radiographs) in some of the questions. Like the CCT, many items on the NAVLE will use clinical case information (such as history and diagnostic results) as a basis for the question.

How much will the NAVLE cost?

The final cost has not been established, but efforts are being made to keep the cost of the NAVLE close to the combined cost of the NBE and CCT. The NAVLE will be a one day examination, meaning most candidates will not incur overnight lodging expenses. In addition, travel costs will likely be less in some cases, because the NAVLE will be offered

at multiple sites, and candidates who might be away on an externship, for example, will not have to travel back to their home state to take the examination. In addition, candidates will be able to take the NAVLE in jurisdictions that do not presently offer the NBE and CCT.

Will candidates have to be proficient in the use of a computer to do well on the NAVLE?

No. Taking the exam will involve no more than pressing a few keys to indicate responses to the questions. There will be no typing involved. Studies done by other professions that have moved to computer based testing have shown no differences in candidate performance attributable to prior experience with computers. The NBEC and the NBME will prepare and release a practice examination, which will allow candidates to experience first-hand how the computer based test will work.



No, this isn't the NBEC's new office, it's the North Dakota Capitol building, located about a mile north of our office. Built in the 1930's the Capitol was and still is the tallest building in the state.

Additional information on the NAVLE will be included in future issues of the *National Board Report* and on the NBEC's Web site: www.nbec.org.

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Address Correction Requested

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