

# National Board Report

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## Don't Call It Trivial Pursuit

Multiple-choice examinations like the NAVLE and the QE are often criticized as simply testing the ability of candidates to recall isolated facts. In the internet age, critics say, people can look up the facts themselves. What professionals need are higher-level skills like problem solving, critical thinking, and interpersonal communications. While multiple-choice examinations may not be very good at assessing communication skills, well-constructed multiple-choice examinations can do an excellent job of assessing higher-level skills, and are certainly not exercises in trivial pursuit.

The NAVLE and QE development process begins with item writer training, conducted by testing experts at the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME). Following the workshop, item writers receive their assignments, and then work individually to come up with items in their particular content area. Medical editors at the NBME work to ensure that the items meet established criteria for style and terminology. Item writers then meet together to review their newly-written items. I am always impressed by the dedication shown by our item writers, as they strive to ensure that each item is a clear and accurate assessment of the particular content area. Most NAVLE and QE items are now case-based, meaning that they include a brief clinical vignette, followed by several choices, all of which are supposed to be plausible. The candidate has to choose the best option, given the clinical information provided.

All testing organizations are going to have to evaluate their examination programs in light of new technologies that make information retrieval easier than it has ever been. However, licensed professionals cannot be expected to have to look everything up. A thorough understanding of medical vocabulary, a solid foundation in basic medical sciences, and broad-based clinical knowledge and problem-solving skills will continue to be essential to the public protection mission of licensing boards, even in the internet age.

John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD  
Executive Director

## January NBVME Meeting Preview

The NBVME will meet in Phoenix, Arizona January 28-29, 2011. The meeting will be chaired by Dr. Jay Hedrick. Persons interested in attending the January meeting should contact the NBVME office for details.

### NAVLE® Pool Review

On January 27, most NBVME members will participate with members of the Examination Development Advisory Board (EDAB) and a few former NBVME members in a review of several hundred items from the NAVLE item bank. Periodic pool reviews are done to ensure that items in the active item pool are suitable for use on NAVLE forms. Participants will work in five teams, by content area, and will be assisted by three editors from the NBME's test development department.

### Strategic Plan Update

At its July 2010 meeting, the NBVME approved a revised Strategic Plan. The board will devote time in January to review progress made on the various priority areas identified during the planning process. These include possible changes in the NAVLE scoring procedure, the NBVME's future relationship with the National Board

of Medical Examiners, the impact of the report from the North American Veterinary Medical Education Consortium (NAVMEC) on the NBVME's examination programs, NBVME outreach to veterinary schools, and possible development of new examinations to meet the needs of licensing boards and other constituents.

### Two-Step NAVLE

At the July meeting, the NBVME continued discussion of the idea of a two-step NAVLE, but tabled further consideration of the idea pending review of the final report from NAVMEC. The two-step NAVLE would include a basic science step 1, which could be taken by most candidates after two years of veterinary school, and a clinical science step 2 taken prior to graduation. The NBVME has gathered input on the two-step NAVLE from 23 basic science faculty members who participated in the August and September QE pool and item review meetings, and has received comments from other constituents. Anyone who wishes to offer thoughts on the idea of a two (or three) step licensing examination should contact the NBVME office prior to the January meeting.



Dr. Jay Hedrick

## NAVLE Candidate Survey Coming in January

In late January, the NBVME office plans to send an e-mail message to each fall NAVLE candidate, inviting them to participate in a brief on-line survey of their examination experi-

ence. The NBVME tested the survey following the April 2010 administration, and was pleased with the process and the results.

## ENHANCEMENTS TO NAVLE APPLICATION AND SCHEDULING PROCESS

Beginning with the fall 2010 testing window, NAVLE candidates have benefited from changes intended to prevent problems associated with applying for and making appointments to take the NAVLE.

The new NAVLE e-permit system allows candidates to access and print their own scheduling permits on-line. This has eliminated situations where candidates misplaced or never received the scheduling permit mailed to them by the NBVME office, and had to request a duplicate permit. In the past, when another permit could not be sent in time, these candidates had to pay a rescheduling fee and make a new testing appointment.

All NAVLE candidates are now required to provide an e-mail address on their application, and this has allowed the NBVME staff to send e-mail messages to candidates at various steps in the application and scheduling process, reminding them of deadlines and other things they need to do to take their examination.

The home page of the NBVME's web site now has a news and announcements section, where recent updates are posted. This allows visitors to the site to see information on deadlines, new application and scheduling procedures, and policy changes, without having to search for the information on multiple web pages.

## Visitors to North Dakota

In October, the NBVME office was pleased to host two sets of visitors. Joyceanne Fick, the NBVME's public member, and Janine Hawley, the NBVME's contact person at the NBME, visited the office October 13-15. The photo shows the two of them with Salem Sue, the world's largest Holstein cow, on a beautiful fall day in New Salem, ND about 30 miles west of Bismarck. (Note: they are standing near the front legs.)



Less than two weeks later, the NBVME Executive Committee (Drs. Hedrick, Tubbs, Franklin, and Blythe) made the trip to Bismarck. They met with the NBVME's accountant, visited several local banks and financial institutions, and met with the NBVME's new auditor. Drs. Hedrick and Tubbs were able to see the North Dakota badlands before leaving for home, right before the first significant snow of the season.

## What Is the NBVME?

### Third in a series

One of the consistent findings from the NBVME's licensing board outreach visits over the past two years was a relative lack of understanding on the part of licensing board members of what the NBVME is and what it does. The board decided to offer a series of brief articles in the newsletter dealing with this topic. A detailed history of the NBVME appeared in a 17-part series in the *National Board Report* from May 1996 through November 2000.

The NBVME office has been in Bismarck, North Dakota since January 1997. Five people work in the office. John Boyce, Anita Casey-Reed, Debbie Larson, and Bridget Whittey are full-time employees, and Tonee VanderVliet works part time for the

NBVME and part time for the North Dakota Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.

Major duties of NBVME staff include receiving and processing NAVLE applications and fees, approving candidates and reporting NAVLE scores on behalf of 21 state licensing boards, administering the Qualifying Examination and the Veterinary Clinical Skills Assessment, reviewing and approving requests for test accommodations, maintaining the NBVME's web site, corresponding with candidates and other constituents, reporting examination score statistics to veterinary schools, and making meeting arrangements for the NBVME, item writers and reviewers, and other groups.

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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*

## Fall NAVLE and QE Item and Pool Review Meetings

NAVLE item writers met at the NBME office in Philadelphia November 9-11. This year, in addition to meeting for two days to review newly-written items, nearly all of the item writers came in a day early to participate in a review of items from the NAVLE item bank. This review ensures that items in the active item pool are appropriate

for use on examination forms. Approximately 800 pool items were reviewed by 16 participants on November 9. The next day, three additional item writers joined the group to review newly-written items. Items that were judged to be acceptable were added to the NAVLE item bank.

Similar QE pool and item review meetings were held at the NBME September 28-30, involving 11 of the 12 2010 QE item writers. New NAVLE and QE items approved at the fall review meetings will be used for the first time on examination forms developed for the 2011-2012 testing cycles.



**2010 NAVLE Item Writers.** *Seated:* Elizabeth Snead, Nadine Hackman, Henry Yoo, Amanda House, and Susan Little. *Standing:* Reid Groman, Alan Corber, Alex Gallagher, Doug Aspros, Fernando Marqués, John Angelos, Christa Irwin, Dale Boyle, Rodney Auffet, Vicki Thayer, Bob Larson, and Beth Boynton. *Not pictured:* Tom Graham and Anthony Nanton.

## NBVME Member Profile: Dr. Jay Hedrick

Since its inception in 1996, the *National Board Report* has consistently featured articles on new board members, as soon as possible after their appointment to the NBVME. Unfortunately, we somehow skipped Dr. Jay Hedrick, who happens to be NBVME Chair for 2010-2011. We regret this oversight, and offer the following information on him, albeit two years late.

Dr. Hedrick is a 1972 graduate of Kansas State University. After practicing in Montana and western Nebraska, he returned to Kansas to establish the Bluestem Animal Clinic in 1978 in El Dorado. He sold that practice in 2003, and is presently working part-time as a relief veterinarian in the El Dorado area, when he isn't hunting or fishing.

Dr. Hedrick served as a member of the Kansas Board of Veterinary Examiners for eight years, and became involved with the American Association of Veterinary State Boards, serving as a board member, treasurer, and president of AAVSB. The AAVSB Delegate Assembly elected him to the NBVME in 2008.



## NBVME Examination Updates

### NAVLE®

The fall 2010 testing window for the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) opened Monday, November 15 and runs through Saturday, December 11. The NBVME office processed and submitted 3,789 candidate eligibility files for the fall examination.

Applications for the April 11-23, 2011 testing window will be available in mid-December, and the application deadline for new candidates is January 3. Scores from the fall testing window will be reported in mid-January. Candidates who do not pass will be able to submit applications for the April window until February 15.

NAVLE Self-Assessments, consisting of 200 items formatted like the actual examination, are available for purchase on the NBVME's web site. There are now three forms of the assessment available in English (one new form

was added this fall), and two in French. Each assessment is \$50. Assessments include a diagnostic report, and a prediction of future NAVLE performance based on the candidate's performance on the assessment.

### Qualifying Examination

The NBVME's Qualifying Examination (QE) is a 300-item web-based basic science examination used as the step three requirement of the Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence (PAVE). A total of 211 PAVE candidates took the QE at 11 locations on September 16. The failure rate for the 176 first time test takers was 24.4%.

The NBVME has received 202 applications from PAVE candidates for the January 20, 2011 QE administration. Iowa State University and Tuskegee University plan to administer the QE to their third year students in January.

The QE will be administered again on May 12, 2011.

### 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 will be January 8-9, 2011 at Cedar Valley College in Dallas, Texas. Six candidates are scheduled to take the VCSA in January.

### Species Specific Examinations

The NBVME offers companion animal and equine species specific examinations for use by licensing boards. There are two forms of each examination, each consisting of 100 multiple-choice items taken from the NAVLE item bank. Each form has its own recommended criterion-referenced passing point. Boards interested in the species specific examinations should contact the NBVME office.