

Veterinary Excellence through Specialisation

The History of the EBVS

Prof. Stefano Romagnoli, President
Dept of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, University of Padova, Italy

Veterinary Specialist Diplomas have been available in many European countries since the 1960's. However, such an early recognition of the importance of Veterinary Specialisation actually delayed the concept of the European Veterinary Specialist. In fact, in those European countries where veterinary specialisation was developing it was felt that the national system was functioning properly and therefore there was no need for a broader European structure. In 1978 the European Commission established the Advisory Committee on Veterinary Training (ACVT) approved the establishment of EBVS but never implemented a supervising body (with ACVT representation). Such a body was developed by the profession itself when, in 1996, seven European Specialist Colleges (ECVAA, ECVD, ECVDI, ECVIM, ECVN, ECVO and ECVS representing specialists in anaesthesia/analgesia, dermatology, diagnostic imaging, internal medicine, ophthalmology and surgery, respectively) established the umbrella-type organisation called EBVS. Over the last 14 years the number of European Specialist Veterinary Colleges has grown to 23. Each College depends on the EBVS which has the function to define standards and criteria for monitoring the quality of College diplomates. Although the term European Veterinary Specialist still does not have full legal recognition, national specialist qualifications are being phased out in many countries due to the inherent higher quality of EBVS specialist qualifications.



RE-EVALUATION: Why should a Specialist's performance be checked every 5 years?

Jens Arnbjerg, Treasurer

European Specialists must be evaluated every 5 years because this is the only way the organisation can be sure that Diplomates are active and updated in their field. Consumers expect specialists to be not only excellent in their field at the time of initial examination and certification but who also to have current updated knowledge and expertise. This is a major difference between a PhD and a Diplomate, i.e. the former is a researcher who at the time of thesis defence could demonstrate a deep knowledge in a limited area within a speciality; the Diplomate instead, has a broader appreciation of the speciality together with considerable practical expertise on a higher level in the specific area of veterinary medicine, and is constantly updating her/his knowledge at regular intervals.

Re-evaluation is performed by the Credential Committee of the college every 5 years to ensure that the Diplomate is actively working in the speciality for more than 20 hours a week and has demonstrated activity in different ways of practicing the speciality (taking part of updating education, meetings, publishing papers, teaching residents etc) over the last 5-year period. In order to fulfil re-evaluation requirements, Diplomates must reach a 100-point score based on attending (and presenting posters/papers/seminars) continuing education meetings, publishing papers, teaching residents, serving on College Committees or writing College Examination questions (an item which comes useful whenever reaching the 100-point score is difficult, as exam questions must be thoroughly documented with scientific literature and therefore require a lot of reading and updating).

If for some reason (temporary leave, illness, maternal leave or loss of employment), a Diplomate is not active and cannot fulfil her/his College requirements for the re-accreditation, that Diplomate is registered as Non-Practicing. The credential committee will register the Diplomate as practicing again, when reason/s is/are removed and the Diplomate can demonstrate that s/he is active again.

Veterinary Excellence through Specialisation

DID YOU KNOW.....

Did you know how many veterinary specialists are there in Europe - Currently there are more than 2600 diplomates in the various European Colleges

College	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
ECVAA	13	51	59	59	63	68	80	79	83	89	89*	99	105
ECVD	14	27	30	29	30	34	34*	40	47	55	59	62	64
ECVDI	33	45	53	58	66	78	79	96	100	105	113	123	130
ECVIM-CA	25	68	85	102	111	121	129	143	154	167	185	210	229
ECVN	24	39	39	42	43	44	48	56	64	67	75	90	97
ECAMS	8	10	15	17	18	22	21	26	24	24	25	29	29
ECVO	25	32	32	32	41	41	40	48	50	55	58	63	64
ECVS	125	146	131	161	180	197	221	241	264	287	311	339	368
ECVP		142	226	224	231	225	214	257	297	254	276	296	281
ECVPT		13	12	13	45	57	56	62	63	57	59	59	59
EVDC		9	12	14	14	15	16	16	20	21	21	24	27
ECAR				35	70	145	171	182	188	169	185	187	191
ECVCN				17	17	24	34	34	36	35	36	37	37
ECLAM					7	19	35	73	74	77	80	83	83
ECVPH						34	64	138	187	254	260	254	244
ECEIM							15	24	40	57	63	71	70
ECVBM-CA							6	6	6	14	16	24	24
ECVCP								37	43	55	65	68	78
ECBHM								21	64	101	114	186	192
EVPC								121	125	132	168	171	170
ECPHM									13	22	48	63	81
ECPVS													6
ECSRHM													11
TOTAL	267	582	694	803	936	1124	1263	1700	1936	1971	2306	2538	2640

Progressive composition (n° of specialists) for each of the 23 Specialist Colleges present in Europe from 1996 until December 2008. From the top the following European Colleges are indicated with specific acronyms: Anesthesia and Analgesia, Dermatology, Diagnostic Imaging, Internal Medicine (companion animals), Neurology, Avian Medicina and Surgery, Ophtalmology, Surgery, Pathology, Pharmaco-Toxicology, Dentistry, Animal Reproduction, Comparative Nutrition, Laboratory Animal Medicine, Public Health, Equine Internal Medicine, Behaviour (companion animals), Clinical Pathology, Bovine Health and Production, Parasitology, Swine Health and Production, Poultry Veterinary Science, Small Ruminant Health and Production. For the two colleges of Poultry Veterinary Science and Small Ruminant Health and Production (which were provisionally recognized in 2008) the De Facto procedure is still open, which means that those veterinarians who have sufficient qualifications based on their curriculum may apply to be recognized as Diplomates without having to take the exam.

Veterinary Excellence through Specialisation



2010 Executive Committee (left to right)

Stefano Romagnoli, President (ECAR)
Frank Gasthuys, Past-President (ECVAA)
Neil Forbes, Vice-President (ECZM)
Jens Arnbjerg, Treasurer (ECVDI)
Peter O'Brien, Secretary (ECVCP)

Questions and Answers

What is the difference between a European Society covering a specific field of veterinary medicine and a European College?

A clear distinction exists between European Societies and European Colleges. The Societies are the interest groups that are open to anyone interested, while Colleges are only open to proven specialists in their discipline. Becoming a member of a European College (or a "Diplomate") requires having gone through an intensive period of training supervised by a Diplomate, after which candidates must pass an examination, and then have to re-credential themselves every 5 years.

When I pass my College examination and become a Diplomate, do I have to deal with EBVS or just with my College?
Diplomates only deal with each respective College. The EBVS maintains a register of specialists. Such a register is officially recognized by the European Union, and can be freely accessed at www.ebvs.org.

Does my European Specialist Diploma title have a legal value?

Despite the fact that there is no legal protection for the title of specialist and EBVS has no monopoly on specialization, it is important to realize that the competent authority of an

EU country cannot discriminate against other EU nationals, if they have a specialist qualification that is of equal or even higher standard than their own. The rights of EU citizens to establish themselves or to provide services anywhere in the EU are fundamental principles of EU law. The Council Directive 89/48/EEC provides a general system for the recognition of higher-education diplomas. The only indirect way of providing some form of legal protection for an EBVS specialist is by using the EBVS logo (Figure n° 3). The EBVS is the owner of this logo and permission to use it has to be formally asked using a form available on the EBVS web site. The use of this logo is only allowed to diplomates which are registered in the EBVS register as fully active specialists.



The European Veterinary Specialist Logo is a trademark registered by the Office of Harmonization in the Internal Market and published in the Community Trade Marks Bulletin No 054/1999, page 605, and owned by the EBVS.

The fact that the EBVS specialist titles are of a very high standard makes it impossible for any European country to refuse accepting these titles. Currently diplomate qualifications awarded by European colleges can be used in at least 13 European countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom) and are already officially recognised in several of these countries. On a number of occasions a diplomate from one of the European Colleges has successfully appealed in court a decision by the competent national authority which was of the opinion that a diplomate title from one of the European Colleges could not be used. In Germany this had led to the situation that the national authority now allows European Diplomates to use their titles officially. If, however, these diplomates wish to receive the German national specialist qualification then they have to apply on an individual basis to the Bundestierärztekammer (National Veterinary Chapter of Germany).

Veterinary Excellence through Specialisation

The European Coordinating Committee of Veterinary Training: pro or contra

Frank Gasthuys, Past-President

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE, founded in 1975) and the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE, founded in 1988) have a long positive history of sharing information and ideas. With the promulgation of the European Directives 1026, 1027 and 1028 in 1978, EAEVE was officially given a mandate by the European Commission (EC) to assess the quality of teaching of Veterinary Medicine in Europe, a duty to be fulfilled with the help of FVE. Such an important decision was taken by the the Advisory Committee on Veterinary Training (ACVT), an advisory committee to the EC which played a key role on the development of the veterinary profession in Europe until it was disbanded by the EC in the year 2000. Because of the political importance of ACVT (due to the presence of members of the European Commission in it), both EAEVE and FVE tried to re-establish a body of similar relevance and breadth in the european panorama. Initially, a committee called Joint Policy Committee (JPC) was formed with members of academia (EAEVE) and practice (FVE). Later, as the role of specialists in the profession was becoming increasingly important, EBVS was contacted and the 3 organisations established in 2004 a new committee named the European Coordination Committee for Veterinary Training (ECCVT). Three different parties are involved in this committee.

- The EBVS (www.ebvs.org/) who is responsible for the recognition and supervision of new speciality colleges and the maintenance a register of European veterinary specialists. More over, the EBVS assures the quality by monitoring the colleges and promotes the enhanced utilisation and availability of speciality services to the public and the veterinary profession. Up to now, 23 colleges with more than 2600 Diplomates are active in the EBVS. Prof. S. Romagnoli from Padua, Italy, is the president of the EBVS; the secretary is based in Brussels.
- The FVE (<http://www.fve.org/>) aims to unite the European veterinary profession for the benefit of animal health, animal welfare and public health and strives to maintain a structure to assemble opinions from all members of the European veterinary body and to formulate these opinions into one corporate voice. Forty six national organisations spread over 38 countries are member of the FVE. The 4 sections are the European Association of State Veterinary officers (EASVO), the European Veterinarians in Education, Research and Industry (EVERI), the Union of European Veterinary Hygienists (UEVH) and the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners (UEVP). Dr. W. Winding from Austria is the president of the FVE which is housed also in Brussels.
- The EAEVE (<http://www.eaeve.org/>) has a mission to support, promote and develop veterinary education in Europe in all its aspects. At present, 98 faculties of veterinary medicine spread across 32 countries are members of this EAEVE. The primary objective is to monitor the harmonization of the minimum standards set down in the study program for veterinary surgeons (European Union Directive 2005/36; European visitation and accreditation programs). Other objectives are to reinforce cooperation between member establishments and to act as a forum for discussion in order to improve and harmonize veterinary education. The administrative centre of the EAEVE is located in Vienna, Austria with Prof. M. Wanner from Zürich as president.

To benefit the progress of the veterinary profession and to ensure a comparably high standard of pre- and postgraduate veterinary training, the ECCVT assist the 3 founding organisations to coordinate their policies on veterinary training whereby all matters relating to training and recognition of the professional are dealt with. During the meetings, not only information about the content, level, training methods is exchanged but the principles of quality control are discussed in depth. Recommendations for definitions and harmonisation of final attainment levels for knowledge and skill in veterinary training together with suggestions for the operation of the evaluation system were important items on the agenda.

Since communication with the authorities in the EU is not an easy task, the ECCVT encourages all parties that are involved in the veterinary medicine to communicate with one voice. This principle was the basis for a successful meet

(Continued on page 5)

Veterinary Excellence through Specialisation

(Continued from page 4)

ing with different members of the European Parliament in October 2008, where problems encountered in the FVE, EAEVE and EBVS were discussed in depth. As one founder member of a college and former president of the EBVS, I am convinced that a good communication with the sharing of all relevant information between the 3 parties of the ECCVT can only help to obtain a legal ground for the veterinary specialisation in Europe. However, we must be realistic: it will be a long way ...

Behind the Scenes

Sharon Green, Administrative Assistant

The EBVS secretariat acts as a central information repository, thereby ensuring continuity with each EBVS Executive Committee and also acting as a link between EBVS members, the EBVS Executive Committee, members of the profession and the general public. The office is staffed on a part-time basis by Sharon Green (since 1999) and Angela Richens (since 2008).

In order to fulfil the goal of the EBVS to further veterinary specialisation within Europe, administration has to take place behind the scenes. The office tasks are varied and include arranging meetings and flights, drafting letters and documents, paying expenses and monitoring finances, administering the forums and website according to the wishes of the EBVS, administering College Annual Reports, administering the applications of applying Colleges, monitoring any item or subject that may have been overlooked by the EBVS and on a day-to-day basis answering e-mails and telephone enquiries from the public, the EBVS and EBVS Diplomates. In any one year we receive approximately 5000 e-mails and 100 phone calls.

The peak period of work is from mid-December, with the start of College Annual Report submissions, to mid-May, with the aftermath of AGM administration. In addition, there are peak periods before and after the three or four Executive Committee meetings that are held each year.