

A brief history of the Australian Veterinary Association

There were few veterinary surgeons in the self-governing colonies of Australia before Federation but they tried to form professional bodies, such as the Australian Veterinary Medical Association in 1880, the Royal Veterinary Graduates Society (MRCVS) in 1891, and the New South Wales Veterinary Association in 1894. However, because of poor communications, a waning interest and the four years of World War I, moves to form a national body were delayed.

The inaugural meeting responsible for the formation of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) was held at the School of Veterinary Science, University of Melbourne, on 12 January 1921. Professor JD Stewart was elected president with Professor HA Woodruff as vice-president and Mr Max Henry as honorary secretary. The meeting also elected a Council of 16 members as the governing body with four representatives from each of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. The object of the Association stated in the original meeting was the promotion and advancement of veterinary science and allied sciences and the maintenance of the honour and interest of the veterinary profession. Membership was confined to those holding a degree or diploma approved on the recommendation of the Council of the AVA. The activities of the AVA are governed by the Memorandum and Articles of Association, which have been amended periodically until today in order to adjust to the increase in membership and the interest of the members.

The *Australian Veterinary Journal* was first published in March 1925, with Max Henry as Honorary Editor. The Journal has been published continuously ever since then and has grown in quality and range with the profession.

In 1925, the constitution was amended and the Association was registered as a company, providing for the affiliation of State Associations as Divisions of the AVA. A Code of Ethics (now called a Code of Professional Behaviour) was first adopted in 1928 and all members undertook to abide by the code when applying for membership.

Groups of members with special interests were formed in the early 1960s. In 1977, these groups were admitted as formal special interest groups (SIG) of the AVA. Twenty-two SIGs having a minimum of 50 members now operate within the national Association.

Most of the legislation dealing with farm livestock and other animals and with veterinarians, drugs and poisons, and public health is State law, so the Divisions in each State deal with the State government departments and veterinary boards as well as with local issues.

The AVA has conducted annual general meetings since its inception. These meetings are now the central function of a national conference, which is held in the different capital cities and other major venues over a period of a week each autumn.

Reference

Sutherland AK. 75 years – a retrospective look at the AVA. *Aust Vet J* 1996;74: 36.

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