Rehabilitive Penalty: Apology

Mr PN Khambula, an animal health technician (AHT), was found guilty of unprofessional conduct on 14 October 2015. As part of the ruling against him, he had to write an article for publication in the Newsletter on what an animal health technician is allowed to do in terms of the Act and the Rules for AHTs. This is his article, as approved by the Inquiry Body.

“It is with deep regret that in execution of my duties as an AHT I found myself trampling upon the rules governing the para-veterinary profession of animal health technician.

This is after a person called me to attend to a sick dog, upon my arrival the animal was unable to give birth. Despite explaining my scope of work and referred her to a local private vet she put the dog down and left it with me to help it. As a result of that I did what I was not suppose to have done, something which I regret so much. Indeed, the decision and action I took was not deliberate, but being of service to the person and animal in that awkward situation which I found myself in.

I have learned a lesson out of this, therefore I would like to appeal to my fellow colleagues to familiarise themselves with the Veterinary and Para-veterinary Professions Act 1982 (Act no 19 of 1982) and its regulations in particular pertaining to the animal health technicians

2. SERVICES PERTAINING TO AHTS

Surveillance and inspection of livestock, poultry, and game and report all diseases listed by the Office International des Epizootics in disease control areas, at livestock auctions, sales and during routine farm visits and inspections.

• Implementation of vaccination programmes to prevent control animal diseases to strive for disease free animal population as well as administering vaccines

• Implementation of parasite control programmes to prevent and control animal parasites striving for a disease free animal population

• Carry out abattoir inspections and report in writing to the VPH Directorate of the national and provincial departments of agriculture about National Standards

• Carry out meat inspections and other duties under relevant abattoir if authorised by the Provincial Executive Officer

• Perform delegate duties pertaining to regulated animal diseases, listed under relevant animal disease control legislation, including various eradication schemes; Bucellosis eradication scheme, taking samples for diagnosis by a veterinarian of brucellosis in animals and testing of animals for tuberculosis by means of intradermal tuberculin test provided the AHT passed a course approved by the department of agriculture

• Provide extension services - training and education to farmers, community, members and their children to protect and promote the health and well being of animals

• Collection, capturing and evaluation of data and compiling of reports in epidemiological and research projects

• Collection of samples to investigate reproductive and fertility problems in livestock

• Collection of samples, blood smears, brain smears, impression smears, skin and wool scrapings, faecal samples, but excluding collection of samples by biopsy

• Examination and analysis of samples - blood smears, skin and wool scrapings, urine samples, faecal samples and basic clinical chemistry

• Perform basic post mortem examination and collection and submission of samples for microbiological, histopathological, toxicological, and serological investigation

• Perform artificial insemination provided that the AHT is registered as inseminator with the register of animal improvement in terms of the Animal Improvement Act,1 998(Act No 62 of 1998)

• Render primary animal health care services to poor communities
• Perform any other duties authorised by other legislation
• An AHT may assist a veterinary professional when the veterinary professional performs surgery outside theatre environment or under field conditions

3 PROCEDURES PERFORMED ON ANIMALS

The AHT may perform the following procedures on animals without veterinary supervision

• Open castration of cattle under 3 (three) months, sheep and goats under (two) months, and pigs up to 7(seven) days
• Dehorning of immature animals under 4 (four) months
• Tail docking of pigs up to 7 (seven) days, sheep by open method under 2 (two) months and elastrator method under 6 (six) weeks
• Feet trimming
• Branding

The AHT may perform procedures on animals on instruction and supervision of a registered person to practise a veterinary profession including, but not limited to the following

• lancing of abscesses
• treatment of septic wounds
• administration of injections and medicines

4. EXECUTION OF SERVICES

The Animal Health Technician should perform services referred to above while or during his employment with the state or on behalf of a person registered to practise veterinary profession. He should not prevent any other person registered to practise a veterinary or para-veterinary profession from carrying out procedures pertaining to his profession.

5. EMERGENCY TREATMENT

During an emergency, the AHT may render services which fall within his scope of training and experience as an AHT which are essential to save lives or relieve suffering in animals, provided that a report is made available to the state veterinarian or private veterinarian as soon as possible so that further treatment of such animal is entrusted to either state veterinarian or private veterinarian registered to practise the veterinary profession.

6. COURSE OF CONDUCT FOR AHTS

1. A person practising the para-veterinary profession of Animal Health Technician should base his personal and professional conduct on that;

   a) he is a member of a learned and honourable profession and he is required to act at all times in a way that would maintain and promote the prestige, honour, dignity, and interest of a profession and of the persons by whom it is practised

   b) he is morally obliged to serve the public to the best of his ability by maintaining at all times the highest standard of animal health care and professional conduct

   c) he should work in co operation with colleagues and members of other professions in a responsible and professional manner
d) he should not allow himself to be exploited in a way which may be harmful to an animal, public or profession

2. An animal health technician should;

a) execute tasks understandingly and faithfully and should refuse to participate in any unethical behaviour or procedure

b) keep himself informed of all laws which affect him in practising his profession

c) be familiar with the ethical rules applicable to animal health technicians and should promote them at all times

d) regard any information acquired during his employment as confidential and should refrain from divulging such information to any person except his employer

e) refrain from expressing any criticism in public through which the reputation, status or practise of colleagues in practise could be undermined or injured, or through which a reflection could be cast on the professionalism skill, methods of conduct of such colleagues

f) keep at all times a detailed and accurate record of information and procedures performed by him for at least three years

3. All animal health technicians are working for the same good cause and they should therefore co-operate with each other and the authorities concerned to promote that cause.

4. An animal health technician should use methods which are in compliance with the applicable minimum Good Laboratory Practise Code and other standards as determined from time to time.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere apology for the pain, suffering and hurt caused to the animal and original owner. I have learned a lesson out of this. I promise this will never happen again and I will uphold highest standards of animal health care and professional conduct by refraining from or refusing to take part in any unethical behaviour or procedure.”