Colleagues

When you read my previous message in December 2016 the country had not had sufficient rains to relieve us from the severe droughts. We are also still experiencing severe droughts in the Western Cape Province and in other parts of the country, which we hope will be relieved by the winter rains. We are aware of the impact of the drought on farmers and their animals and the consequences thereof for veterinary services in the country. Council is also cognisant of the highly volatile social-, economic- and financial circumstances in the country but also internationally. It is against this backdrop that we discussed the strategic goals for the Council and the veterinary and para-veterinary professions in February 2017. We identified three main goals which are:

- Transformation of the veterinary professions;
- Improvement of communication at all levels; and
- Restructuring of the Council.

These goals were identified as we realised that the veterinary team and Council both need to remain relevant in a constantly fast-changing environment, we need to be prepared for eventualities and our members must be empowered to adapt fast to changing circumstances.

Some of the challenges in achieving these goals for the veterinary and para veterinary professions were identified as follows:

- Basic education in SA is poor;
- Poverty and mal-nutrition cannot be alleviated without education;
- Animal- and human welfare must be addressed as one engagement- and extension service;
- Livestock farming is not seen as a career by the youth;
- Veterinary and para-veterinary professions are fragmented, divided and apathetic;
- There are huge gaps in business training for veterinary professionals;
The veterinary profession is a high stress profession;

Most people in SA do not have access to veterinary services;

The veterinary professions need to keep abreast of technological advances;

No accountability: politicians and policy makers do not follow their own rules; and

Council is elected and designated on an all-in and all-out basis.

These challenges are but a few of those identified and the details and the goals as discussed by Council can be viewed at this link.

**Please comment on the strategic plan and the goals.** We intend to implement most of these goals within our term of office and will give the implementation plan our attention within the next few months.

We will host our second annual meeting on **Thursday, 8 June 2017** which will in future be known as the **Annual Council Indaba**. An invitation and programme will be sent to all registered members. We will in the first session discuss the strategic goals and will explain what Council does for you, our colleagues. In the second session, an expert will present transformation; and in the same session we will deal with the dynamics of the roles of the veterinary and para-veterinary professions with practical examples, including how to obtain evidence for meat inspection investigations. We will finally provide a session dedicated to questions. Much thought went into the compilation of the programme as Council resolved that the topics had to be relevant for our colleagues to attend. We will make certain that you find this a valuable experience. Please book your seats.

On 28 March 2017, attorneys Adams and Adams, on behalf of Council and the South African Veterinary Association [SAVA], wrote to the Minister of Environmental Affairs to obtain certainty regarding the applicability of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004 (“NEMBA”) on registered veterinary professionals rendering veterinary services in terms of the Veterinary and Para Veterinary Professions Act, Act 19 of 1982 and, if necessary, to seek a limited exemption for veterinarians from certain provisions of NEMBA i.e. permits to treat Threatened or Protected Species [TOPS]. We will keep you up to date regarding the outcome of this process.

We are as concerned as our members having read the latest amendments to Act 101 of 1965 and the recently published regulations. We immediately requested a meeting with the Director General of the Department of Health [DoH] and the Registrar of Medicines to discuss the amendments to Act 101 of 1965, the recently published regulations and the discrepancies in the Act and regulations as well as proposals regarding dispensing requirements for veterinarians. Council discussed this matter at length at its meeting held on 14 & 15 March 2017 and deliberated on the approach that the veterinary profession should be taking. Our approach is to retain the dispensing rights for veterinarians however we recognised the fact that we should prove that we have standards in place to ensure that veterinarians are trained and licensed to dispense. We will report to you on further developments.

Compulsory Veterinary Community Service [CCS] entered the second year of implementation and a lot of
the initial teething problems were addressed. There are still complaints regarding a lack of resources, a lack of mentorship, and a lack of consistency and forward planning. The Council serves on the CCS Forum and we will continue to bring all reported deficiencies to the attention of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Primary Animal Health Care [PAHC] is promoted to new graduates as the main purpose of CCS and is mainly dependent on education- and human resources and less on medicines and equipment. Please also familiarise yourself with remunerative work outside the scope of CCS published elsewhere in the forthcoming Newsletter.

Animal health technicians [AHTs] play an important role in the animal health sector (both in public-[government] and in private sectors). AHTs fulfil a critical role as they are responsible for PAHC and extension to resource poor communities and they are mainly responsible for animal health related duties [disease surveillance] under the Animal Diseases Act, Act 35 of 1984. I request that specifically veterinarians read the article in the forthcoming Newsletter to acquaint themselves on what services AHTs are able to render.

During our report to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in October 2016 we highlighted the challenges regarding access to critical vaccines and we have subsequently been advised that vaccines are available. The main reason for the lack of vaccines appeared to relate to supply chain management and management of accounts.

We will soon enter the second round of routine inspections. It is satisfying to report that most facilities inspected in 2016 to date comply and that only minor adjustments need to be made at some practices. We trust that principals will gain from these inspections. Please read further about the feedback we received from the inspectors and principals of facilities, as well as the costs structures in the forthcoming Newsletter.

The Continued Professional Development [CPD] audit for 2017 will be concluded on 31 March 2017. Members had one year in which to submit proof of their twenty structured CPD points and to provide written confirmation of their forty unstructured CPD points. Members could also choose the relevant cycle for example, 2012-2015 or 2015-2018 for which they wanted to be evaluated. I have received a report from the Registrar that by 31 March 2017 more than two hundred and forty-two veterinarians out of the three hundred and twenty-nine veterinarians selected responded to the emails and SMSs sent to the randomly selected members. Unfortunately, those members who did not respond in time will now have to explain why they did not submit proof of the required CPD points within the year granted to them. The next random selection audit will commence and members [both veterinary and para-veterinary professionals] who have been selected will soon receive notification that they have one year in which to submit proof of CPD compliance.

Please contact any of your Councillors should you wish to discuss matters with us. You will find our contact details published in every Newsletter. Please remember to provide the administration with your latest contact details.

Looking forward to reading your responses and meeting you at our events.
Kind regards

Clive Marwick

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