

8 October 2024

## **Feedback on 2026 Investment Advice to TEC for the Veterinary Services and Animal Care Industry**

Tēnā koe Sarah,

Thank you for sharing the draft 2026 Investment Advice for the Veterinary Services and Animal Care Industry. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on behalf of the New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA). The draft touches on some key issues affecting our profession, and we would like to contribute further insights, particularly regarding the skills versus workforce shortage discussion.

It's important to clarify that while there is ongoing discourse about workforce shortages, our primary concern lies with the shortage of skilled professionals rather than simply a lack of personnel. The size of our veterinary graduating class will increase to 175 students annually, with this cohort expected to complete their studies in 2026. This increase is a step in the right direction, but the core challenge persists—most of these graduates are not adequately prepared for the complexities of rural and large animal practice, particularly in underserved regions without mentorship and support.

While the complexities faced by the Veterinarian's are outside the scope of this industry qualification review, what is significant is the identical need for qualified, skilled allied professionals, a need that has been exacerbated by the closure of the Bachelor of Veterinary Technology degree. The loss of this qualification has had an impact on the industry, as the graduates from this program were extensively trained in not only companion and production animal veterinary medicine but also equine, wildlife and leadership. Without skilled/highly-skilled graduates, veterinary practices across the country are facing an acute shortage of highly trained veterinary technicians/nurses and allied professionals, which is further straining our veterinary workforce.

While workplace training is undeniably valuable, the importance of extramural or on-campus courses cannot be overstated. These structured learning environments offer students a consistent, gold-standard education, ensuring they gain exposure to the full spectrum of skills and knowledge required in veterinary practice. Such courses also provide the opportunity to practice and refine critical skills that may not be encountered in their specific workplace, thereby broadening their expertise and ensuring a more comprehensive preparation for their professional careers.

Additionally, it's vital to align workforce development with the emerging needs in animal care, particularly in terms of technical expertise and leadership within clinics. As identified in the Boehringer Ingelheim report, the sector urgently requires more trained managers and supervisors with strong leadership skills to foster positive working environments. Ensuring that our workforce not only grows but also develops robust leadership will be critical in addressing retention challenges and improving the overall wellbeing of veterinary teams. We would seek clarification regarding the focus of the Emerging Leadership microcredential. Specifically, we are interested in whether this course could be offered with a focus on the leadership skills required within veterinary practice. At present, it appears that the microcredential is offered exclusively through Dairy Training, with a primary emphasis on leadership in a dairy farming context. While valuable, this does not fully meet the specific leadership needs of veterinary clinics. Given the unique challenges faced by veterinary teams, particularly in managing high workloads, fostering team cohesion, seasonal and casual workforce and navigating client relations, a course tailored to veterinary practice leadership would be far more beneficial to our industry.

We acknowledge the importance of detailed, targeted investment in vocational education and training (VET) for veterinary services. However, we encourage an approach that places a stronger emphasis on

skills development and the cultivation of professionals equipped to meet the evolving demands of our sector. This will require revisiting the current suite of qualifications and ensuring that both veterinary and allied health education tracks are sufficiently supported.

We look forward to continued collaboration with Muka Tangata and other stakeholders to shape a workforce that is not only larger but more skilled and resilient.

Nāku iti noa, nā,



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Chief Executive Officer  
New Zealand Veterinary Association Te Pae Kīrehe