

SVA COMMITTEE REPORT 2021/2022

1. SVA Committee

The elected members of the Executive Committee for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021 were:

President	Dr Timothy Chua
Vice – President	Dr Cathy Chan
Hon Secretary	Dr Teo Boon Han
Hon Treasurer	Dr Kelvin Lim
Hon Editor	Dr Chow Hao Ting
Committee Member	Dr Kim Koh
Committee Member	Dr Rockey Fong
Committee Member	Dr Patrick Maguire
Honorary Auditor	Dr Han Zi Yang
Honorary Auditor	Dr Eric Yeoh
SVA Council Member	Dr Charlene J Fernandez

2. Membership

As of 31 December 2021, the standing membership of SVA is as follows:

Honorary	5
Ordinary	252
Senior Ordinary	13
Associate	14
Total	284

This total includes **45 new members** admitted this term.

3. Events and Activities of the Year

a. Continuing Professional Education (CPE)

The COVID-19 situation in the first quarter of 2020 was a global pandemic which affected countries and businesses throughout the world. Many countries effected lockdowns to curb the local transmission of the disease, affecting many businesses. In Singapore, a Circuit Breaker came into force on 7 April 2020, which saw the closure of many businesses except for those deemed essential.

The COVID-19 situation saw many in-person events, including Continuing Professional Education events, closed. To assist SVA Members to meet the CPE points required for licence renewal during this period of time, SVA worked with the regulators to endorse selected virtual events so that the CPE points accrued from these events could be considered under the Structured CPE requirements. The Veterinary Education platform was also made available to SVA members in 2020, and the fees paid were accrued in 2021.

b. Statements

I. Statement against Pet Cloning

In October 2021, the SVA released a statement on pet cloning and how it does not improve animal welfare, animal health nor does it have any real social value in nurturing

the human-animal bond. The SVA is strongly opposed for the cloning of any companion animal for this purpose. The reasons are outlined as follows:

- i. The promise of an exact replica of a pet obtained via pet cloning is false
- ii. Animals used by cloning facilities are bred and kept for the sole purpose of being surrogates
- iii. Many other animals are in need of a home

II. Online Petition and Falsehoods Involving the Veterinary Profession

In February 2022, the SVA released a statement in response to an online petition and falsehoods involving the veterinary profession in Singapore. The notion that veterinarians are an unregulated profession in Singapore is false.

As lead advocates for animal health and welfare, the veterinary profession remains one of the most regulated in the animal and pet industry. In general for Singapore, veterinary degrees from veterinary schools fully accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) or the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) are acceptable qualifications for obtaining a veterinary licence. These veterinary medical programmes are rigorous, have a duration of at least 5 years, and are internationally renowned.

Pet owners with any grievances and cases of suspected professional misconduct or negligence involving the veterinary profession should report the cases to the regulators promptly. Investigations must be conducted impartially and thoroughly, through the proper channels. Any acts that may prejudice ongoing investigations or spreading of falsehoods must be avoided as it impedes the investigative and regulatory process.

General disparaging sweeping statements and falsehoods against the veterinary profession is unnecessary and a disservice to veterinary professionals who have dedicated their lives to safeguarding animal health and welfare.

III. Other Matters

The SVA has also received several queries on its opinion and position on various matters related to the practice of veterinary medicine in Singapore. To provide clarity and guidance to members, and interested members of public, SVA EXCO has also convened and issued statements on several other matters. This include: Statement on COVID-19 and implications for companion animals on 7 March 2021, Statement regarding mental health amongst Singapore veterinarians on 27 December 2021, and Statement on Identifying and Diagnosing Notifiable Diseases on 8 February 2022. (View all the statements here: <https://sva.org.sg/statements/>)

c. AVS-SVA Prudent Use Guidelines

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has been declared as one of the top 10 global public health threats by the World Health Organisation (WHO). It endangers human health and threatens the health and welfare of all animals.

AVS and SVA jointly developed Singapore's first Guidelines for the Prudent Use of Antimicrobials in Companion Animals. This guides local veterinarians on good antimicrobial stewardship practices, and includes a prescribing guide for first-line antimicrobial selection. It

also contains background information on properties of antimicrobials and a client education tool kit. The guidelines were launched in November 2021, and will be updated regularly. Minister of State/ Ministry for National Development has also posted about the work done by AVS and SVA in this regard.

d. Veterinary Council

This year, SVA has also worked with AVS closely to engage the veterinary industry and users of veterinary services to identify key trends and challenges faced by the veterinary profession. This is part of the ongoing work to raise professional standards of our veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals in response to the increasing work demands and complexities of veterinarians, together with an growing pet and industry animal sector. There have been several jointly facilitated focus group discussions and Minister of State/ Ministry for National Development has acknowledged the need for a professional entity i.e. a veterinary council to regulate and manage the veterinary industry. In the upcoming year, SVA will be stepping working group discussions to bring the initiative forward.

e. RAWG

A rehoming and adoption workgroup (RAWG) was set up in October 2020 to raise the standards of rehoming and adoption of stray dogs in Singapore. This workgroup consisted of stakeholders from the pet industry, such as veterinarians, dog trainers, and animal welfare groups (AWGs).

The guidelines were developed after a series of focus group discussions by the RAWG, followed by a month-long public consultation which ended in November 2021, to improve rehoming and adoption practices in Singapore.

RAWG also discussed the issue of euthanasia requests from owners of their pet dogs for non-medical reasons (e.g. behavioural issues and aggression which may lead to public safety risks). The choice of treatments or animal care should be guided by the welfare of the animal, the commitment of the client to the treatment, and the safety of the public. As practised by many veterinarians, prior to euthanasia of any animal, treatment options must be considered, as appropriate. This should be documented to help ensure that relevant information is clearly communicated between the owner and the veterinarian.

The current Code of Ethics for veterinarians sets out appropriate standards for professional conduct to establish and maintain the highest standards of integrity, skill and practice in the profession of veterinary medicine. In the course of day-to-day veterinary practice, veterinarians may wish to consider documenting the following in their decision-making process:

- a. Details of the animal (e.g. name, breed, age, sex, microchip number)
- b. Origins of the animal (e.g. purchased or adopted, source of origin)
- c. How long the dog has been kept by the owner for
- d. Medical history (e.g. vaccinations, illnesses if any)
- e. Behavioural history (e.g. temperament, aggression, bite history, utilising objective tools and established guides where possible)
- f. Physical and mental wellbeing of the animal in both the short and long term.
- g. For euthanasia cases - reason(s) the owner wishes to euthanise the dog, and possible alternative arrangements such as rehoming options, if appropriate
- h. For behavioural issues and/or aggression - previous behavioural training by certified trainer

- i. Put in place processes to allow for declaration of animal ownership and/or authority to consent by the client or person-in-charge of the animal
- f. Singapore Veterinary Nurses and Technicians Chapter
 - I. Vet Nurse of the Year award

For the first time under the newly formed Singapore Veterinary Nurses and Technicians Chapter (SVNTC) under SVA, the Singapore Veterinary Technician/Nurse of the Year Award 2021 was held. This award, sponsored by Royal Canin, seeks to recognise the contributions of the veterinary nurses and technicians in Singapore, as part of a larger effort to raise the profile of the veterinary paraprofessionals.

More than 300 individuals were nominated for the award. After rigorous rounds of selection, the final interview was conducted by a panel of 4 judges on 27 February 2022. The results will be released later on in the year.

- g. SVA Coffee Table Book

In response to SVA members' request for a coffee table book that documents the history and contributions of veterinarians to Singapore, the SVA EXCO has convened a working group and engaged a publisher to research and draft the coffee table book. This is a project many years in the making and the final product is currently undergoing editing. It is projected to launch the book on 30 April 2022, World Veterinary Day. It will be co-launched with AVS, one of the main sponsors and supporters of the project, and details on the availability of the book will be made available later.

- h. SVA Outreach

As part of public education and outreach, we started our SVA Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/SGvetAssociation>) and Instagram pages (<https://www.instagram.com/sva.sg/>). Original content covering various topics were posted:

- a. Ectoparasite
- b. Endoparasite
- c. Parasite Prevention
- d. Dental Care

We also created an information portal for Pet Owners: <https://sva.org.sg/petinfo/>

The board-certified specialists in Singapore are also listed on our website: <https://sva.org.sg/veterinaryspecialists/>