



# San Diego County Veterinary Medical Association

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Via telefax: 916-263-2621

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VMB / RVTC

Ms Susan Geranen, Executive Officer  
Terri Becker, DVM, President, and Members of the Veterinary Medical Board  
2005 Evergreen Avenue, Suite 2250  
Sacramento CA 95815-3831

*Re: Usage of the Doctorate Credential "DVM"*

Dear Ms Geranen and Members of the Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to address one of the many issues currently before the Veterinary Medical Board. As you consider allowing or suggesting that veterinarians who become licensed to practice in California can arbitrarily use the degree reference of "DVM" to signify their licensure we ask that you consider a few points that may not have come to your attention.

The usage, display and recognition of valued credentials is considered by most who have earned them to be a matter of formal acclaim and importance. This Association has historically followed the creed and dictate of the *Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics of the AVMA*, the "golden rules" of veterinary professional and ethical behavior. Those Principals directly and specifically address the usage of the title of a professional degree earned by the school where the degree was awarded. Excerpts of the Principals follow at the end of this letter. \*

The San Diego County Veterinary Medical Association, along with the Southern California Veterinary Medical Association, following the lead from many years ago of the California Veterinary Medical Association, requires applicants for membership in each respective association to agree in part, and by signature, to adhere to those ethical doctrines: *e.g. SDCVMA Membership Application: "Your signature constitutes acceptance of and your intention to be bound by the Constitution and Bylaws and Policies of this Association and the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics of the American Veterinary Medical Association, ....."*

We as an association also strive to maintain all records, databases, references, and published materials to accurately reflect said Principals to the best of our ability. Advertisements in our publication require appropriate "doctorate granted" usage to be eligible for publication, as again the AVMA Ethical Principals indicate otherwise to be "false, deceptive, or misleading".

We have a number of members, as all veterinary associations would, **that are not licensed** to practice in California, including graduates of accredited schools in the U.S. with "DVM", "VMD" and other various foreign college granted veterinary medical degrees. There are 45 (including DVM and VMD) different degrees granted throughout the world from veterinary colleges recognized by the World Health Organization and the AVMA Council on Education Accreditation Standards. Thirteen countries including the United States grant a "DVM - Doctor of Veterinary Medicine".

We realize that other professions have policies based on their own criteria, i.e. human medical doctors are required to do internships and/or residencies upon graduation. And while recognizing that a medical education for human medical doctors may not vary significantly from country to country, it has been noted that some foreign veterinary schools may limit their doctorate focus to an agricultural and food animal curriculum vs. a companion animal curriculum. Substituting "DVM" for another granted degree reference would not only be inappropriate according to the Ethics Principals, but could also imply licensure status which may be contrary to your actual intent in many cases. Most states provide a great deal more information to the consumer about the medical doctor's, (MD's) educational background, credentials, specialties, memberships, achievements, ethnicity, etc.

Clarifying a foreign granted degree simply by adding the word "Veterinarian" could suffice for consumer awareness that you seek.\*\*

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Lastly, the well-known *AVMA Veterinarian's Oath* requires a sworn allegiance to "...the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics".

We ask that you consider these existing policies and perspectives, and review the excerpted doctrines of AVMA Ethical Principles and leave the time honored policies and practices as they are utilized not only in California but throughout the United States.

*\* Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics of the AVMA 2010 – Excerpts:*

**II. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR**

**B. Veterinarians should obey all laws of the jurisdictions in which they reside and practice veterinary medicine. Veterinarians should be honest and fair in their relations with others, and they should not engage in fraud, misrepresentation, or deceit.**

3. Veterinarians should use only the title of the professional degree that was awarded by the school of veterinary medicine where the degree was earned. All veterinarians may use the courtesy titles *Doctor* or *Veterinarian*. Veterinarians who were awarded a degree other than DVM or VMD should refer to the *AVMA Directory* for information on the appropriate titles and degrees.\*

**X. ADVERTISING**

**B. Advertising by veterinarians is ethical when there are no false, deceptive, or misleading statements or claims. A false, deceptive, or misleading statement or claim is one which communicates false information or is intended, through a material omission, to leave a false impression.**

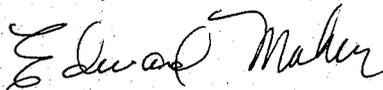
**D. The principles that apply to advertising, testimonials, and endorsements also apply to veterinarians communications with their clients.**

*\*\* AVMA Membership Directory and Resource Manual (As of July 23, 2010):*

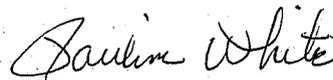
**"Veterinary Medical Degrees Granted Throughout the World"**

Graduates should only use the degree actually granted by their college or school of veterinary medicine. For instance, if a foreign college grants a degree of Bachelor of Veterinary Science, a graduate would sign his/her name "John Doe or Mary Smith, BVSc," and a Medico Veterinario would sign, "John Doe or Mary Smith, MV." **Any individual whose degree is other than DVM or VMD should add the word "veterinarian" under his/her signature and actual degree and should not replace their degree with DVM or VMD.**

Sincerely,



Edward Maher, DVM, DABVP, DACVIM-SAIM  
President



Pauline White,  
Director