

Veterinary Medical Board

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RACE Approval of Complementary and Alternative Veterinary Medicine (CAVM) Continuing Education

In its role as a consumer protection agency, the California Veterinary Medical Board (VMB) instituted mandatory continuing education requirements (36 hours every two years) for purposes of license renewal in 2000. The VMB adopted regulations to define the parameters of “approved” continuing education and designated the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB) as the approval body through its Registry of Approved Continuing Education (RACE).

The criteria for RACE approval mirrors the requirements in California and for purposes of license renewal, the VMB only accepts continuing education that is offered by providers that are either statutorily approved or approved by RACE. The criteria used for courses that insure consumer protection and that are used for purposes of license renewal may be more stringent than those used simply as courses to expand a licensee’s knowledge base.

In cases where a provider is denied approval, there are provisions for an appeal to the RACE Committee. In those cases where the provider has exhausted all avenues of appeal with RACE and is denied, providers have the option of appealing to the VMB for a review of the processes used by the RACE Committee. Providers have the option to make changes to their programs to meet the updated standards and licensees always have the option of taking courses outside the minimum 36 hours required for license renewal.

If a specific provider wishes to appeal to the VMB, that provider must provide the Board with all of the documentation of its application to RACE, correspondence, and letter(s) from RACE stating the specific reasons for the denial.

The VMB has received several letters and emails recently voicing general concerns about changes in the RACE approval standards that became effective in September 2009 that apparently affected programs offering continuing education in the areas of complementary and alternative veterinary medicine (CAVM). The concerns include:

1) Currently, only one member of the RACE committee is reviewing the complementary and alternative veterinary medicine courses

In a memo dated February 7, 2011, to the member licensing boards, the AAVSB describes the process for providers wishing to become RACE approved. That memo is attached and is posted on the Board's web site. The RACE Committee utilizes consultants to screen the applications for continuing education providers and courses. Once the consultants have made the initial determination, the applications are reviewed by the RACE committee and finally by the AAVSB Board of Directors for final approval.

2) When RACE denies a CAVM course no specific reasons are provided

When a course is denied approval through RACE, the provider is given specific information as to why it did not meet the RACE Standards. Because the VMB recognizes RACE approval it is working with the AAVSB to make all processes transparent and to provide specific information on the criteria used for approval or denial of courses available to the public.

3) There is a consumer demand for CAVM services, so veterinarians need to be able to obtain approved continuing education in these fields

The Board understands that there is consumer demand for CAVM services, but when the continuing education is being approved for purposes of license renewal, there is always a standard that is applied in order to insure consumer protection and to insure the integrity of the education being offered to licensees.

According to AAVSB, "...Programs shall conform to the definition of RACE-approved continuing education, and all scientific information referred to, reported or used in RACE-approved CE Program Applications in support or justification of an animal-care recommendation must conform to the medically accepted and scientifically supported standards of experimental design, data collection and analysis."

4) RACE approved CAVM courses for over eight years and then discontinued approval even though there were no changes in the CAVM courses or providers

According to AAVSB, "Previous versions of RACE standards did not address what criteria should be met in order to meet the Scientific subject matter category qualifications."

Individual providers also can provide additional information to the VMB.

5) RACE is disapproving courses that are approved for human medicine and are areas that are on the licensing examinations for human acupuncturists

Without specific examples of a course that was disapproved and the letter explaining the rationale for the disapproval, the VMB cannot respond to this statement.

According to AAVSB, "Programs approved for human medicine continuing education may be beneficial to a veterinarian, however, as indicated in the Standards, the definition of RACE approved CE pertains only to veterinary medicine."

6) Approval or denial that used to be done within 45 days is now taking up to 11 months.

According to AAVSB, "...programs which do not initially meet the RACE Standards or are asked to submit additional information/documentation can expect the process to take longer...those programs which appeal the initial decision...can expect the process to take additional time. Eleven months is not an accurate reflection of the Race review process."

The VMB is willing to evaluate the approval process, for specific providers/courses but would need more information, e.g., is the 11 month timeline beginning from when the application is received or from when there is a completed application.

Providers wishing to appeal a final denial of a specific course by the RACE Committee should submit a request along with all the documentation originally submitted to the AAVSB along with the denial letters from the AAVSB/RACE Committee to:

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