WHY DOES ONE NEED STRONG VETERINARY STATUTORY BODIES

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Veterinary Services (VS) of a country comprise all sectors of animal health service delivery in both the public and private sectors. Veterinarians have a wide scope of responsibilities which go way beyond individual animals and clients and include meeting societal expectations on “public good” components such as animal welfare, food safety, environmental health, public health and biosecurity. For VS to be able to comply with OIE international standards in respect of the Quality of Veterinary Services, as contained in Chapters 3.1 and 3.2 of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*, a Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB) plays a pivotal and indispensible role in the establishment and maintenance of Good Veterinary Governance.

Key components of the concept of GVG are quality veterinary education and an effective regulatory system of the veterinary profession. These core elements of GVG are intimately linked to the universal acceptance of the veterinary profession. The definition of “profession” is highlighted.

The core responsibilities and functions of a VSB to ensure excellence and ethics of the veterinary profession, being the regulation of veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals through licensing/registration, determination of minimum standards of initial and continuing veterinary education and the setting and enforcement of standards of professional conduct and ethics are discussed.

Particular reference is made to the requirement of VSBs for authority and capacity based on appropriate and enabling legislation, freedom from undue political interference, adequate administrative and financial support to be able to exercise its functions in an accountable and transparent manner. This includes the laying down of rules of professional conduct broad enough to cover all fields of veterinary activity, including protocols and guidelines for quality management systems based on a Code of Good Veterinary Practice.

In summary: In order for the Veterinary Services of a country to comply with OIE internationals standards for Good Veterinary Governance and quality veterinary services, an effective and well resourced VSB plays a key role.

**Keywords**: Veterinary Profession – Good Veterinary Governance/Practice – Veterinary Statutory Body.