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To Whom It May Concern

For the subject of proposal to establish a new veterinary school in Hong Kong, I would like to present the following opinions contributed from the active members in the China (Hong Kong) Veterinary Association.

CONS

A. Oversupply of veterinarian and potential influence on the job prospect for future veterinary graduates

1. Assessment of Current Veterinary Workforce Supply and Demand in Hong Kong
Currently, the majority of the veterinary surgeons in Hong Kong work in companion animal clinical practice.(Table 1) There is a concern amongst our members that rising numbers of graduates will promptly contribute to an oversupply of veterinarians in Hong Kong.

Areas of Employment	Number of Veterinarian
Government	30
Jockey Club	14
Ocean Park / Kadorie Farm	5
University/Education/Industry	16
Small Animal Clinics	335
Not Working in Hong Kong	127

Table 1₅

Compared with the Australasian countries where most veterinarians in Hong Kong qualified from, the pets-per-vet is 1036, 2257, and 1239 in Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong respectively. (Table 2). The pets-per-vet figure reflects that there is nearly 2 times more companion animal veterinarians than New Zealand even no local veterinary graduates in Hong Kong. A new veterinary school may pose a serious threat to potential saturated companion animal practice sector.⁹

Country	Pet Dog Population (thousands)	Pet Cat Population (thousands)	No. of Small Animal Veterinarian
Australia	3484 ₁	2450 ₁	5725* ₂
New Zealand	650 ₁	1095 ₁	773 ₃
Hong Kong	247.5 ₄	167.6 ₄	335 ₅

TABLE 2.

There is 803 out of 1447 participants, i.e. 55.4% of total participants work as companion animal veterinarian in current AVA workforce survey. This figure is calculated from 55.4% of total registered veterinary surgeons in Australia.

2. Veterinarian Oversupply in Small Animal Clinical Practice

Country	Dairy Population (thousands)	No. of Dairy Veterinarian
Australia	1650 ₆	854 ₂
New Zealand	4528.7 ₇	307 ₃
Hong Kong	0 ₈	0 ₅

Table 3

There is 119 out of 1447 participants, i.e. 8.2% of total participants work as dairy veterinarian in current AVA workforce survey. This figure is calculated from 8.2% of total registered veterinary surgeons in Australia.

Farm practice is a core subject and another substantial industry in veterinary science. Nonetheless, only 18 square kilometres of land are actively farmed in Hong Kong. Farms are generally small in size and they produce mainly leafy vegetables, pigs or poultry.⁸ There is only one dairy in active operation with a total herd population of less than 10 cows₈, no beef cattles or small ruminant farm, and there are already seven clinics in Hong Kong who will perform farm work on request.⁹ Compared to Australia and New Zealand, nearly no full-time veterinarian is needed in Hong Kong. (Table 3) There is tremendous waste of resource that a well-established veterinary school trains only small animal practitioners with most graduates found that they never get a job in various farm practice like dairy, beef cattle, or small ruminant.

Country	Veterinarian in Regulatory or State Government	Total Registered Veterinarian
Australia	770*	10317
New Zealand	277	2521
Hong Kong	30	600

TABLE 4

There is 107 out of 1447 participants, i.e. 7% of total participants work as dairy veterinarian in current AVA workforce survey. This figure is calculated from 7% of total registered veterinary surgeons in Australia.

It could be that our profession responds by employing the cheapest vets and an excess of veterinary graduates could drive down wages, which are already painfully low, and push the excellent graduates out of the industry to more lucrative vocations.¹⁰

According to Table 2, pets-per-vet in Australia is less than that of Hong Kong, and that means more small animal veterinarians serving less pet animals in Australia. Nevertheless, the graduate wage ranking of veterinarian drops significantly over a decade (Figure 1), and the salary trend is decreasing compared to Australian wages.



Figure 1

3. Veterinarian Oversupply Globally

In Australia, with approximately 710 veterinary graduates each year the 19% unable to find employment, and it would equate to about 135 people in the graph. (Figure 1)¹². One of the member implied that there are Australian graduates writing to him offering to work for free in Hong Kong because they cannot get jobs.

In United States during the 1980s, the veterinary profession was inundated with dire

predictions of shortages of thousands of veterinarians by the year 2000. Many practitioners believed these claims to be wildly exaggerated, but the experts dismissed their opinions as unscientific and even accused practitioners of being self-serving and seeking to limit competition.¹¹

A major study released today by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and conducted by IHS Healthcare & Pharma in partnership with the Center for Health Workforce Studies at the State University of New York estimates an excess capacity of veterinary services in the United States. Specifically, the report indicates that the supply of veterinarians in the United States in 2012 was 90,200, and that supply exceeded the demand for veterinary services by about 11,250 full-time equivalent veterinarians.¹³

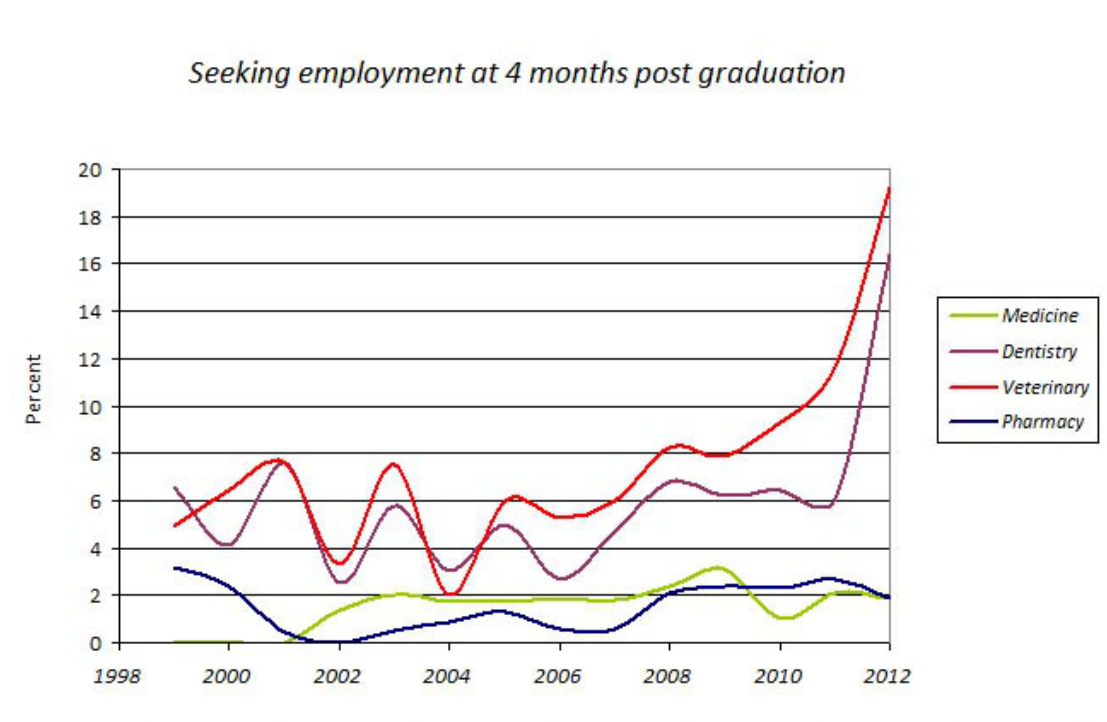


FIGURE 2

The average wage of recent Italian veterinary graduates is less than 900 euro per month from anecdotal report. There are 13 veterinary schools in Italy, and supply more than a quarter of veterinary graduates of entire Europe!¹⁶ The oversupply of veterinarian can not be neglected readily.

- B. Inadequate Resource to build an international accredited veterinary college
 Taking New Zealand as an example, there are 4 millions dairy cows, 60 millions sheep and 76 thousand horses in New Zealand. On the other hands, there are

less than 10 dairy cows, no sheep, and 1.8 thousand horses in Hong Kong.(Table 5). Farm practice and equine medicine constitutes a major part in veterinary medical course in modern countries. Students in Hong Kong may experience difficulties to learn hands-on experience in those species.

Practising farm or herd medicine in other countries like China is not a viable solution. Law regarding food safety, pharmaceuticals, drug residues, and veterinary medicine in China is very different from Hong Kong. On the other hands, most correspondent ordinance in Hong Kong has been adopted from British law, and current veterinary graduates from United Kingdom or Commonwealth countries are already familiar with them.

Most veterinary proprietary drugs used in modern Western countries cannot be imported to China, and thus, the training in therapeutics and treatment monitoring are particular weak, which is very essential in clinical medicine.

Country	No. of Dairy Cows	No. of Horses	No. of Sheeps
New Zealand	4,000,000	76,000 ₁₈	60,000,000 ₁₉
Australia	3,100,000 ₁₇	221,000 ₁₈	7,700,000 ₂₀
United States	9,200,000 ₂₂	9,223,000 ₁₈	7,000,000 ₂₁
Hong Kong	10	1,800	0

Table 5

PROS

- A. Provide the continuing education opportunity, and route to become specialist by postgraduate education, internship and residency.

Some members in CHKVA complained that the competency of recent new graduates was declining. One year clinical rotation internship can provide the thorough training of all the skills necessary comparable to Year One Competencies established by RCVS.¹⁴ Internship program can relieve the rush of recent graduates into the market even they may not be well prepared for the skills required in providing standard of care in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, experienced veterinarians found that it is difficult to get a good opportunity to develop their special interest without travelling to UK, Australasia, North America or Europe. Specialist training is virtually impossible for most clinicians as they have to quit their jobs and leave their families to stay in aforementioned countries for three to six years before getting board eligible for examination.

The cost of postgraduate veterinary education is very high for Hong Kong veterinarian. (Table 6) The high living cost and consumer index has not been

taken into account.

Institution	Tuition Fee (HK\$)
<i>The University of Edinburgh, MVSc</i>	\$234,351
<i>Murdoch University, MVS in Small Animal Practice</i>	\$266,674
<i>The University of Sydney, MVSt</i>	\$262,744
<i>University of Glasgow, MVMS</i>	\$328,092
<i>University of California, Davis. MVPM</i>	\$246,005
University of Hong Kong, MPH	\$150,000
University of Hong Kong, MMedSc	\$109,000
The Chinese University of Hong Kong, MPH	\$144,000
The Chinese University of Hong Kong, MSc in Gastroenterology	\$98,000

Table 6

- B. Provide opportunity to train veterinarian with interest in public health
- One of the member stated that Hong Kong may be one of the few places in the world where we raise livestock and produce meat without the supervision of veterinarians. Moreover, Hong Kong sat in a part of Asia where many diseases emerged and needed more animal care experts and academic research on the topic. There is no veterinary training of any sort in Hong Kong so training of these specialists in food safety and public health is essential in order to raise the standard in the whole region and fill in gaps.¹⁵
- C. Establishing a new veterinary school may inevitably increase the supply of veterinarian. Taking other medical professions like medicine and dentistry as an example, especially dentistry, the launch of faculty of dentistry in University of Hong Kong was not found to cause oversupply of dental surgeons in Hong Kong. The key should be the licensure examination. For example, all overseas graduates wishing to register as medical practitioners with the Medical Council of Hong Kong have to pass the Licensing Examination and complete a 12-month internship in approved hospitals. If the new veterinary school is successfully established and gets accredited by Hong Kong Veterinary Surgeons Board and overseas accreditation body like American Veterinary Medical Association, the similar legislation can be considered to prevent the future saturation of veterinary workforce.

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