



海洋公園公司
OCEAN PARK
CORPORATION

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Professor Roland Chin
Convenor, Vet School Task Force
University Grants Committee
7/F Shui On Centre, 608 Harbour Road
Wan Chai, Hong Kong, China

Dear Professor Chin,

As the Executive Director for Zoological Operations and Education, as well as the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong's Director, I have been asked to respond to your queries regarding the establishment of a veterinary school in Hong Kong and thank you for this opportunity to comment. We welcome a veterinary school in Hong Kong and the expertise in much needed disciplines to Hong Kong, such as pathology, specialist surgery and diagnostic imaging. We would also welcome the opportunity to collaborate through the exchange of expertise and resources between our two organizations.

I have asked our Chief Veterinarian, Dr Paolo Martelli to address your questions. He has been working closely over the years on this topic and has valuable insights that I would like to share with you. Please find our response to your questions attached.

In July, it will be myself and our Chief Veterinarian, Dr Paolo Martelli that will meet with you in the session proposed.

We hope our input has been helpful. Should you require any additional information or clarification before the separate session in July, please do not hesitate to contact me at: suzanne.gendron@oceanpark.com.hk.

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne M. Gendron
Executive Director of Zoological Operations and Education
Ocean Park Hong Kong

Cc: Paolo Martelli – Chief Veterinarian Ocean Park
Tom Mehrmann – CE Ocean Park

海洋公園力求成為一個世界級具領導地位的主題公園，為遊人帶來一個既開心又難忘的旅程，將遊人與大自然緊密連繫起來。

Ocean Park aspires to be a world leader in providing excellent guest experiences in a theme park environment connecting people with nature.

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GENERAL QUESTIONS

(a) *What is the general view of Ocean Park towards setting up a vet school in Hong Kong?*

Ocean Park welcomes a vet school in Hong Kong which would allow Ocean Park to tap into expertise such as pathology, diagnostic imaging, and specialist surgery. The Park's veterinary team would appreciate access to the vet school's online library resources. In collaboration with the vet school, the Park could support students in the form of clinical attachments and provision of study material (carcass, clinical samples such as smear). In the medium term we would also like to create an internship wherein OPC interns could obtain an academic qualification upon completion of an on-the-job internship.

(b) *What number of annual graduates would be appropriate for Hong Kong?*

Actually Hong Kong already has enough graduates qualifying annually, to the point where some chose to not return and where the profession is degrading as some unscrupulous clinic owners offer first job packages that are very poor.

Should it train for Hong Kong alone, the Pearl River Delta, Mainland China, Asia Pacific region and to what standards should the school be pitched at?

Anything but the highest international standard is of no use to the Park and of no use to the students. Neighboring countries already offer substandard training at a much lower cost. This is not a goal worth aiming for, not even for starters. Hong Kong students, local or otherwise, expect World class training in a World class city.

DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF VETS IN HONG KONG

(c) *As one of the major employers of vets in Hong Kong, do you have any general views on the demand and supply of vets in HK? What is expected trend?*

The Hong Kong market will change but will not grow much more. A need for more specialists, more referral clinics, more fully equipped hospitals and catering to niche markets are likely to be the trend. The Park only hires 4 vets and in 5-to-10 years and is not likely to hire more than 5 (including intern) or 6-to-7 if we expand into the regional.

(d) *There are a small number of vets currently employed by the Government while the remaining bulk is employed by private clinics or relevant organization. Have there been difficulties in employing vets in Hong Kong?*

We receive several applicants from Hong Kong but because of the specialized nature of the Park's work and the high value of the collection, the Park has only rarely been able to recruit locally (only 1 in last 10 years).

Breakdown and remuneration in past 5 years and turnover:

The remuneration ranges from \$55K to \$100K monthly, plus rental allowance. Until recently turnover of chief vet was high but there has been no change in the past 8 years. Vets currently employed have been here 9-8-5 and 3 years respectively.

Change in the Park that may result in recruitment of vets in next 5 years?

It is not likely that the Park will expand its veterinary staff level, as the collection is not going to increase significantly over the next 5 years.

(e) Need to review the existing vet registration mechanism by VSB to adjust the pool of potential vets to practice in Hong Kong?

The inclusion of Taiwanese graduates to the automatic registration has had the effect of creating lower end clinics and a two speed profession with different expectation and obligations. It is not a healthy situation. Also Taiwanese graduates that practicing to high standards are misjudged on their degree origin which is also unfair. An accreditation system may help.

(f) Do the vets in OPC have any collaboration with the Gov. or academic inst, to carry out animal/zoonotic disease research?

Yes, Ocean Park collaborates with local universities and the Government frequently.

PROMOTION OF ANIMAL WELFARE

(g) Are there existing policies and measures taken to promulgate animal welfare in HK?

There are numerous ordinances that cover animal welfare in Hong Kong but fish and invertebrates in the live fish trade are not included and therefore are not offered any protection and are treated quite poorly.

Is there an increase in awareness of animal rights, protection and welfare?

Yes. Every year, awareness increases a little more. Emotional and intellectual investment in animal welfare increases and is already sometimes translating into action.

What is the projected demand for vets to promote animal welfare in HK?

Vets are obliged to be involved as animal welfare is central to the veterinary profession, be it for food animal or companion animals or wildlife.

If there were a school do you think it can help promote animal welfare and how?

As mentioned above, veterinarians are obliged to promote animal welfare. With the school, animal welfare should be included in the curriculum. It is a scientific discipline that is developing fast.

ESTABLISHING A VET SCHOOL IN HONG KONG

(h) Pros and cons for a school in Hong Kong?

Pros: For post graduated, the strong, established medical profession in Hong Kong will compliment the school.

Cons: For the undergrad, the school has the potential to be expensive when compared to studying in renowned international schools. In addition, there is no agriculture, and a limited pet market that is mostly high-end. Hong Kong students who can afford to study can afford to study overseas. The local school must be of a caliber that makes it equal to overseas studies that tend to make young grads more employable.

Key factor to consider whether an institution is fit to establish a vet school?

An institution that is establishing a vet school must be motivated by dedication to vet profession and science not by prestige or gain. Strong related departments in disciplines also would be desired.

Any views if a vet school to be housed with med school?

It would be perfectly compatible and in the case of postgraduate studies, beneficial.

(i) What programmes to meet the needs of HK and OPC?

Specialties that would be beneficial to Hong Kong and Ocean Park would include orthopedics, ophthalmology, radiology, and advanced molecular diagnostics.

What programmes to meet the needs of Mainland?

High end veterinary education is scarce in Mainland China. The vet school in Hong Kong would train graduates to the highest standards.

(j) *What basic training is required for a vet student to become a qualified vet in Hong Kong?*

Basic training must be training to the highest standards. We do not have an opinion on the capital or staff resources necessary but believe the high ranking vet schools in the US, UK and Australia should be able to provide advice on these needs.

(k) *What kind of research capability is required for public health food safety and promotion of animal welfare?*

Live fish and invertebrates currently escape public health scrutiny. There are unmonitored amounts of cyanide, antibiotics, pesticides and other POPs that enter the human food supply. As mentioned before, the welfare for these animals is often ignored.

What type of research support and staff, etc. are essential?

High-end collaboration between government monitoring agencies and research labs will help protect Hong Kong people. 90% of all fish farming is practiced in Asia and this is an area of simultaneous growth and crisis where university level collaboration and research would be fruitful at many levels.

(l) *Has any agreement reached between CityU and OPC in the use of facilities to provide training?*

In previous conversations, the Park agreed to take in students on attachment, with the caveat that the Park already receives many students from all around the globe and that only two students at a time could be accommodate. It was also discussed that students could carry out projects in Ocean Park, provided that the projects are consistent with the Park's welfare standards and that resources are available.

In addition, Ocean Park would like to explore the possibility of a necropsy facility and a laboratory that allows student participation and learning. We would also like to explore the possibility of establishing a center for imaging excellence in zoological medicine, compatible with use for domestic species.