

The CVE

It is generally an accepted principle that persons belonging to a specific profession involved in providing professional services should render such services in a competent and professional manner. It is similarly accepted that the consumer of professional services has a rightful expectation that such services will be the best possible contemporary service under the prevailing circumstances. The principle of lifelong learning is a cardinal feature of professional degree programmes leading to registration with a professional Council. Lifelong learning is embodied in Continued Veterinary Education (CVE) as an essential component of maintaining and enhancing professional skills and knowledge. CVE is an interactive process by which Veterinarians enhance their skills and knowledge they had at the time of graduation. It covers a continuous post-graduate programme of both structured and unstructured learning activities which contribute directly to the professional competence of the Veterinarians. Similarly, the para-Veterinary personnel who are engaged in rendering 'Minor Veterinary Services' are also required to update their knowledge/skills in their respective areas for ensuring quality services to the clients as provided in the IVC Act.

Background:

Currently, almost all the State Governments have some or the other kind of CVE Programme in the form of short duration trainings/refresher courses on need based specific areas. However, the response and impact of these trainings, being non-structured, do not commensurate to the efforts made and the expenditure incurred. The limitations that have been assessed on the basis of deliberations in various meetings and interactions of the VCI with the State Councils and field Veterinarians are: (i) number of participants of these programmes is less, (ii) non - utilization of the training of the person after he/she attains the training and goes back to the work place, (iii) non - availability of the specific tools required to use the skills attained by the person during training, (iv) absence of regulatory mechanism in the process of selection and identification of the trainees for specific training programme and proper recording of such trainings, (v) limitations of the State Animal Husbandry Departments in nominating/deputing suitable number of participants in different training programmes due to shortage of staff and funds to meet the training expenditures as well as requirements etc. As such, the existing implementation of the programme in different States is not fulfilling the desired objectives despite the fact that CVE has been recognized as an important activity.

During various meetings with the State Veterinary Councils conducted by Veterinary Council of India, the matter of CVE emerged as the most important concern of the States. It was observed that some States conduct CVE courses under the title of "Refresher Training Courses". Often the trainings offered by the Veterinary Colleges do not fit into the learning objectives of the trainees. Mostly, the training has a high content of theory or blackboard teaching without any emphasis on skill development, which is the most frequent learning objective of the field professionals. These issues were discussed

in detail in different meetings where the Directors of Animal Husbandry, Deans of Veterinary Colleges, representatives of the State Veterinary Councils/State Veterinary Associations, and senior Veterinary professionals were present.

Realising the need, the Veterinary Council of India (VCI) had been continuously approaching the Government of India to initiate the CVE Programme so that the skills and competence of the field Veterinarians may be improved and their service delivery competence may meet the emerging challenges. Majority of the Veterinarians are working in far-flung areas where communication and availability of latest technology are inaccessible. Most of them are deprived of the current developments and are required to tackle the problems within the limits of their skills and knowledge acquired during their formal education programmes. In the context of this situation, the immediate task of updating the knowledge of field Veterinarians and para-Veterinary personnel can hardly be over emphasized and the step taken in improving the quality of the personnel and their competence to contribute qualitatively in meeting the newer challenges in livestock production and health shall play an important role. In view of this, the Council identified launching of CVE Programmes as one of the important thrust areas in its Vision-2025 document. The CVE being an important activity to improve the Veterinary practicing capabilities of the personnel providing the services, it has to be considered as one of the most important areas to be taken up by the VCI on a well defined regulatory mode so that the purpose behind initiating such a well conceived and urgently needed activity is directed towards the objective for which its is to be performed.

Based on the request of the VCI to initiate the programmes, the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India conveyed the decision to entrust the activities of implementing the CVE programmes, an activity of Professional Efficiency Development Scheme, to VCI as its nodal agency in India.

The Need:

The CVE for the field Veterinarians, senior level professional managers and para-Veterinary personnel is an essential pre-requisite for not only sustained professional development but also for improving the quality of service to the client. Though appropriate regulations shall be framed to make CVE a mandatory one for both the employer and the employee, it should be the personal obligation of all registered Veterinary practitioners to ensure that he/she undertakes CVE programmes for continuous progression of capability and competence. Undertaking CVE will help the individual to expand knowledge base, keep updated with the continual changes and developments in knowledge, skills and operating environments and shall enable him/her to meet the emerging challenges out of the post WTO regime as well as the international standards for competing in global market with respect to livestock and livestock products. With the burgeoning body of knowledge, changing global trade and economic scenario and emerging areas of inter-disciplinary concerns, there is a paradigm shift in the attitude and approaches to impart Veterinary education and more so to the existing field Veterinarians delivering services to the animal owners. Even the present interpretation of disease, as a result of the collusion of Veterinary pathogenic agents and individuals, has been and will be redefined from time to time. Accordingly, there is an

urgent need to update the knowledge of Veterinary professionals involved in looking after the livestock production and health in the country as well as in managing the livestock based business. Moreover, international regulations regarding delivery of Veterinary services, product quality, standards etc. are also emerging important areas for the country to become competitive in global market.

Individuals are expected to review their CVE needs regularly, and plan ahead so that they can make the most of development opportunities as they arise. Many Veterinarians choose to attend external courses to keep themselves updated, but participating in more informal networks and in-house training is also of great value. The opportunities offered by working on new projects, or through involvement in research should also be recognized as adding to professional development. CVE is an important asset not only in maintaining competence but also in assisting Veterinarians who are re-entering the workforce after a period of absence or are changing disciplines within the profession. It is particularly essential for maintaining speciality competence in the era of specialisation and super specialisation. Keeping a CVE record can help the individual to focus attention on his/her own learning needs, and can help to provide reassurance to the animal owning public that their practitioner of choice takes seriously the need to maintain professional competence.

Objectives:

In view of the background and need as elaborated above, the CVE programmes are proposed to be implemented by the Veterinary Council of India with the following specific objectives:

1. To upgrade the knowledge, competence, and quality of the registered Veterinary practitioners in the country aimed at improving delivery of Veterinary services.
2. To upgrade the quality and competence of the para - Veterinary personnel engaged in rendering "Minor Veterinary Services" in different State departments.
3. To provide opportunities for training of the trainers who will be imparting training to the field Veterinarians in identified and specified areas.
4. To improve the manpower and technology management competence of senior level Veterinarians performing man/services management duties.
5. To strengthen/develop mechanism as well as infrastructure for administering CVE programmes to the practicing Veterinarians on a continuous basis.

Target Group:

The specific target group for the CVE Programmes will be the registered Veterinary practitioners including the professional managers both in the Government and private sector and the para-Veterinary personnel engaged in providing 'Minor Veterinary Services'. Accordingly, the methodology will be developed in consonance with the objectives identified and the target group specified. The CVE for the Veterinary professionals in the teaching/research institutions and the trainers shall be devised and

implemented in a phased manner to meet the requirements as they arise from time to time. The immediate target group for different CVE Programmes shall be the registered Veterinary practitioners employed by the State Animal Husbandry Departments in the field Veterinary institutions. The CVE programmes for para-Veterinary personnel shall be conducted by the respective State Animal Husbandry Departments through the State Veterinary Councils to upgrade their skills in performing “Minor Veterinary Services” as notified/prescribed by the respective Departments.

Components of CVE:

1. Knowledge Based Programmes: Under these programmes the professional/technical knowledge of the field Veterinarians and para - Veterinary personnel shall be updated with respect to the recent advances in different disciplines directly related to the Veterinary and Animal Husbandry development requirements.

2. Skill/Specific Technology Based Programmes: The purpose of these programmes is to improve the skills and competence of the field Veterinarians in areas like animal health and health care systems, bio-safety, Veterinary public health, livestock production technologies, animal welfare and care of wild animals, international regulations etc. These programmes shall be of medium duration ranging from 4 to 6 weeks. The courses will be offered by Veterinary institutions recognized/identified by the VCI and having competence in specific areas. Such courses shall be centred around national/regional importance.

3. Technical Competence Development Programmes (TCDP): These courses will be of short duration of 2–3 weeks aimed at providing training to improve the technical competence of the field Veterinarians in areas like health diagnostic and production technologies. These courses will be of regional/respective State requirements based.

4. Refresher Courses: These courses will be of 3-7 days duration which will be regularly carried out by Veterinary teaching and research institutions. The Veterinarians will be brought back to the institution every 5 years to abreast them of the newer/current developments in Veterinary sciences. This will provide him/her opportunity to reckon and choose areas of his/her CVE Programme as per his/her professional needs.

Implementation approach:

Implementation of knowledge based CVE Programmes shall be either through interactive mode or through distance learning mode. Under the interactive mode, holding of Seminars, Conferences, Workshops etc. wherein deliberations are made in the specific advances in the respective fields of interest, shall be encouraged. The ICAR/Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries are already providing financial support for these activities. The Veterinary Council of India on its part will suitably fund for holding such Seminars, Workshops and Conferences held on the specific topics of interest for the field Veterinarians. The recommendations emerging out of such Conferences etc. will be widely disseminated to the field Veterinarians for updating their knowledge.

In addition to this interactive mode, advances of various disciplines of Veterinary sciences will also be made available to the field Veterinarians through technology mediated open learning modes. Experts in specific areas related to the interest of the practising Veterinarians will be identified and requested to prepare suitable teaching modules for circulation to the field Veterinarians.

The Council on the requests received from different State Animal Husbandry Departments/professional societies/teaching & research institutions will also endeavour to hold Seminars, Conferences and Workshops on specific topics inviting experts both from within the country and abroad.

Depending upon the specific requirement of State Animal Husbandry Departments, suitable number of practising Veterinarians will also be identified to undergo short term diploma/certificate courses of 3 to 6 months duration at the identified competent institutions in the country for manning specific posts in different States in the areas of diagnostics, breeding, livestock products technology, disease control management etc. This will go a long way in developing a middle level junior specialized cadre to hold field positions needing specific training.

As regards Skill /Technology based CVE, the process of obtaining the details in respect of identifying the areas of training on the basis of their felt need and also the existing CVE programmes being under taken by the State Animal Husbandry Departments, teaching Veterinary institutions, State Councils as well as the ICAR Animal Science Institutions has already been initiated by VCI. On the basis of this information, the Council will identify the most important areas that need to be given utmost priority in the first stage for holding skill/technology based CVE at national, regional, zonal and State level.

Realizing the existing shortage of manpower with the State Animal Husbandry Departments and the financial constraints existing in meeting the training expenditures by different State Animal Husbandry Departments, the Council also plans to take relevant programmes for the field Veterinarians at their place of work. Such programmes where the actual presence of a trainee is not required will be taken up through distance learning mechanism and this will require the identification of the experts, development of suitable teaching material as well as communicating the material in the most effective way to the trainers.

Though CVE programmes shall be applicable to all the registered Veterinary practitioners, the initial priority shall be given to those practitioners who have obtained their last formal Veterinary education around 15-20 years back. This is proposed keeping in view the fact that their knowledge would need immediate attention to bring at par with the current graduates in terms of latest advancements.

The CVE programmes for para-Veterinary personnel shall be conducted by the respective State Animal Husbandry Departments through the State Veterinary Councils

to upgrade their skills in performing “Minor Veterinary Services” as notified/prescribed by the respective Departments. The State Governments have to make necessary budgetary provisions for this purpose and the Central Government will be required to advise the State Governments for providing required funds to the State Veterinary Councils.

The success of CVE Programmes shall depend on the active participation and involvement of the beneficiary. In the proposed CVE programmes, the beneficiary is not only the field Veterinarian but indirectly the respective State Animal Husbandry Departments are also benefited in terms of their improved capabilities in planning, implementing and managing development programmes in the areas of Animal Production and Health. Accordingly, it is necessary that every State Government provides appropriate financial resources in their Plan and Non-Plan heads for supporting the CVE.

Veterinary Council of India is the regulatory body at the national level and the State Veterinary Councils are the regulatory bodies at the State level wherever the IVC Act has been extended. Accordingly, in order to efficiently identify, execute, manage and evaluate the CVE, the State Veterinary Councils will have to be strengthened to discharge responsibilities in their respective States. This will develop a close linkage between the VCI and the State Veterinary Councils. The State Veterinary Councils will not only be motivating the field Veterinarians and the State Animal Husbandry Departments to actively involve in identifying the specific training areas on the basis of the felt need of the respective State but will also actively involve in planning and implementation of the CVE Programmes as well.

As already stated, the success of the ongoing CVE Programmes has been limited because of the programmes not being structured and having regulatory mode. Hence, as decided, the CVE Programmes shall be implemented on a regulatory mode through framing of a set of appropriate regulations for this purpose. The regulations shall be governing the selection of the trainees, use of the trained personnel in different State Government jobs, specifying the number of days/programmes to be attended by the Veterinarians as a pre-requisite for renewal of registration/promotion, obligations of the appointing agencies for upgrading the competence and skills of their employees etc. With the implementation of these regulations, the frequency as well as the opportunity to the field Veterinarians for enabling them to improve their knowledge/skill will be mandatory for both the employer and the employee.

Evaluation and impact assessment of a programme is pivotal in ascertaining its utility, justification of fund utilization and also for future planning in the desired direction towards fulfilling its objectives. As such, the Council shall make necessary provisions for the purpose of assessing the utility and impact of the CVE Programmes concurrently as well as periodically through commissioning of appropriate studies by competent agencies/individuals having the relevant capabilities. The findings/ recommendations of such studies shall be given due consideration in modifying the programmes and formulating future strategies.

Action Plan:

In order to identify the priority areas, the institutions with required capabilities and the experts with technical competence to be associated with the implementation of CVE Programmes at the initial stage, detailed discussions with the Directors of Animal Husbandry, Deans of Veterinary Colleges and State Veterinary Councils of the States have been held.

Based on the discussions and the information generated, the Council proposes to implement the CVE Programmes to achieve its already envisaged aims and objectives, with the following Action Plan:

1. Identification of priority areas for CVE:

The priority areas for the CVE will be decided after detailed discussions/dialogues with the State Animal Husbandry Departments/State Veterinary Councils on their urgently felt need and on continuous basis. In this direction, the Council has already requested the State AH Departments and the State Veterinary Councils to inform their requirements for CVE programmes relevant to their States. Though the requirements at the national/regional level shall be ascertained from time to time to identify the areas of importance, an indicative list of various programmes has been developed through expert deliberations to be taken up as CVE programme. In addition, proposals for imparting a specific training programme from institutions shall also be invited and examined to assess their utility in accordance with the objective of the programmes. In order to avoid multiplicity of agencies and the programmes, it is proposed that attempts shall be made to dovetail the existing CVE programmes undertaken by various agencies with the CVE Programmes to be implemented by the VCI. Till the requirements of the States are received and finalized, the Council shall focus on the following programmes at the first stage:

(a) Improving the competence of field Veterinarians for quick diagnosis of diseases: Quick and correct diagnosis is essential for effective treatment and control of any disease. With the tremendous advances taking place regularly in the area of disease diagnosis, it is imperative to upgrade/update the knowledge of field Veterinarians. The fast developing animal biotechnology has provided many diagnostic tools in the areas of molecular diagnosis, which is required to be passed on to Veterinary practitioners in respect of transboundary, emerging and zoonotic diseases. Similarly, practitioners are also required to be trained/made aware of the international standards and techniques for disease diagnosis prescribed by the OIE to maintain the standards and meet the international obligations. Rabies, avian influenza, glanders, tuberculosis, brucellosis, etc. are the few important emerging and zoonotic diseases that shall be considered at the initial stage.

(b) Handling of frozen semen for improving breeding efficiency-Identification, conservation and propagation of the high yielding milch animals is one of the very important sectors of the animal husbandry development in the country. Good quality semen free from pathogenic organism as per the national and international standards is

one of the important components for improving the quality of animals. These newer developments in the concept and the techniques were not covered in the formal education courses earlier and hence, the Veterinarians are required to be updated and trained in such latest skills on AI and handling of frozen semen for improving the breeding efficiency. In addition to making the knowledge based educational materials available through distance mode, practical skill based trainings shall be imparted through identified institutions with relevant capabilities .

(c) Developing a trained middle level cadre in each State for dealing with unforeseen/emerging exotic diseases in livestock/poultry: With the opening of global trade in the post WTO era, emergence/re-emergence of diseases in livestock and poultry has become a common feature. Consequently, many times alarming situations arise because of emergence/re-emergence of such diseases and the concerned departments find it difficult to deal with the situation. The recent example is the emergence of bird flu in some States in the country. As such, there is a need to develop a strategy for preparedness to deal with such emergencies, which not only involve the animals but also human health. The Veterinarians working in the field should be equipped with the knowledge and skill to deal with such diseases on priority. As it would not be practical to train all the Veterinarians through out the country at a time, attempts are required to meet the necessity at least by developing a cadre of Veterinarians in each State to deal with such emergencies. Though the actual fields in which such cadres are to be developed shall be decided from time to time depending upon the need, in view of the existing disease situation, it is proposed to take into consideration developing of a cadre for bird flu and glanders at the initial stage.

(d) Professional Ethics and Animal Welfare- Veterinarians are required to strictly observe the professional ethics and render relentlessly the selfless service to the society, clients and animals as already prescribed by the Council in its Regulations. As per the global concern on animal welfare, it is also the moral responsibility of the practitioners to ensure application of the existing Animal Welfare related laws to alleviate the suffering of animals. Therefore, the Veterinarians are required to be updated with the provisions along with the recent developments in the concept in this important area. The relevant training materials shall be got developed by identified experts in the concerned field and disseminated to the practitioners through distance learning mode. Orientation training programmes on these above topics shall also be conducted from time to time.

(e) Large Animal Practice: The livestock sector is playing a pivotal role in the economy of the country in general and for sustenance of the rural people in particular. The large animals especially the cows and buffaloes constitute the major population of farm animals in India and provide the source of livelihood to the landless laborers and marginal farmers. While there has been tremendous advancement in the knowledge in respect of animal production, productivity and health care measures, these are still not available with the Veterinarians practising in the far-flung areas of the country. This becomes more relevant to the Veterinarians who had obtained their formal education long back and hence, may not be well conversant with such latest advances. Therefore, such advanced knowledge is needed to be passed on to the practising Veterinarians for

optimizing Veterinary services particularly in the rural areas. For this purpose, the information shall be made available through interactive as well as distance mode. The Veterinary Colleges/institutions in the respective States shall be entrusted to undertake skill development programmes related to this field on regular basis. The State AH departments shall be required to depute the field Veterinarians employed with them for such training as per their need.

(f) Pet and Companion Animal Practice: The pet and companion animals have become very relevant in the present day society and has not remained confined to only the major cities but has become a common feature even in small towns and in villages. They also play a major role in the household security and also as a companion to elderly people. In order to ensure quality Veterinary services in this sector, it is essential that the registered practitioners rendering the services are suitably equipped with the latest knowledge and skills with respect to Veterinary care, disease diagnosis and control of diseases including that of the zoonotic diseases. For this purpose, the relevant information shall be made available through interactive as well as distance mode. The Veterinary Colleges/institutions in the respective States, which have the necessary capabilities, shall be entrusted to undertake skill development programmes related to this field on regular basis. The State AH departments shall be required to depute the field Veterinarians employed with them for such training as per their need. Besides, as the pet animal practice has grown in the private sector, the private practitioners shall also be encouraged to participate in this programme.

2. Identification of the institutions and experts with their competence and capabilities:

For efficient and fruitful trainings in identified priority areas of CVE, the identification of Institutions and the experts, having relevant capabilities and competence is one of the most important factors influencing the success of CVE. The capabilities of the institutions in performing the specific skill/technology based programmes shall be assessed in detail before entrusting with an identified training programme. Based on the available information, initially, the teaching/research institutions in different States having the known competence and capabilities, and the experience of conducting CVE at various levels shall be utilized to impart specific skill/knowledge/technology based competence development programmes on Zonal/Regional basis for which the State AH Departments shall have to depute the trainees. For this purpose, initially, the facilities available at the Colleges of Veterinary Science at Pantnagar, Chennai, Hisar, Ludhiana, Bikaner, Mumbai, Guwahati, Bhubaneswar, Tirupati, and Jabalpur and the Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Bareilly shall be utilized to meet the immediate requirements on zonal/regional basis. Similarly, the services of the professional experts with known competence shall be utilized to develop required training materials.

In addition to class room/laboratory teaching/training, the other very effective and efficient way of upgrading the knowledge is through written literature/electronic media. For developing such programme, the VCI would make efforts to identify the

capable/competent institutions/ organizations/individuals who shall prepare the teaching materials. These materials shall be made available to the practitioners by the VCI/State Veterinary Councils/ State AH Departments and also through the websites. In this direction, the concerned websites shall be made a dynamic one.

As a long-term measure, a database with the existing capabilities of the institutions and the competence of the experts shall be developed and maintained which shall be utilized in entrusting the responsibilities of conducting CVE programmes. The facilities available with the Veterinary Colleges/institutions shall be utilized for imparting the routine trainings. However, emphasis will be given to develop centres of excellence in specified fields at certain identified institutions to carry out the specialized trainings required to meet the demands of the country/particular zone. In addition, a cadre of trainers for trainees shall also be developed by deputing the identified experts for advanced trainings either within the country or abroad. A mechanism shall also be developed to invite experts of international repute in a particular field to visit the training institution in the country and impart training on a specific area.

3. Regulation and monitoring of CVE

For efficient implementation of any programme, it must have a regulatory mode. The CVE, being an integral part of Veterinary education for continuous updating of knowledge and ensuring quality Veterinary services, should also be implemented through a set of regulations. Thus, the Council shall attempt to formulate appropriate regulations for implementing and monitoring the CVE programmes as part of regulation of Veterinary practice under the Indian Veterinary Council Act, 1984. These regulations shall envisage making the participation of the Veterinarians in the specified CVE programme mandatory and a pre-requisite for renewal of their registration/promotion. These will also prescribe the responsibilities/obligations of the practitioners, State AH Departments, State Veterinary Councils, and identified training institutions towards CVE, and also the structure of different programmes. These regulations shall be developed through extensive deliberations with all stakeholders at appropriate level. Till the required regulations are framed, the Guidelines developed for this purpose shall be followed in terms of objectives, terms and conditions, selection procedure, submission of proposal, operation of this scheme and financial support.

For monitoring CVE Programmes in terms of meaningful identification, planning, implementation, evaluation and regulation of CVE programmes in the country, a CVE Cell with adequate infrastructure and manpower at the VCI Headquarters is a pre-requisite.

Simultaneously, efforts shall have to be made by the Central Government and the State Governments in suitably strengthening the State Veterinary Councils to take up the activities of CVE as the regulatory authority at the State level. Also, efforts shall be made to establish a networking of the VCI with the State Councils and training institutions.

4. Target:

As stated above, the CVE programmes shall be initiated during the current financial year (2007-08) with the focus on identification of priority areas, institutions and experts, and also initiating the courses on priority as identified. After the actual need is assessed and the mechanism of implementing the programmes is put in place, the physical targets in terms of various identified programmes and the number of practitioners to be covered under each programme shall be worked out on yearly basis in detail. However, it is proposed that during the current year a total of five knowledge based programmes (involving all the registered practitioners through distance education mode), and two skill based programmes and at least one technical competence development programme shall be implemented involving about 2,000 registered practitioners. From the second year onwards attempts shall be made to achieve a target of at least 24 knowledge based programmes, 12 skill based programmes and six technical competence development programmes annually involving about 5,000 registered practitioners. In addition to the above, refresher courses shall also be organized on specific topics from time to time.

5. Evaluation and Impact Assessment:

As stated above, evaluation and impact assessment of the CVE Programmes shall be carried out periodically through commissioning of appropriate studies by competent agencies/individuals having the relevant capabilities. This shall be made a mandatory requirement as part of the regulations and relevant parameters for the study shall be developed in due course. The first such study is proposed to be commissioned at the end of third year. The findings/recommendations of such studies shall be given due consideration in modifying the programmes and formulating future strategies.