VETERINARY SURGEONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1965

House of Assembly, 1 September 1965, page 1410

Second reading

**The Hon. G. A. BYWATERS (Minister of Agriculture):** I move:

*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

Its object is to amend the Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1935-1957. One of the main reasons for amending the Act is to provide for more comprehensive control over advertising and merchandising by members of the veterinary profession. This is sought by the profession itself as a measure of self-discipline. This amendment appears in clause 15, which amends section 34 of the principal Act by providing for regulations to be made, prescribing a code of professional conduct in the same terms as are embodied in legislation regulating the conduct of other professional groups, such as dentists.

Clause 5 amends section 21 of the principal Act, and provides that no person shall be registered as a veterinary surgeon until he has paid the appropriate fee, or, in the case of renewal, a renewal fee. This clause facilitates collection of fees. Clauses 4, 6 and 10 confer power on the Veterinary Surgeons Board to prescribe the fee to be paid in respect of registration rather than lay down a set fee as at present.

By clause 8, which amends section 25 of the principal Act, the board would have power to cancel or suspend the registration of any veterinary surgeon who has become incapable of practising as such owing to mental or physical infirmity. This clause, like clauses 13 and 15, is designed to strengthen the authority of the board and improve ethical standards in the profession.

Clause 9, amending section 28 (a), and clause 11, amending section 28 (c), confer wider discretionary powers on the board as regards issue of permits to enable the interim registration of permit holders to treat sick and injured animals where no qualified veterinary surgeons are available. At the same time these provisions enable the board to encourage the establishment of qualified veterinary surgeons in all country areas of the State where livestock populations are capable of supporting a full-time qualified service. In this connection it is to be noted that South Australia is the only State that permits registration of unqualified persons. By clause 12, the penalties in sections 29, 30, 30a and 31 of the principal Act are increased from £50 to £100. The reason for this increase is to bring the penalties into line with changing money values.

By clause 13 section 30 of the principal Act is extended so as to make it an offence for the holders of permits to cause themselves to advertise or hold themselves out as veterinary surgeons, etc. At present the section makes it an offence only if a person himself advertises and does not extend to the situation where, for example, another advertises on his behalf. Clause 14 is intended to limit the scope of section 31a (1) to the extent that an unregistered person may not advertise himself as qualified to castrate, etc., dogs and cats though he may castrate, etc., other animals. The clause also amends section 31a (2) by providing that any person so treating any animal must not claim reimbursement of any expenses incurred for such treatment. Experience has shown that unregistered persons have been avoiding the provisions of the section, that no fee or reward must be charged, by claiming reimbursement of expenses incurred in the treatment. It was the intention of the section that no remuneration whatsoever should be recovered for such treatment.

Clause 15, in addition to making provision for making regulations for prescribing a code of professional conduct, increases the penalty that can be prescribed for a breach of the regulations from £10 to £100. The reason for this increase is like clause 12, to bring the penalty provision into line with present-day money values. The other amendments are of a minor nature and are designed to remove anomalies and outdated features in this Act and to improve its administration. I commend this Bill to the House.

Mr. NANKIVELL secured the adjournment of the debate.