



Australian Veterinary Association Mental Health Approach

Literature review & desktop analysis

Table of contents

Executive summary	3
Background	3
Aim	3
Methodology	3
Findings	3
Recommendations	3
Overview	4
The Veterinary Industry	4
Mental health impacts	4
Scope of desktop review	5
Current state of mental health in the veterinary industry	6
Career lifecycle factors	6
Education & student life	7
Psychosocial risk factors	8
Psychosocial protective factors	11
Indicators of a thriving workplace	12
COVID-19 impacts	13
Current mental health interventions in the veterinary industry	14
An integrated approach to mental health	14
Australian approach	15
International approach	19
Intervention gap analysis	25
Recommendations	26
High-level recommendations	26
Strategic recommendations	26
Next steps	28
References	29
Appendix 1 - Other Industry Approaches	30

Executive summary

Background

There is growing evidence from academic research, industry bodies and professionals that the veterinary industry is in a mental health crisis. Over the last three decades the risk of suicide in veterinary professionals has steadily increased: veterinarians are now four times more likely to die by suicide than the general population, and two times more likely than any other healthcare profession (13). The mental health landscape across the Australian veterinary industry is complex and varied, suggesting that a holistic approach is needed to positively impact the mental health outcomes of professionals across the industry.

Aim

To provide a summary of the current state of the industry, identify risk and protective factors, determine gaps and opportunities in the interventions already used nationally and internationally, and provide recommendations on best practice innovative approaches to make sustainable and measurable change to mental health in the veterinary industry.

Methodology

To review the current state of mental health across the veterinary industry, data was leveraged from SuperFriend's national 'Indicators of a Thriving Workplace' survey. Academic literature was also reviewed, and anecdotal evidence was gathered, and fact checked from industry issues papers, articles and key stakeholders within the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA).

The 'Integrated Approach to Workplace or Workforce Mental Health' framework (9) was used to conduct a gap analysis on the interventions currently offered by national and international industry organisations. This framework focuses on three main areas: preventing harm or protecting mental health, promoting mental health, and managing illness. Recommendations for future initiatives were also made using this framework.

Findings

This review identified that individual and environmental risk factors exist throughout the entire veterinary career lifecycle, and include personality traits of perfectionism, demanding and expensive student life, poor post-graduate support, poor work-life balance, high occupational conflict, emotional and moral challenges, and financial stressors. Protective factors include sense of community, sense of meaning, satisfaction with clinical success and a deep connection to animal advocacy and welfare.

This review also identified six national and seven international organisations which are currently providing support to address mental ill health across the veterinary industry. Most interventions focus on managing illness (including 24/7 helplines, mental health and suicide intervention training, free confidential counselling, etc), and further work needs to be done in preventing illness and addressing mental health risks both directly and indirectly.

Recommendations

High-level recommendations include creating an industry wide approach, investing in further research, and creating stronger links with state health and safety regulators. Strategic recommendations which address key risk factors across the veterinary career lifecycle include graduate mentoring, client interaction training, pet insurance strategies, and mental health support programs, among others. These initial recommendations will be validated through focus groups and voice-of-industry activities prior to being finalised and implemented.

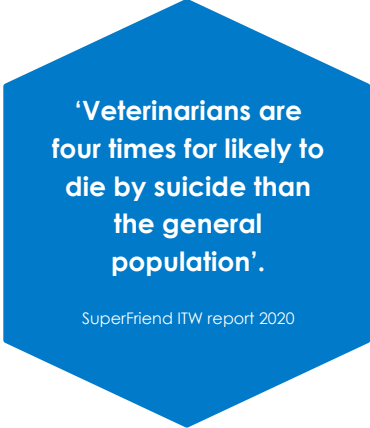
Overview

SuperFriend was engaged by the Australian Veterinary Association to review literature and research related to the current state of mental health in the veterinary industry in Australia. This review takes a holistic view of the industry, inclusive of all roles and stakeholders with a specific emphasis on the veterinary role and high risk of suicide associated with this role. The risk and protective factors as well as current and potential best practice initiatives to address mental health within the industry formed the scope of this review. Both Australian and international approaches to mental health in the veterinary industry were included to leverage global best practice and inform action now and, in the future, to make practical and sustainable change for the industry.

The Veterinary Industry

There is growing evidence from academic research, industry bodies and professionals across the industry that the veterinary industry is in a mental health crisis. Not only do those in the veterinary profession suffer from burnout, compassion fatigue, anxiety, and depression, they are four times more likely to die by suicide than the general population - double that of any other healthcare profession (13). The risks to mental health are significant and varied for all members of the industry.

Those in the industry are often drawn to the profession as a 'personal calling'. They are passionate about animals and take an oath to serve animal welfare, but animals are owned by people. This creates a unique situation in which veterinarians and other veterinary support staff must perform a dual role in working with animals and people, often lacking the skills to manage the people side of the job. Over the last three decades there has been an increased risk of suicide with a steady upward trend (13). The contributing factors are complex and multi-faceted but have often been described by those in the industry as a combination of being 'over-tired, over-worked, and underappreciated'.



'Veterinarians are four times for likely to die by suicide than the general population'.

SuperFriend ITW report 2020

Mental health impacts

Recent reports from the industry suggest that over 30% of veterinarians are considering leaving clinical practice due to stress, anxiety, and poor work conditions (18). However, the mental health landscape across the industry is much more complex than this, suggesting that a holistic approach is needed to positively impact the mental health outcomes of those in the industry.

While a high stress working environment is a key risk factor, individual and environmental risks exist throughout the entire veterinary career lifecycle (figure 2), including:

- Personality trait of perfectionism
- High course entry requirements
- Demanding course structure
- High student loans
- Lack of post graduate support
- Low starting wage
- A national veterinary shortage

These risks are compounded by a high-stress working environment with poor work-life balance due to long hours, demanding work, unsociable hours, and on-call work. Stigma related to mental ill health is highly prevalent in the macro-level professional environment, with professional competence being the main priority in a highly regulated environment. The emotionally taxing nature of the work also brings a host of risks, as veterinary staff confront five times more death than in human medicine and must regularly deliver bad news, manage moral and ethical dilemmas around animal care, and deal with primary and secondary trauma (7).

Challenging interactions with the public further contribute to the workplace stressors that negatively impact those in the industry. Staff in veterinary practices across Australia are routinely exposed to workplace conflict, including client abuse, manipulation surrounding payment for services, pressure to work for free, and challenges around negotiating proper patient care. This can also often create additional stress and financial pressure for practice owners who regularly absorb costs and out-of-pocket expenses. Figure 1 below highlights some of the key risks to mental health as well as some of the impacts on those working in the industry.

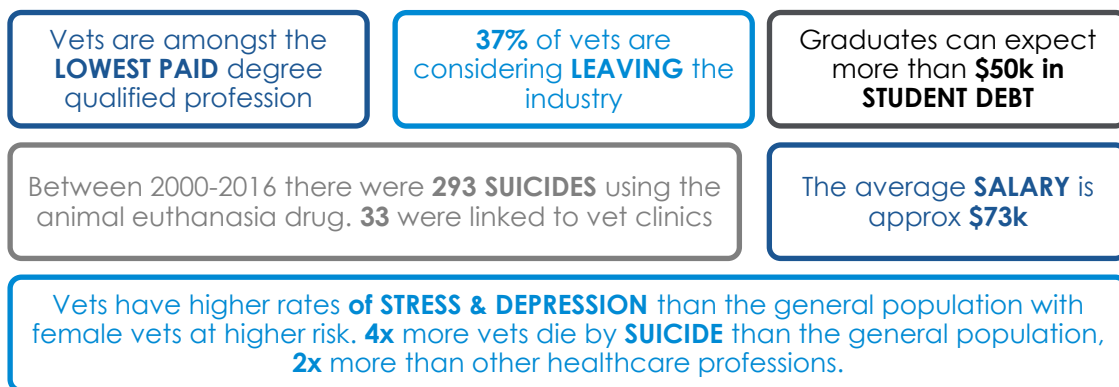


Figure 1. The current state of the veterinary industry in Australia.

Despite these stressors, there are many positives to working in the industry though these are less frequently reported in the literature. Less than half of the studies on mental health in the veterinary industry address protective factors, with most focusing on stressors alone. This is an area of opportunity for ongoing research.

However, some of the positives associated with working in the veterinary industry which could be critical in the solution include:

- Sense of meaning and purpose associated with serving in animal welfare and contributing to the greater good.
- Sense of community that often exists in many clinics and workplaces.
- Community perception of being an essential and needed service.
- Achievement and satisfaction that comes with clinical successes and good news stories.

Scope of desktop review

The aim of this review is to provide a summary of the current state of the industry, identify risk and protective factors that exist, determine the gaps and opportunities in the interventions that already exist and provide recommendations around best practice innovative approaches to make sustainable and measurable change in the mental health status of the industry.

Current state of mental health in the veterinary industry

A review of academic research, ITW survey data, VetSurvey data and issues papers has shown that stressors exist across the entire career life cycle for veterinary industry professionals. The following section details individual and environmental risk and protective factors that impact upon the mental health of individuals in the veterinary industry.

When assessing workplace psychosocial risk, factors that detract from the workplace experience or increase the likelihood of one experiencing mental health related issues (risk factors) and factors that enable good mental health (protective factors) should be considered. A mentally healthy workplace or workforce is one in which risk factors are acknowledged and addressed, and protective factors are fostered and maximised.

Career lifecycle factors

Although this review considers all roles within the industry, the role of the veterinarian is unique in the risks that may be present throughout the entire career lifecycle. From pressure and finances in student life to adjusting to life in practice in the early years through to identity and transition challenges when approaching retirement, there are various risks that could impact the mental health of a practicing veterinarian. Considering the entire career lifecycle while ensure a holistic approach to addressing the mental health of the industry.

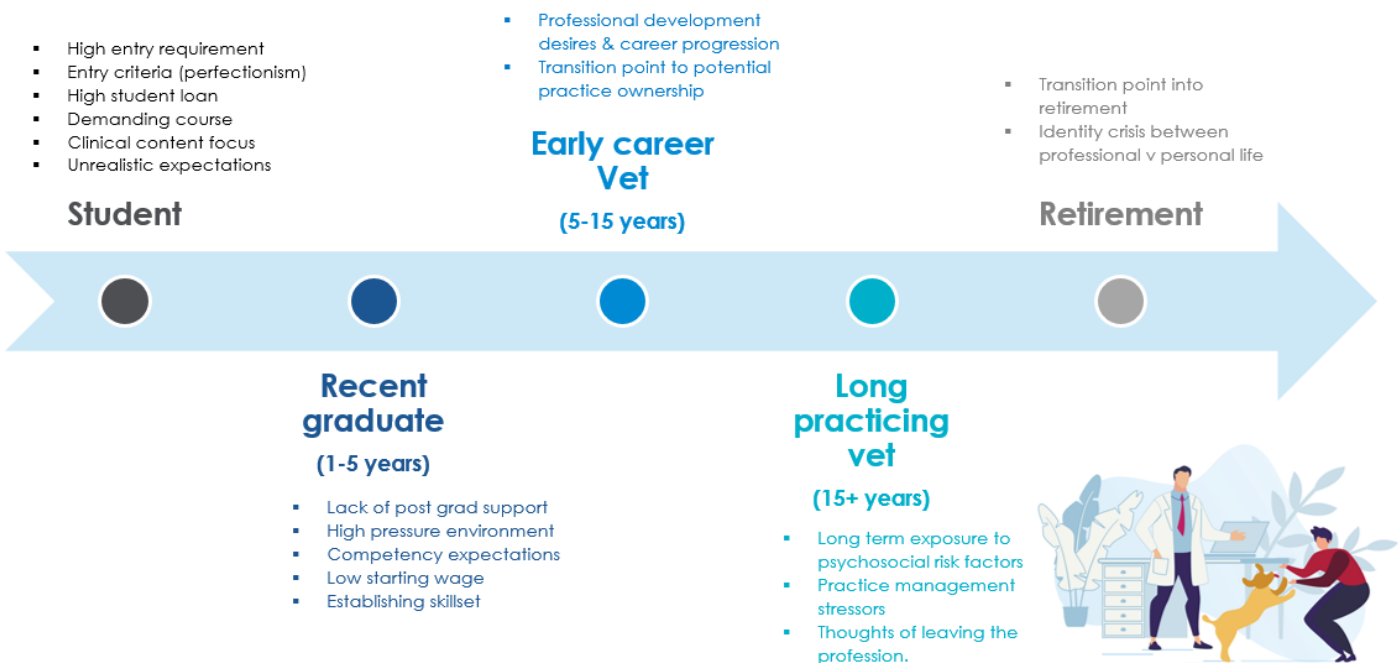


Figure 2. Journey of a practicing veterinarian and associated risk considerations.

Education & student life

Multiple studies highlight that the life of a studying veterinarian is a stressful experience, as well as a risk for future mental health related issues (17). A high university entrance score and universities selecting for perfectionism to meet the rigorous academic demands are initial risk factors for future mental health challenges, while personality traits such as perfectionism, being self-critical, and high-achiever type traits are also shown to contribute to student risk (17).

Veterinary students' study for 4-5 years and end their course with a high student loan and low starting salary, and with a future ahead of them where their level of remuneration does not fairly reflect the work they do. These formative early educational experiences are critical, as negative university experiences put students at a higher risk of developing mental health related issues when exposed to unmanaged occupational risks once they enter the workforce (17).

The veterinary science course is heavily weighted towards clinical veterinary skills and focused more on the animal element of practice rather than on managing human clients. There is evidence in the research that suggests a need for more non-clinical course content including communication, coping, client interactions, ethics literacy, moral distress, and cognitive skills. It has been additionally suggested that a focus on well-being and self-care including mindfulness, self-awareness, mental health and suicide awareness, grief and bereavement and resilience is also required.

'Veterinary students' study for 4-5 years and upon graduation are among the lowest paid degree qualified professions.

Murdoch University in Perth currently run a core unit in their course called "Veterinary Professional Life" which helps students to understand and prepare to look after their mental health and that of their colleagues. This course includes topics on positive psychology, resilience, gratitude, and self-awareness. This is a positive sign and important advancement for the industry, as young veterinarians are a high-risk group in the industry as noted in multiple studies (4, 7, 17).

With this information in mind, consideration must be given also to embedding mental health professionals in universities and ensuring staff and teachers are trained and upskilled in mental health awareness and intervention to ensure adequate support for students in their study journey.

Psychosocial risk factors

Risk factors are those factors that exist within the workplace or workforce that may negatively impact our experience at work and increase the likelihood of work detracting from our mental health. These include demand and control challenges, exposure to trauma, poor interpersonal relationships and conflict, poor leadership, effort and reward imbalance, and lack of work-life balance.

Below is a summary of some of the most common psychosocial risk factors that may be present in a workplace setting (6) If addressed these can positively impact on a workforce or workplaces mental health and thriving status. Factors specific to the veterinary industry have also been identified through available evidence reviewed from academic papers, industry reviews, survey data and issues papers (4,5,10).

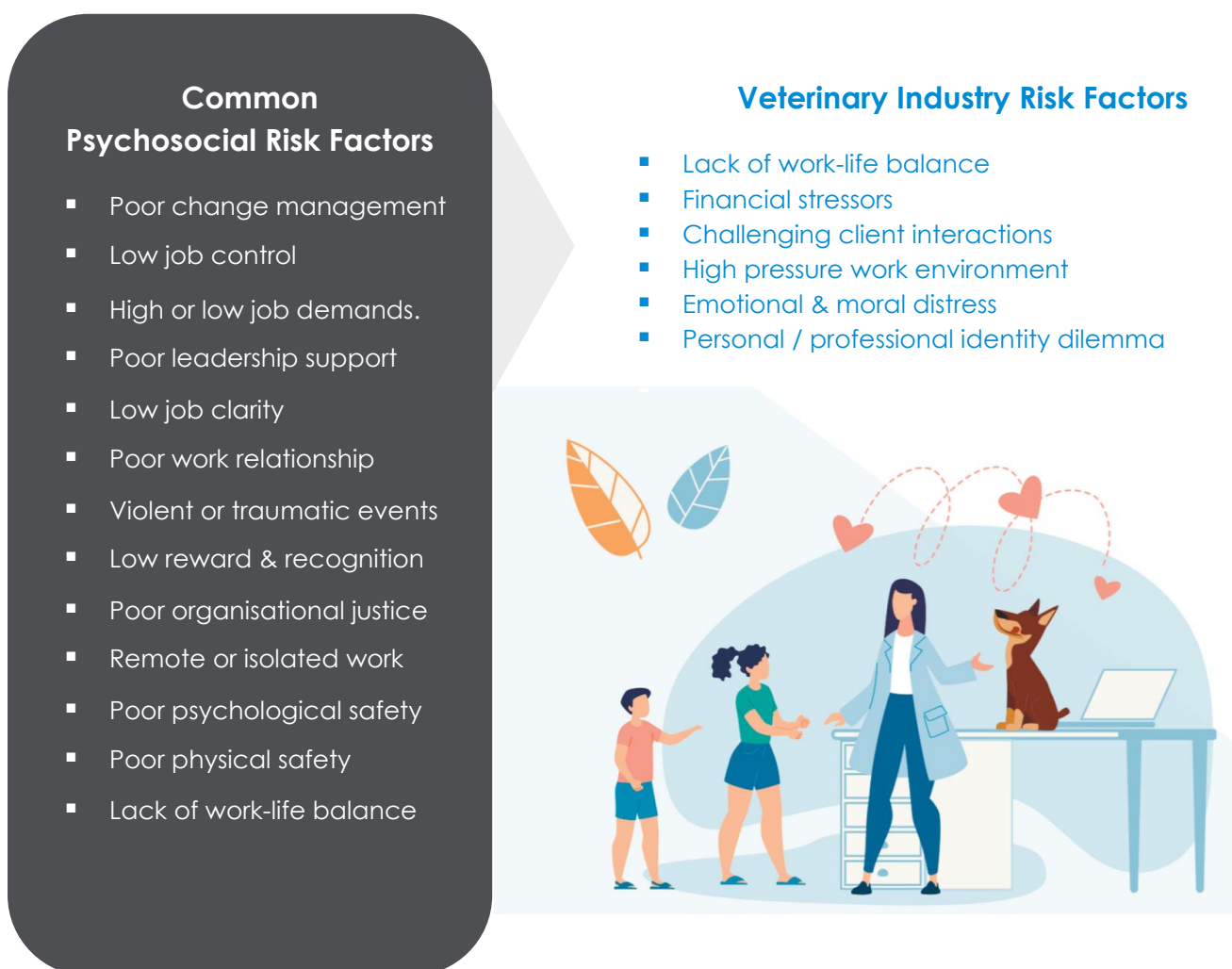


Figure 3. Common psychosocial risk factors and those specific to the veterinary industry.

The following is a summary of some of the commonly reported risk factors in the veterinary industry with some common trends called out and grouped accordingly.

Lack of work-life balance

Working long hours, on-call work and unpredictable patterns of work make work-life balance difficult in the veterinary industry with the following associated risks to well-being.

Working long hours	High expectation to be available	Emergency, on-call & shift work
Unpredictable patterns of work	Personal life intrusion & impact on spare time	Poor access to & attitudes towards sick/annual leave
Staffing & recruitment issues	National veterinary shortage impacts	Pressures & demands of managing a business

Financial stressors

Not only does running a business or clinic include a range of financial stressors, cost of treatment and the clients ability to pay for services exposes those in the industry to a range of risks, so too does the financial impacts of study in early student life.

High student loan debt	Low starting wages of practicing veterinarians	Low pay across the career lifecycle
Costs associated with running a business	High fees with no available rebates	Pressure to absorb costs for unpaid services
Community expectation to work for free	High cost to offer best practice clinical services & equipment	High number & frequency of non-paying clients

Challenging client interactions

Challenging client interactions are common and range from emotionally charged situations to abusive clients as well as delicate financial conversations exposing those in the industry to risks on a daily basis.

Imbalance in skills to deal with animals vs people	Regularly breaking sad or bad news	Exposure to physical & verbal abuse
Dealing with complaints, lawsuits & board enquiries	Social media reviews & cyberbullying	Exposure to animal abuse or neglect
Negotiating patient care & advocating for the patient	Moral & ethical decisions around best practice care	Community expectation to work for the greater good

Personal & professional identity

There are a range of personality factors present in many that work in the industry that may be risk factors if not managed appropriately. Often those in the profession are drawn to the profession and can become quite absorbed in their work creating a blur between the personal and professional identity.

High degree of maladaptive perfectionism	High degree of commitment, competitiveness & altruism	Performance anxiety due to the critical environment
Self-critical & high achiever traits	Loss of personal identity outside of 'veterinarian'	Proving competence & keeping up with profession
Highly specialised skills with perception of low transferable skills	Lack of time for interpersonal relationships at work	Imposter syndrome & pressure to perform at a high level

High pressure work environment

The pressure of a highly critical clinical environment in which competence and capability is of significant importance brings with it a range of pressures and risk factors.

Highly critical clinical environment	Working alone or in isolation	Rural or remote work
High stigma environment	Pressure to 'be strong' or 'get on with it'	Regulated environment to maintain ability to practice
Limited time to debrief difficult situations	Impersonal clinical environment	Easy access to drugs in a high pressure environment

Emotional & moral distress

Being exposed to sad and difficult cases at a high frequency presents a range of risks, not only do those in the industry deal with emotional situations regularly, moral distress is also shown to be high.

Regularly dealing with sad cases	Exposure to death at high rates	Euthanising animals & attitudes towards death
Prioritising care of others over self	Mandatory reporting of mental health issues in a regulated environment	Moral distress associated with ethical clinical decisions
Being unable to give animals the care they need	Emotionally charged situations with no time to process	Challenges that come with the patient being 'owned'

Psychosocial protective factors

Protective factors are those factors that exist within the workplace or workforce that contribute to positive work experiences, increase the likelihood of developing good workplace mental health and protect against mental ill health. These factors include positive and supportive leadership, opportunities to develop and grow, a safe environment, access to mental health supports, and good workplace relationships.

Much of the research both locally and internationally centres around veterinary specific stressors and risk factors, but few explore protective or satisfying factors. Further research into industry-wide protective factors is warranted to ensure that these are being leveraged to create solutions that enhance the existing protective factors and ensure positive, long-term sustainable impact on mental health in the industry. The following protective factors however have been identified in the veterinary industry.

Sense of meaning and purpose

High sense of pride & purpose in work being done	Connection to the greater good	Deep connection to animal welfare & role as animal advocate
--	--------------------------------	---

Internal motivation

High levels of internal motivation & engagement with work	Commitment & dedication to serving the profession	Internal desires to positively serve the animal population
---	---	--

Sense of community

Contribution to the care of the community	Being an essential service to the community	Contribution to the greater good
Relationships formed in small, rural & remote communities	The workplace itself feeling like a community or family	Community feel of the professional network

Autonomy in work

Large scope for autonomous work	High degree of decision-making latitude	Job control factors are usually high
---------------------------------	---	--------------------------------------

Achievement and satisfaction

Satisfaction associated with achieving clinical success	High level of problem solving & associated successes	Exposure to and contribution to good news stories
---	--	---

Good team environment

High level of teamwork within clinical practice	Colleagues having a shared purpose	Family feel of small-medium practices
Colleagues as a support network	Positive workplace interpersonal relationships	The 'profession' supporting each other

Indicators of a thriving workplace

Each year SuperFriend undertakes Australia's largest mental health and wellbeing survey the 'Indicators of a Thriving Workplace' report. Using 40 scientifically validated indicators the survey measures and tracks the current state against the desired state of a thriving workplace. The report provides insights into how the Australian workforce and workplaces are faring in creating mentally healthy and thriving workplaces across 5 key domains: *leadership, capability, culture, connectedness, and policy.*

The latest survey was completed in May 2020 by over 10,000 Australian workers making up a representative sample of the Australian workforce across industries, gender, age, and location. Although the sample size for veterinary science/medicine was relatively small in the 2020 survey, some key insights were gathered via verbatim comments about the industry. The following verbatims demonstrate a representative voice of those currently working in the industry and validate some key points highlighted in the academic research such as the need for community education, training & education, the pressures of client interactions and paperwork and the need for greater work-life balance and flexibility.

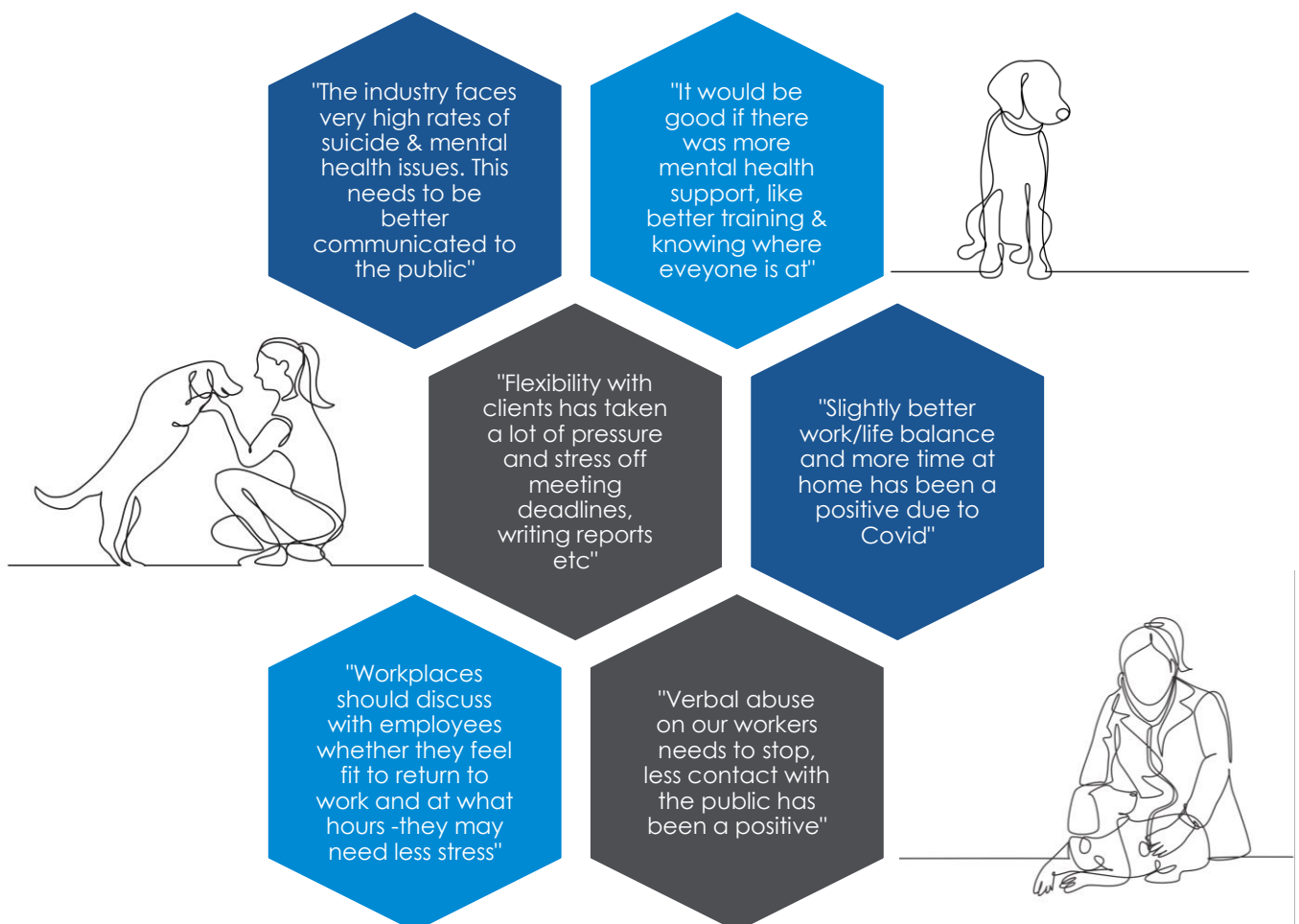


Figure 4. Indicators of a Thriving Workplace 2020 report – veterinary science verbatims

COVID-19 impacts

In January 2021 CM Research published the first set of results from the 2020 VetsSurvey in a report titled 'COVID-19 – Global pandemic impact on the veterinary industry'. This was a global survey to track the impacts of the pandemic on Vets Panel members since March 2020 in which over 5000 veterinary professionals were interviewed across 91 countries.

Some interesting insights were gained from the survey which may both directly and indirectly impact the mental health of those in the industry, now, and in the future.

High level findings

- Virtually all clinics have put new policies and procedures in place to adapt to the pandemic.
- There have been issues with stock and the supply chain for materials, equipment, medications, etc. which have had a flow on to clinics.
- Clinic activities have changed to include house calls, less routine check-ups, decrease in vaccinations and more emergency cases.
- Clinics have had to adapt their communication channels relying more on technology, email, and social media.
- Client numbers have in fact increased as has revenue for a lot of clinics.

Changes to the way clinics operate.

Clinics were required to adapt the way they operate quite drastically which included things like using personal protective equipment (PPE), limiting client numbers for only emergencies, operating a phone triage service to determine in person visits and cancelling unnecessary sales and rep visits. Due to an increase in client numbers and having to accommodate triaging and clients waiting outside the clinic some clinics implemented split shifts, working hours increased and staff had a higher workload than pre-pandemic. In Australia, the pandemic was also noted to have little impact on staff redundancies.

Impact on continuing professional development (CPD)

The pandemic appeared to offer an opportunity for staff to increase their ability to complete and take part in continuing professional development (CPD) activities. In Australia, the following areas were most popular; area of speciality (54%), COVID-19 advice (32%), self-development (27%), diagnostic (24%) and pain management (21%).

Future workforce impacts

Some interesting insights were collected related to future career aspirations of respondents. 39% of respondents advised they intend to remain employed as a vet, 32% would like to decrease hours or work part-time, 16% are seeking further qualifications and 10% would like to leave the profession.

Current mental health interventions in the veterinary industry

A review of academic research, industry papers and publicly available organisation information has shown that both in Australia and internationally, professional associations, charities, not-for-profits, and separate entities are attempting to intervene to address the issue of mental health and mental ill health across the veterinary industry.

These organisations are intervening at a range of levels from prevention and early intervention to managing and supporting illness. Most work in this area focuses on interventions for managing illness, while further work needs to be done in preventing illness at all levels through activities that address mental health risks both directly and indirectly.

The most common interventions both locally and internationally include free confidential counselling, 24/7 help lines, financial support through benevolent funds, mental health and suicide intervention training, peer support and debriefing, leadership programs, graduate mentoring, continuing professional development and health and well-being resources. There are also innovative practices being introduced internationally, including reflective practice programs, anti-stigma campaigns, lived experience podcasts, storytelling, research grants, and charitable vet work funds.

An integrated approach to mental health

When addressing mental health across a workplace or workforce it is important to take an integrated approach. An integrated approach to workplace or workforce mental health encompasses three main areas of activity:

- (i) *Preventing harm or protecting mental health* by reducing work-related and other risk factors for mental health problems. Risk and protective factors are addressed in a systemic way as a primary step in intervening.
- (ii) *Promoting mental health* by developing the positive aspects of work as well as worker strengths and positive capacities, and
- (iii) *Managing illness* and responding to mental health problems as they manifest at work, regardless of cause. These interventions are often psychologically focused through service and support provision (10).

The integrated approach was used as the framework to assess current interventions, complete a gap analysis and provided recommendations for future initiatives and interventions.

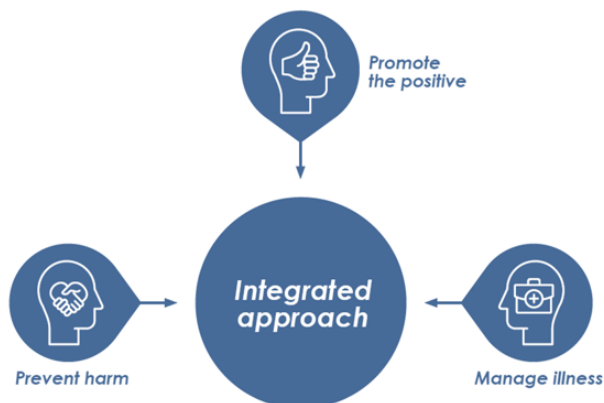


Figure 5. The integrated approach

Australian approach

There were six organisations identified in the desktop research that are either providing services or intervening in the veterinary mental health space in Australia. These include;

- The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA)
- VetSet2Go
- The Lincoln Institute
- Vetlife Australia
- Love Your Pet Love Your Vet
- Vets in Mind

The following section will provide detail on the focus and activity of each of these organisations.

Australian Veterinary Association (AVA)



The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the professional association representing veterinarians across Australia. The AVA has developed a range of initiatives to support veterinary mental health and prevent serious mental health issues and suicide in the industry. These initiatives are underpinned by the *Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework* developed in 2014 which encompasses 6 key action areas (see Figure 6).

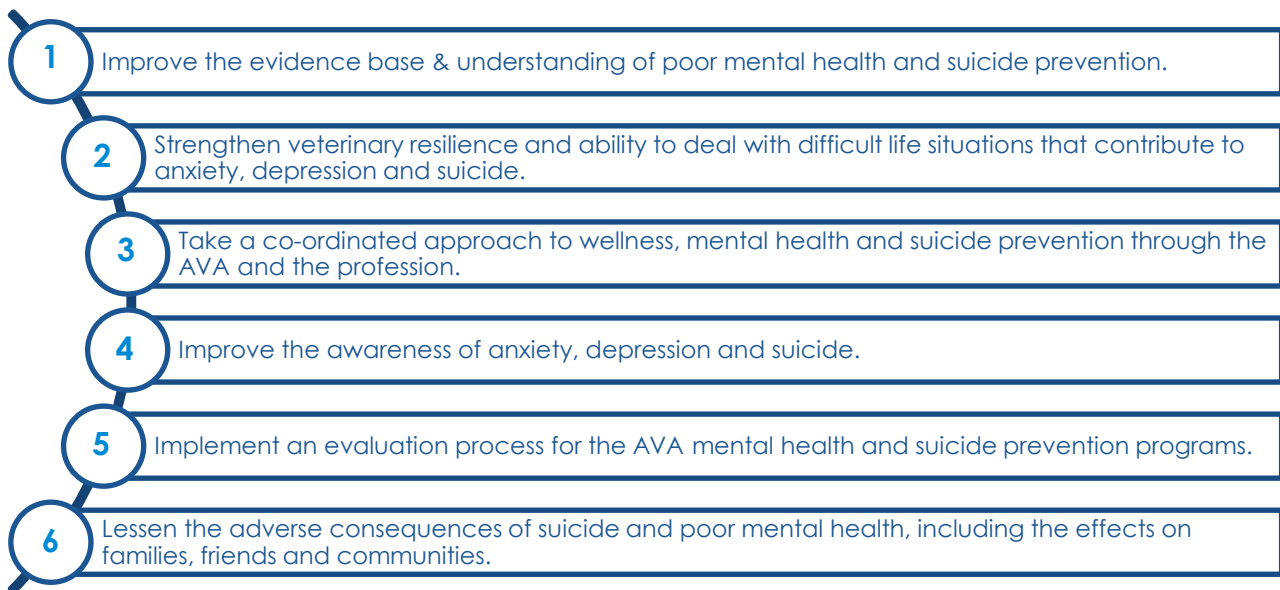


Figure 6. AVA Mental health and suicide prevention framework action areas.

The interventions available through AVA as part of the vet wellness program are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Australian Veterinary Association interventions.

Intervention	Description
HR Advisory Service	The HR advisory service focuses on workplace relations, accidents and safety, training and development, employee wellbeing and reconciliation and mediation. Calls to the service about wellbeing are reported to be low.
Workforce Challenges Working Group	Following the annual conference in 2019 a working group of members with a range of expertise was formed to actively seek and work towards solutions to workforce attrition. Addressing employment and workforce challenges is a key priority of the group.
Employer of Choice program	Accreditation program aimed at employee retention through creating best practice thriving workplaces. The program includes initial registration, staff and manager surveys, online learning, resources and templates and 30+ best practice employee retention strategies. Accreditation and reaccreditation criteria apply to ensure compliance.
CPD Calendar	Online learning platform and webinars as well as face-to-face conferences, seminars, and events across the course of the year. Both clinical and non-clinical topics are addressed through the CPD program, as well a specific focus on mental health and wellness through mental health days, webinars, conference topics, vet boot camp for graduates, 'reflect and grow' programs, and mental health resources on the web.
Graduate Mentor Program	Opt-in 12-month program linking in recent graduates with experienced mentors. Currently there are 369 active mentors and 204 mentees. The aim is for mentors and mentees to connect at least once a month from a support, learning and growth perspective.
Vet Health Resources	Vet health resources include (but are not limited to) suicide, grief and loss, addiction, domestic violence, relationships, general wellbeing, stress, supporting others, depression, and anxiety. There are a range of TED talks focused on mental health and wellness as well as extra resources provided during mental health month campaigns.
Leadership Diploma	Designed for leaders and those in management positions and delivered by the animal industries resource centre and veterinary business group with an aim to upskill those in positions of authority and responsible for running a clinic/small business.
Return to Work Program	Program is aimed at vets wishing to return to practice after leave, career breaks etc. It is an online self-paced program including clinical and non-clinical options aimed at assisting the transition process of returning to work.
Annual Awards	Recognition of service to the association or veterinary profession through a program of awards and prizes. Awards include those for outstanding service, international veterinary science, outstanding practical contribution, and student awards.
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	Standard EAP service through Converge International. Converge International recently reported the most common reasons for using the service included ongoing stress, anxiety, job/time pressure, and loss of confidence.
Member Helpline	Helpline managed by the member services team and acts as a triage service for assistance to members in times of need. Free confidential counselling is available 24/7 through Converge International for all members, vets, vet staff and family members. Face to face and clinic visits are also available as is post traumatic counselling.

Benevolent Fund	Practical support to those affected by illness, financial hardship, accident or otherwise having a tough time. The fund is managed by four individual trustees appointed by the AVA board in which requests are submitted and reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
Mental Health First Aid Training	Mental health first aid courses are offered face-to-face and online with 517 vets trained to date.

VetSet2Go



VetSet2Go is a collaborative project to define the capabilities most important for employability and success in the veterinary profession and create assessment tools and resources to build these capabilities. The focus is beyond initial employment and graduate competency towards

sustained success in the profession, regardless of context. A range of sub-projects are part of the broader project, including a case studies sub-project lead by Murdoch University, employer expectations project lead by the University of Queensland, veterinary resilience sub-project lead by University of Adelaide and the University of Sydney, client expectations sub-project lead by University of Edinburgh, and a stakeholder perceptions sub-project lead by Murdoch University.

The project aims to make the capabilities that contribute to employability more explicit in education to help students better prepare for challenges they may encounter in transition to practice. This is achieved through a veterinary employability framework which defines 18 key capabilities important to employability in vet contexts and intended to assist vets in discovering self through their own values, ideals, goals, and identity to succeed in their career.

Table 2. VetSet2Go interventions.

Intervention	Description
Online Self-Assessment Tool	An online assessment tool has been developed with associated resources to assist users in to explore self-discovery including assessment of values, ideals, goals, and professional and personal identity.
Capability Cards	Based on the framework, 18 discovery cards have been developed as resources for users to explore capabilities that align with their strengths and opportunity areas. The capability cards align to five broad domains including effective relationships, veterinary capabilities, professional commitment, psychological resources, and self-awareness.

VetLife Australia



Vetlife Australia is a not-for-profit health promotion charity aimed at mental health awareness and suicide prevention. Research suggests Vetlife Australia is in development with activities based on the Onelife program in WA and the Vetlife program in the UK, however there is little

evidence of the progress of the charity. Research into Vetlife Australia suggests the following initiatives are in development: gatekeeper system for training to recognise poor mental health and encourage help seeking, a dedicated helpline for immediate support, and capability building / education for all vets in the area of wellbeing and mental health. Some basic information is provided on a two-day resilience and coping course titled 'Path to Positive Veterinary Life'.

The Lincoln Institute



The Lincoln Institute aims to support the veterinary industry to thrive through delivery of leadership and development training for veterinary business owners and their teams. They are a leadership development organisation servicing Australia and New Zealand.

LINCOLN
INSTITUTE

Table 3. The Lincoln Institute interventions.

Intervention	Description
Free Training	Small range of free courses designed to cover topics to help vets thrive in practice. These include time management, managing staff conflict, and dealing with difficult clients.
Training Subscription Service	Monthly subscription service with weekly bite-sized video trainings. All learning is non-clinical and focused on topics such as communication with clients, time efficiency, work and interpersonal relationships, resilience, and managing financial strain. The program attracts CPD points and can also contribute to a micro-accreditation in leadership through the University of QLD.
Practice Owner & Senior Manager Training Program	"Lead to Succeed" is a three year leadership mastery development program designed for practice owners and senior managers.

Love your pet Love your vet



Love your pet Love your Vet is a registered charity aimed at increasing the wellbeing of those that work in the veterinary industry. The charity was founded by Dr Nadine Hamilton from Positive Psychology Solutions and claims to be 'leading the way in reducing suicide in the vet profession' by raising awareness and reducing stigma.

Table 4. Love your Pet love your Vet interventions.

Intervention	Description
Vets of Australia Mini-Series	Fourteen part story telling series aimed at educating the community about the ups and downs of working in the veterinary industry. Vets from within the industry share their stories about a range of topics including: a day in the life of a vet, financial constraints, unrealistic expectations, compassion fatigue, and euthanising animals.
Group Debriefing Service	Online group debriefing sessions available for vets and their staff who have been through a difficult time. Sessions are run and facilitated by CEO Dr Nadine Hamilton (Psychologist) and are charged at \$150 donation to Love your pet love your vet.
Free Suicide Prevention Training	Through a collaboration with Banfield Pet Hospitals, Love your Pet Love your Vet offers free 'ASK' (Assess – Support – Know) suicide prevention training to veterinary professionals.

VetFolio Wellbeing Resource Centre	Access to VetFolio's one-stop-shop of continuing education materials and resources related to both professional and personal development.
Reach Out Wellbeing Conference	A two day wellbeing conference for veterinary professionals focused on coping strategies. The conference focuses on evidence-based coping, stress and time management, communication and assertiveness, relaxation, goal setting, and holistic wellbeing.

Vets in Mind



Vets in Mind is a not-for-profit organisation which aims to be a source of quality information about mental health and wellness for the veterinary market. Vets in Mind aims to help veterinary professionals by providing resources on a range of mental health topics, 24/7 information about how vets can look after themselves, and contacts for mental health support. Vets in Mind have a smartphone app which is provided by a not-for-profit consortium of interested parties across the industry and which was launched in late 2020. The app is in its early stages and the future direction will be decided by an Advisory Board which is in the process of forming.

International approach

There were seven organisations identified in the desktop research that are either providing services or intervening in the veterinary mental space internationally. Organisations are spread across the UK, USA, Canada, and New Zealand. *Vetlife UK*, the *American Veterinary Medical Association*, and *Mind Matters* appear to be the most active in the veterinary mental health space internationally.

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association



The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) is the national and international voice for Canada's veterinarians, providing leadership and advocacy for veterinary medicine. The CVMA prioritises leadership on national veterinary issues, animal welfare advocacy and a successful careers and balanced life for those in the industry. The CVMA has a veterinary wellness advisory group whose mandate is to develop and promote veterinary wellness initiatives and programs at a national level to complement provincial programs and help groups and provincial veterinary medical associations in expanding their own wellness initiatives.

Table 5. Canadian Veterinary Medical Association interventions.

Intervention	Description
Emerging Leaders Program	Designed to support veterinary colleagues (Years 1 - 10 post-graduate) in finding their way forward as professionals and establishing themselves on a track to become fulfilled colleagues who are successful in both their personal and professional lives.
Online Education Portal	Access to over 800 e-learning sessions and education resources from veterinary experts and education institutions from around the world. These contribute towards continuing education (CE) points.

Mentoring Program	Developed to help recent graduates overcome the challenges they face post-graduation while settling into professional life, CVMA created the CVMA Mentoring Program connecting CVMA members wanting to support final year DVM students, recent graduates, and early career veterinarians.
Veterinary Health and Wellbeing Resources	Pertinent resources and information from numerous sources to help support the personal well-being of veterinarians and veterinary students, with a focus on education, awareness, and prevention.

Vetlife (UK)



Vetlife (UK) is a long-established veterinary charity which initially formed as the Veterinary Benevolent Fund and rebranded to Vetlife in 2015. Vetlife has three integrated component functions: Vetlife Helpline, Vetlife Health

Support, and Vetlife Financial Support. The aim of this organisation is to provide independent, confidential, free help for everyone in the vet community including vet nurses, students, and non-clinical staff.

Table 6. Vetlife (UK) interventions.

Intervention	Description
Helpline	Phone-based helpline is available 24 hours, 365 days a year and is run by volunteers who have knowledge and experience in the veterinary industry. This is a completely confidential service available for work and non-work-related support and is also available to family members.
Email Support	An anonymous email service for confidential support. All emails are answered within 24 hours with the senders' email and identification details removed for complete anonymity.
Health Support	Vetlife Health Support is made up of a team of professionals including psychiatrists, mental health nurses and therapists who have experience working in mental health. Access to the service is through a triage process via the helpline and email support. Once an assessment has been made by the health support team, appropriate case management will be undertaken to determine the next steps of support.
Financial Support	Emergency financial assistance is available to vet surgeons and dependents. The service includes regular monthly grants, one-off gifts, professional advice on state benefits and debt, access to CPD and bungalow accommodation. All applications are assessed by a grants award panel and assessed on their individual merit.
Advice, Information & Resources	There is a wide range of advice, information and resources related to mental health and wellbeing for students, graduates, vets, and support staff. These resources address a range of risk factors and behaviours as well as mental health and wellness topics of relevance relating to work, self-care, and the emotional and mental impacts of the role.

Not One More Vet (NOMV)



Not One More Vet is a not-for-profit which began in 2014 following the suicide of world-renowned veterinarian, Dr Sophia Yin. The mission of NOMV is that every single veterinary professional receives the support they need to reduce incidence of suicide in the industry. Through a large network of veterinary professionals NOMV aims to create an online peer support network as well as relevant education and tools.

Table 7. Not One More Vet interventions.

Intervention	Description
NOMV Moderators	Support group moderators trained in suicide intervention are available for veterinarians to seek support from. Volunteers are not available 24/7, therefore this means of support is not recommended in crisis situations.
Education	Lectures and workshops are available covering a range of wellness topics including crisis, resilience, new graduates, communication, cyberbullying, and emotional intelligence. Tailored lectures and workshops are also available.
Emergency Grants	Emergency grants and financial assistance is available for veterinarians in crisis. This can be used to cover a range of things such as therapy and financial support as well as temporary relief for vets requiring time off work.

New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA)



The New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA) is the only membership association representing New Zealand veterinarians.

Table 8. New Zealand Veterinary Association interventions.

Intervention	Description
NZVA Education Hub	The recently developed NZVA Education Hub is helping to deliver on NZVA's mission of supporting and empowering New Zealand veterinary professionals to be lifelong, independent learners and commit to their CPD requirements.
Mentor Program	Mentor program linking new graduates in with experienced vets to succeed in their transition to practice.
Free 24/7 Counselling	24/7 helpline for free confidential counselling available through Vitae. Pastoral care is also provided through NZVA CEO.
Elizabeth Veterinary Benevolent Fund	Financial support available through the fund for veterinarians experiencing financial hardship.

Good Yarn workshops	A range of workshops focused on wellbeing, mental health, self-care, and everyday wellbeing.
Resources	A range of resources, articles, booklets, social media releases etc are focused on mental health and well-being as well as holistic wellness.

I matter

i matter.

I matter is supported by the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association and is a platform to equip Ontario veterinarians with knowledge and strategies to help them better cope with and respond to the challenges they face in their professional and personal lives. The platform houses a range of resources and helpful information under three dimensions: I matter (strategies for your wellness), we matter (strategies to support team members) and business matters (strategies for business management).

American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)



The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) is the governing body and collective voice for veterinarians in America. The AVMA aims to protect, promote, and advance the needs of all veterinarians and those they serve.

Table 9. American Veterinary Medical Association interventions.

Intervention	Description
Professional Quality of Life Assessment	Widely validated, self-administered assessment tool that measures the negative and positive effects of helping others who are experiencing suffering and trauma. Used as a guide to assess balance of positive and negative personal and work-related experiences. The tool can help measure how a person is being affected in three areas that are critical to mental wellbeing – compassion satisfaction, compassion stress, and compassion fatigue – and may help identify areas to focus self-care.
Veterinarian Wellbeing Summit	A hosted event bringing together experts to explore strategies and share practical learning that supports both personal and workplace wellbeing.
QPR Suicide Prevention Training	Suicide prevention training is a gatekeeper style training aimed to increase awareness and knowledge of mental health and gives participants the skills to identify and assist those at risk of suicide. This training was initially rolled out to all attendees at the veterinarian wellbeing summit which is held annually.
After a Suicide Toolkit	A toolkit designed for veterinary school administrators and staff on how they should respond to suicide, guidance on helping students, faculty and staff cope and how to reduce the risk of suicide.
Workplace Wellbeing Certificate Program	Online certificate program which provides entire veterinary teams with training to improve mental health and wellbeing literacy of the entire workplace.
Brave Space Initiative	Created in partnership with Pride VMC, Brave Space is a veterinarian continuing education program aimed at creating dialogue among those who hold differing views, identities, and

	experiences where differences are recognised, and each person is held accountable to do the work of coming to new understandings.
Veterinary Leadership Scholarships	Scholarships are provided each year to the Veterinary Leadership Conference for up-and-coming leaders in the industry.
Mix & Mingle Career Fair	Event hosted for those looking to hire candidates and those looking to find work or change career in the veterinary industry. Held for the first time in 2019.
My Veterinary Life Podcast	Weekly show that shares inspiring stories from across the veterinary profession, highlighting the different paths guests have taken to get to their current role. Each episode highlights a different career story or perspective on a topic within the veterinary profession, raising awareness of professional opportunities as well as sharing what colleagues love about the veterinary profession.
AVMA Axon Online Learning	Online learning that the entire veterinary team can incorporate into their daily life. AVMA members gained access to courses dedicated to financial, career, and wellbeing topics, as well as timely issues.
AVMA Trust	The AVMA Trust offers insurance programs and other services available only to AVMA member veterinarians, including health insurance, life insurance, liability insurance, or other coverage for vets, families, employees, clinics.
American Veterinary Medical Foundation	Charitable arm of the AVMA. The foundation includes student scholarships for financial support, relief grants for vets treating animals impacted by disaster and charitable veterinary work grants,

Mind Matters Initiative (UK)



The Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) (UK) aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of those in the veterinary team, including students, veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons, and practice managers. MMI was launched in 2015 and is run by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) which is the regulatory body for veterinary surgeons in the UK.

The MMI operates under the guidance of the integrated approach to managing mental health which focuses on prevention, protection, and support.

Table 10. Mind Matters Initiative interventions.

Intervention	Description
Schwartz Rounds	Pilot initiative run through the Point of Care Foundation and aims to introduce the concept of formal reflective practice to the veterinary industry. Following a monthly hour-long format these rounds are a safe, confidential, voluntary reflective forum for both clinical and non-clinical staff to come together and reflect on the emotional and social aspects of their jobs. These are facilitated sessions run by trained professionals.
&me Campaign	Mental health anti-stigma campaign for health professionals. The campaign aims to encourage senior people in the healthcare industry to share stories to reduce mental health stigma and demonstrate that mental health struggles do not prevent people from achieving leading roles in

	healthcare. The anti-stigma campaign aims to use storytelling and lived experience ambassadors to decrease stigma and create conversation about mental health.
Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grants	Grants awarded to fund research that focuses on mental health and wellbeing within the veterinary professions, including areas such as prevention, diagnosis, intervention, and treatment.
Vet Wellbeing Awards	In partnership with the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) these awards were developed to recognise practices with management systems and initiatives in place that motivate and engage their staff, as well as demonstrating a commitment to supporting their wellbeing. The Practice Wellbeing Star program was also developed to recognise individuals for promoting good practices with relation to wellbeing.
Northern Ireland Peer Support	Trial peer support program for staff in Northern Ireland. This is a confidential support program for volunteers to offer support while linking them into formal support as required.
Mental Health Training	A range of mental health training programs are available such as mental health awareness, resilience, and mental health for managers. There are also free available webinars on a range of mental health and wellbeing related topics.
Campfire Chats	These informal online conversations are hosted with a view to highlight key issues in the industry that may be topical. There are chats hosted with a wellbeing focus regularly.
Online Reflection Time Sessions	These are facilitated online reflection activities in which different themes around emotional aspects of the job and non-clinical demands are the focus. Those working in the industry can voluntarily attend to reflect and learn from their own and others experiences.
Resources & Information	MMI has an extensive range of resources including articles, fact sheets, blogs, videos, short films, etc., all focused on mental health and wellbeing.

Intervention gap analysis

A gap analysis of reviewed interventions was completed and cross referenced with the integrated approach to determine areas of focus for future interventions and gaps in the level of intervention. Analysis indicates interventions at the prevention level warrants consideration.

Intervention	AVA	Vetset2 Go	Vetlife Aust	Lincoln Institute	LYPLYV	Vets in Mind	Vetlife UK	AVMA	Mind Matters	NZVA	CVMA	imatter	NOMV
PREVENT													
Lived experience stories	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X
HR advisory	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Workforce challenges program	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wellbeing certification	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Labour force resource programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Insurance services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Angel funds/charities	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Mental health screening	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Reflective practice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X
Anti-stigma campaign	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X
PROMOTE													
CPD program	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X
Graduate mentoring	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	X
Mental health resources	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Leadership training	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	X
Return to work support	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reward program	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X
Employment capability program	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wellbeing events/workshops	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	✓
Smartphone App	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Diversity & Inclusion activities	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Podcast series	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Research support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X
MANAGE													
Free counselling service	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X
24/7 helpline	✓	X	•	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X
Benevolent fund/grants	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	✓
Mental health training	✓	X	•	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X
Suicide training	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Debriefing service	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Peer support program	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X

Table 11. Gap analysis of initiatives available to address mental health directly & indirectly. Green – in place, Orange – not in place, Yellow – in development.

Recommendations

Below are high-level and strategic recommendations based on the risk and protective factors identified in this review, they have been grouped to address a particular problem identified.

High-level recommendations

High level recommendations are those in which may not address a specific risk factor at a micro level but will be important in broadly addressing mental health at a macro level. Consideration should be given to the following high-level recommendations:

1. Consider the potential of taking an **industry wide approach** to impacting mental health at a system level by developing a separate entity that brings stakeholders together to influence large-scale change (see Appendix 1).
2. Undertaking **further research** to gain more insights into the protective factors, at risk groups in the industry, and mental health experiences of those previously and currently in the workforce.
3. Create stronger **links with the state health and safety regulators** to capitalise on funding, campaigns, and safety initiatives, as well as ensuring accurate measurement and reporting of the industries risk profile.

Strategic recommendations

Strategic recommendations are those focused on addressing particular risks and enhancing protective factors at a micro level, while addressing a particular problem. Consideration should be given to the following strategic recommendations.

Problem statement: Challenging client interactions are frequent and have a negative impact on the mental health of those in the veterinary industry. This is often driven by financial factors associated with patient care.

- Undertake a **community education campaign** to address community education and perception of industry as well as setting cultural standards of appropriate behaviour and tolerance to aggression and violence.
- Review and revise **pet insurance strategy** from a whole of industry perspective to align with financial goals and needs of the broader industry.
- Provide **client interaction training** for client facing roles to improve the reactivity and coping skills of those exposed to challenging client behaviour.
- Consider a **charitable fund scheme** for financial relief to clinics with high volumes of non-paying clients, charitable cases, low socio-economic client base, or high volumes of wildlife cases.
- Develop a **reward scheme** for client compliments and good news stories to improve the client/vet positive to negative interaction ratio, recognise those doing good work in the industry, and reflect on the positive aspects of life in the veterinary industry.

Problem statement: A lack of work-life balance due to long hours and high work demands leaves little time for self-care and creates a dilemma for those in the industry to be able to separate their professional and personal identity. This places individuals under a high level of stress and pressure.

- Create **holistic health and wellness partnerships or subsidies** to encourage and support positive self-care behaviours.
- Develop an **industry self-care code of conduct** to create balance and acceptance in the care for others vs care for self-ratio while highlighting the ethical obligation to maintain well-being.
- Develop a greater understanding of **psychological job demands** within individual roles and across industry and ensure these are reflected through recruitment and induction. Where work design issues (i.e.: long hours, shift work, high workload, roster management) can be addressed and flexibility created these should be explored.
- Explore opportunities to **address the veterinary shortage** such as demand management, gender equality, enhanced remuneration, graduate support, and international qualification recognition. Consider further research in this area.
- Develop a **transition pathway program** to normalise career change for those leaving clinical work and support transition points such as retirement.
- Re-visit a **review of the veterinary award** and consider opportunities for increased remuneration, including considerations for balance in provision of shift and overtime allowances to align effort and reward more closely.

Problem statement: A high degree of stigma exists in the industry with pressure to maintain competency, "keep up", and successfully play a caring role for others. This is compounded by a high pressure critical workplace environment.

- Undertake a detailed analysis and review of the need and practicalities of implementing a **TGA schedule 8 upgrade and accompanying process** for high-risk medications used as suicide means.
- **Revise requirements for mandatory reporting** of mental health related issues to align more closely with capacity and avoid discouraging help-seeking behaviours due to fear of practice restrictions.
- Undertake an **anti-stigma campaign** through storytelling activities and creation of a lived experience industry panel to encourage open conversation, acceptance, and help-seeking, as well as focus on the positive aspects of life in the industry.
- Use a behavioural science approach to create **targeted and personalised resources** specific for the industry and undertake a strategic marketing campaign to gain maximum reach across the whole industry.
- Considering partnering with providers to **create personalised technology solutions** such as smartphone apps, house resources, real-time tools, forums, and access to support.

Problem statement: Graduates enter the workforce underprepared for clinical work, lacking interpersonal skills, and facing unrealistic expectations. Junior vets are at high risk for developing mental health issues but are not equipped with the skills to cope with the demanding and often stressful career of a practicing veterinarian.

- **Standardise undergraduate course content** to include a balance of required clinical veterinary content as well as skills to prepare graduates for life in practice, including (but not limited to) communication and interpersonal skills, ethics, resilience, coping, business and financial sense, moral distress, self-care, wellbeing, and mental health.
- Consider the practicalities of mandatory as opposed to opt-in **graduate supervision or mentoring** as a form of post-graduate support for both the student and the employer.
- Review and adjust the **selection criteria for veterinary degree** candidates to attract a variety of candidates with varied life skills and personality traits as opposed to selecting for academic excellence only.
- Undertake further **industry research to validate at risk groups** and target solutions and strategies at these vulnerable groups. Validate international research literature in an Australian context (i.e.: international research suggests young vets and female vets are at higher risk for mental health related issues).
- Develop a **graduate support field officer framework** and service to assist the transition to clinical life for recent graduates and providing mental health triaging and support.

Problem statement: Exposure to emotionally taxing and difficult incidents is common with limited opportunities to debrief due to a demanding and high workload. Lack of reflection and processing time can create cumulative stress and trauma, increasing the risk of burnout, compassion fatigue and other mental health challenges.

- Creation of reflective practice standards and guidelines with a vision to develop a **reflective practice network** linked to the CPD process and requirements.
- Develop a formal **peer support framework and program** inclusive of support, debriefing, and case management practices.
- Consider a **funding model** for allocation of personal development and wellbeing training as part of the CPD process.
- Provide **training and coaching on moral and ethical distress** with a focus on collaborative patient care, resilience, decision making, and coping with grief and trauma.

Next steps

The above recommendations are draft recommendations and based on the literature and evidence currently available. These will be validated and prioritised through voice of the industry surveys and focus groups prior to implementation with a view to achieve balance across the integrated approach, considering prevention, promotion and management of illness.

References

1. Australian Veterinary Workforce Survey, Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), 2018.
2. AVMA Annual report, action and impact, American Veterinary Medical Association, 2019.
3. Cake, MA., McArthur, MM., Matthew, SM (2017), *Finding the balance: uncovering resilience in the veterinary literature*. Journal of Veterinary Medical Education, 44 (1), 95-105.
4. Fritschi, L., Morrison, D., Shirangi, A., & Day, L. (2009). *Psychological well-being of Australian veterinarians*. Australian Veterinary Journal, 87, 76-81.
5. Gardner, DH., & Hindi, D. (2006). *Work-related stress in the veterinary profession in New Zealand*. NZ Vet J, 54, 119-124.
6. Glozier, N., (2017). *Review of evidence of psychosocial risks for mental ill-health in the workplace*. Safework NSW issue paper, Brain and mind Centre.
7. Halliwell, R., Hoskin, B. (2005), *Reducing the suicide rate among veterinary surgeons: how the profession can help*. Vet Rec, 157:397.
8. Hatch, P., Winefield, H., & Lievaart, J. (2011), *Workplace stress, mental health and burnout of veterinarians in Australia*. Australian Veterinarian Journal.
9. Jones-Fairnie, H., Perroni, P., Silburn, S., & Lawrence, D. (2008). *Suicide in Australian Veterinarians*. Aust Vet J, 86, 114-116.
10. LaMontagne, A., Shann, C., & Martin, A. (2018). *Developing an integrated approach to workplace mental health: a hypothetical conversation with a small business owner*. Annals of work exposure and health, 62, V1, 93-100.
11. Macquarie University, *People who feel too specialised to transfer occupations may be at an increased risk of suicide related thinking and behaviour*, media release (2016).
12. Nett, R.J., Witte, TK., Holzbauer SM et al (2015), *Risk factors for suicide, attitudes toward mental illness and practice related stressors among US veterinarians*. J Am Vet Med Assoc. 247: 945 – 955.
13. Perret, J., Best, CO et al (2020), *Prevalence of mental health outcomes among Canadian veterinarians*. JAVMA, Vol. 256, No. 3.
14. Perret, J., Best, CO et al (2020), *The complex relationship between veterinarian mental health and client satisfaction*. Journal of Frontiers in Veterinary Science, 7:92.
15. Professional Veterinarians Australia (2017), *Testing times to be a veterinarian – industry, employment and remuneration issues impacting professional veterinarians*. An issues paper.
16. Tomasi, SE., Fechter-Leggett, ED., et al (2019), *Suicide among veterinarians in the United States between 1979 through 2015*. JAVMA, Vol 254, No. 1.
17. Williams, SM., Arnold, PK., & Mills, JN. (2005). *Coping with stress: A survey of Murdoch University Veterinary Students*. J Vet Med Educ. 32, 201-212.
18. VetSurvey report, *Survey of the veterinary profession in Europe*, Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), (2019).
19. VetSurvey report, *Vets Panel*, CM research, 2019
20. Volk, J. O., Schimmack, U., Strand, E.B., Lord, L.K., & Siren, C.W. (2018). *Executive summary of the Merck Animal Health Veterinary Wellbeing Study*, JAVMA. Vol 252 No 10.

Appendix 1 - Other Industry Approaches

Consideration can be given to approaches taken by other industries to address transferrable or similar risk factors to the veterinary industry. Below is a summary of various industries who have similar risk factors or issues impacting the mental health of their workforce as well as approaches taken to address mental health at an industry wide level.

Dental & healthcare

Healthcare workers are exposed to many of the same risk factors as those in the veterinary industry including long hours, high demands, shift work, high stigma, moral and ethical distress, exposure to occupational violence and abuse and the complex relationship between care for others and care for self. Healthcare workers also suffer higher rates of mental health related issues than the general population.

What we can learn: best practice approaches to occupational abuse and violence in a clinical setting as well as pressure to prove competence to maintain patient care.

Legal

Just like those that work in the veterinary industry, those in the legal sector are plagued by an unsustainable need to be the best at everything while constantly striving for success, which can have detrimental effects on wellbeing and professional success. This is often termed "maladaptive perfectionism". The legal profession also has high rates of suicide with younger lawyers being the most vulnerable, like the veterinary industry. Victoria and NSW have industry wide strategies that address the risk factors in the profession.

What we can learn: best practice strategies and frameworks in addressing perfectionism in professional life and how to target at risk students and recent graduates.

Emergency services

In 2017 Beyond Blue completed a landmark national survey 'Answering the Call' as part of the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services. This helped to build a comprehensive picture of the mental health and wellbeing of police and emergency services personnel in Australia. The evidence found through the research helped promote wellbeing and mental health, support those affected by poor mental health, and prevent suicide through a collective approach to wellbeing at a national level.

What we can learn: an approach to addressing mental health at a national level across industry and best practice voice of the industry processes to ensure tailored and strategic solutions.

Aviation

The aviation industry is a regulated environment, as is the veterinary industry. This means those suffering from and being treated for mental health related issues have an obligation to disclose their condition which in turn could place restrictions on their ability to work. The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) have been doing work in this space to change their approach to prioritising stable recovery, not just blanket approaches to capacity evaluation to decrease stigma and encourage help seeking behaviour.

What we can learn: appropriate and reasonable approaches to mandatory reporting to consider risk and safety, while creating an environment where stigma is not reinforced.

Transport and Logistics

Healthy Heads in Trucks & Sheds (HHTS) is a not-for-profit charitable foundation for the benefit of the transport and logistics industry. It aims to be the mental health umbrella body through three key pillars, training, standards, and wellness. The transport industry is broad in terms of its workforce spread ranging from store staff, warehouse staff and long-haul truckers. HHTS therefore aims to bring the industry together to address common risks while enhancing protective factors.

What we can learn: a multi-role approach to interventions and solutions to address mental health risk and protective factors across an industry.

Construction

The construction industry has led the way in whole-of-industry approaches to tackling mental health with the development of the Mates in Construction charity in 2008. MATES is an integrated industry intervention that aims to reduce the high level of suicide among Australian construction workers. MATES provides suicide prevention through community development programs on sites, and by supporting workers in need through case management, training, and a 24/7 helpline.

What we can learn: a whole-of-industry approach through a separate entity or integrated industry intervention to achieve large scale impact and change.

Figure 7. Overview of common risk and protective factors in other industries that align with the veterinary industry. Other industry initiatives can be considered in terms of determining best practice solutions for the veterinary industry.

Intentionally left blank.