

Primary Objective of the Review Process:

The role of the Veterinary Council of Ireland is to regulate the veterinary profession in the public interest and in the interest of animal welfare. Under the Veterinary Practice Act 2005 (Part 3, Section 13, Subsection 2), the Council has a number of outlined functions, which include the following:

- (g) to promote the practice of veterinary medicine
- (h) to make pronouncements, as it sees fit, in relation to issues that affect the veterinary profession
- (i) to facilitate the exchange of information between those engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing and those who avail of veterinary services.

The primary objective of the Review is to inform future VCI policy and procedure in relation to the issue of ownership of veterinary practices and to aid the Council in carrying out its functions under the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended. The Review will involve the production of an in depth report following consultation with relevant stakeholders on their views around ownership of veterinary practices and investigation of the established effects of corporate ownership in other Irish professions.

Primary Tasks to Achieve Objective:

- a) To establish the opinions of the veterinary profession, farmers, the public and all stakeholders in relation to the ownership of veterinary businesses by non-registered persons and body corporates.
- b) To establish, using evidence if available from other countries and jurisdictions where there is no or limited prohibition on non-registered persons and body corporates owning veterinary businesses:
 - i. The likely impact of a similar change here on the delivery of veterinary services throughout all areas of the country and across all disciplines of food animal, equine and companion animal practice.
 - ii. The potential impact of corporate ownership of veterinary practices here on the veterinary practitioner-client relationship going forward.
 - iii. The potential impact of corporate ownership of veterinary practices on the working conditions and wellbeing of veterinary practitioners employed by veterinary corporates in these countries.
- c) To establish the extent to which body corporates feature as part of the landscape in other regulated Irish health professions and the extent of the impact which incorporation had on:
 - i. The delivery of services to the community, with particular emphasis on the subsequent cost of services.
 - ii. Whether cherry-picking of clientele occurred to the detriment of certain demographic communities.
- d) To establish whether incorporation led to difficulties for other professional regulatory bodies with respect to their regulatory functions.
- e) To establish the legislative framework governing the ownership of veterinary businesses in Ireland.
- f) To establish the regulatory mechanisms currently used to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine by regulatory bodies in other countries where there is no or limited prohibition on non-registered persons and body corporates owning veterinary businesses.
- g) To examine methods of ensuring clinical independence in the context of corporate ownership and in this regard to consider concepts employed in other jurisdictions such as the concept of “designated senior veterinary surgeon” as introduced by the RCVS or that of “supervising pharmacist” as introduced by the Pharmacy Act 2007.