

Looking after yourself while caring for others



Article by Dr Alice Marshall, Registered Veterinarian (NSW VSB)

Veterinary science attracts compassionate, caring people into its profession. As a vocation, it offers an intellectually stimulating, varied and rewarding career. Yet despite these features, vets are suffering from mental health issues in increasing numbers.

Many workplace factors place pressures on vets and contribute to the high prevalence of **anxiety, depression, stress, burnout and suicide** seen within the profession. A recent federal **parliamentary committee on mental health and suicide prevention** reported that the suicide rate among veterinary workers was four times greater than in the general population.

October is World Mental Health Month. In the lead up to this focus month, here are a few resources to check out which may help your

mental health or help you start a conversation with those you work with:

- > The AVA has developed a range of **VetHealth initiatives** to support veterinary mental health and wellbeing.
- > The initiatives include a range of fact sheets on **anxiety, depression, stress, burnout and suicide.**
- > The AVA provides access to a confidential telephone counselling service. The service is available to AVA members, the vet professionals that work for them (who may not be members) and family members. It is open every day on **1300 687 327.**
- > **Zoetis** has developed a free on-demand webinar featuring Dr Natasha Wilks (High-Performance Vets). In it she shares some practical tips on maintaining good mental wellbeing in practice.

[Click here](#) to view the webinar.

- > **Love Your Pet Love Your Vet** is a movement founded by one of the world's foremost authorities on veterinary wellbeing, Psychologist **Dr Nadine Hamilton.** It focuses on raising awareness and building community support for the profession and providing psychological and educational support for those who work in it.
- > Dr Hamilton is the author of the best-selling book '**Coping With Stress and Burnout as a Veterinarian**'. The book examines the factors contributing to mental health issues in the profession. It also provides self-help strategies that form a 'toolkit' of practical tasks and tips on coping with everyday pressures and increasing mental wellbeing.

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- > **ASAVA at their 2021 conference in August**, are hosting a 'Mental Health First Aid Training program'. The course was designed to help veterinary practice staff in identifying employees who may be experiencing mental health issues and help them know how to assist.
- > Beyond Blue has developed a free six-week program, NewAccess for Small Business, that offers support by trained mental health coaches who have a background in small business. [Click here](#) to register.

- > The AVA's Graduate Mentoring Program pairs newly graduating veterinarians with an experienced colleague in another practice to provide support.

Working in the veterinary industry can be incredibly rewarding, but it can also be challenging and stressful. Veterinarians do so much for the health and wellbeing of animals and clients in their care. Spending some time increasing your knowledge of the factors affecting veterinarians and the resources available can help bring you confidence in helping loved ones, clients, and colleagues with mental health challenges.

If this article has raised any concerns for you, or if someone you know needs help or to access further support, please contact one of the services below:

AVA Counselling service 1300 687 327

Lifeline Australia 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back 1300 659 467

Kids Help Line 1800 551 800

BeyondBlue 1300 224 636

eheadspace 1800 650 890

This article is for general information only. We recommend that you speak to the AVA or support service regarding specific advice around mental health.

