

# PRESS RELEASE/NEWS STORY

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dr. Chris Walster (UK)  
Phone: +44 (178) 525-8411  
E-mail: [chris.walster@onlinevets.co.uk](mailto:chris.walster@onlinevets.co.uk)

Dr. Julius Tepper (USA)  
Phone: (631) 281-8777  
E-mail: [Cypcarpio@aol.com](mailto:Cypcarpio@aol.com)

Dr. Colin Johnston (NZ)  
Phone: +64 (4) 894-0689  
E-mail: [colin.johnston@clear.net.nz](mailto:colin.johnston@clear.net.nz)

Website: [www.AquaVets.org](http://www.AquaVets.org)

## New Global Aquatic Veterinary Association Formed

**STAFFORD, UK; NEW YORK, USA; WELLINGTON, NZ**—Emerging from the needs of a large number of veterinarians already involved in aquatic animal medicine a new veterinary organization has been formed, initially doing business under the name **Aquatic Veterinary Association**. The need for the organization is compounded by the demands from companion and food aquatic animal owner, industries such as aquaculture, and governments for veterinary assistance in aquatic animal health and welfare, public health and seafood safety.

“Formalizing organized aquatic veterinary medicine under an incorporated and registered non-profit professional association will also elevate aquatic veterinary medicine from a niche area of veterinary practice to a well recognized discipline within the profession” said Dr. Peter Merrill who is serving as the interim President. We hope this organization will cater to the needs of an estimated 5,000–10,000 aquatic veterinarians world-wide, and those who seek their expertise, he added.

After receiving input from aquatic veterinarians in the UK, France, Germany, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other countries a group of 6 interim-Directors stepped forward to consolidate the input into formalized preliminary bylaws and structure for the association. These and other official documents will be ratified by the founding members at the first Annual General Meeting in July 2007.

“We are endeavoring to cater to the professional needs of all veterinarians and veterinary surgeons throughout the world, who are involved with all disciplines of veterinary medicine and all aquatic species, suggested Dr. Chris Walster, who is serving as the interim Secretary.

With outbreaks of disease in the fastest growing global sector of animal production and animal ownership —aquatic animals— the demand for veterinarians involved with traditional farmed finfish, crustaceans and molluscs (e.g. farmed shrimp, oysters, and clams) has grown dramatically over the past decade. Three of the five recent animal disease National Emergency Declarations in the US have been for aquatic animal diseases – the other two for Newcastle’s disease and avian influenza in poultry. The problems in the UK, Europe and Canada are similar, added Walster. “A similar situation exists in

Australia, New Zealand and Asia” suggested Dr. Colin Johnston, an interim AqVA Director who covers Australasia.

National and International responses from governments and industries have opened up huge demands for aquatic veterinarians. National plans and programs, such as the US and Canadian government’s National Aquatic Animal Health Plans and Programs, Australia’s AQUAPLAN and AQUAVETPLAN, and European Union directives and regulations that are being developed and implemented, place a huge demand on an aquatic veterinary workforce. The World Animal Health Organization’s (OIE) codified standards and their biosecurity initiatives for protecting aquatic animal industries require an organized aquatic veterinary approach.

“We are also seeing a similar demand for aquatic veterinarians in the private practice sector that deals with pet or ornamental aquatic animals owned by clients” said Dr. Julius Tepper, another of the organization’s interim Directors who owns a private practice in New York. A similar situation is being felt in the aquarium industry, with marine mammals and in wild managed fisheries and hatcheries, suggested Dr. Tim Miller-Morgan, a Director who is organizing the first AGM.

“The solution to demand for aquatic veterinarians in all spheres of practice and with all aquatic animals is in organized veterinary medicine which requires the formation of an organization that represents aquatic veterinarians” said Merrill. And he added: “If we structure this organization correctly it will substantially contribute to all of veterinary medicine through strong liaisons with existing large and small veterinary organizations, as well as industries, governments and the public that have a need for our member’s expertise.”

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The current Mission of the Association (formed in 2007 and doing initial business as the “Aquatic Veterinary Association”) is to serve the discipline of aquatic veterinary medicine in enhancing and advancing the science and art of aquatic veterinary medicine, aquatic animal health and welfare, public health, and seafood safety in support of the veterinary profession, aquatic animal industries and other stakeholders. For more information on this new aquatic veterinary organization, to provide input into its development, or to become a founding member, contact any of the interim Directors or visit the organization’s website at [www.AquaVets.org](http://www.AquaVets.org).