

Update on the ABVP–Exotic Companion Mammal Specialty Status

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Session #145

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Abstract: An update is provided on current work by the Association of Exotic Mammal Veterinarians (AEMV) to gain Specialty Board Certification under the auspices of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (ABVP). The blueprint of the credential process and examination is being established now and is in review by the ABVP. The general blueprint for ABVP–Exotic Companion Mammal will mimic the other ABVP specialties. To apply for the specialty, an applicant will submit a credential package, which must be accepted by the ABVP before the candidate is allowed to sit for examination. We are hoping to sit the first applicants for the examination in November 2007, pending approval by the American Board of Veterinary Specialties (ABVS), the governing body for specialties by the AVMA. More information on the ABVP process can be found at <http://www.abvp.com>.

Since its inception in 1999, the Association of Exotic Mammal Veterinarians (AEMV) has had the goal of gaining specialty recognition for exotic companion mammals. This group is defined as ferrets, rabbits, guinea pigs, small rodents, and a miscellaneous grouping.

The AEMV approached both the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (ABVP) and the American College of Zoological Medicine (ACZM) as parent organizations for this specialty. The ACZM was not receptive to the concept, whereas ABVP was.

In developing the specialty, AEMV is operating under guidelines supplied both by ABVP and the American Board of Veterinary Specialties (ABVS). The latter organization is the governing body for specialties by the AVMA. The AEMV is going through a multistage process for recognition.

Stage 1 involved making a presentation stating the case for the uniqueness and vitality of exotic companion mammal medicine. A formal proposal was developed by members of AEMV and presented to the ABVP. The proposal outlined the number and type of exotic companion mammals seen, the knowledge base available, and other resources. Surveys of AEMV members revealed that numerous veterinarians would be interested in obtaining specialty status. ABVP granted us that approval in 2004.

Stage 2 was the formation of an organizing committee of 20 veterinarians recognized as leaders in exotic companion mammal medicine. During the Stage 1 process, many individuals were identified as interested in helping with the ABVP process. These individuals were then contacted after Stage 1 approval. Individuals with varying backgrounds were sought. Preference was given to board-certified specialists in both private practice and academia. Approval of the organizing committee occurred during 2005.

Stage 3 is the stage during which the blueprint of the credential process and examination is established. This includes the creation of examination questions. ABVP is unique in that what defines the specialty is based on a survey of experienced veterinarians. In our case, veterinarians with exotic companion mammal expertise are identified through membership with AEMV and subscription with various exotic journals. At this time, all paperwork dealing with Stage 3 is being reviewed by the ABVP.

Stage 4 is when final approval is granted by ABVP.

Stage 5 is approval by ABVS. It is anticipated that an ABVS presentation by the AEMV and ABVP will occur during the November 2006 meeting.

The general blueprint for ABVP–Exotic Companion Mammal will mimic the other ABVP specialties.

To apply for the specialty, an applicant will submit a credential package, which must be accepted by the ABVP before the candidate is allowed to sit for examination. This package will consist of:

1. Six years experience in a practice where the applicant has seen at least 25% exotic companion mammals (ECM).
2. Ninety hours of continuing education (CE) over the last 5 years in exotic and companion mammal topics. There is an approved CE listing that is available on <http://www.abvp.com>. Most international, national, and regional CE programs that are offered will comply with the approved list.
3. Three letters of recommendation from veterinarians who are acquainted with your skills. One of these letters needs to be from a board-certified specialist. The forms are standardized and available at <http://www.abvp.com>.
4. Two case reports on different species (species groupings include ferrets, rabbits, hamsters, hedgehogs, guinea pigs, and sugar gliders), plus one published report. The published report can be a case report (must include signalment, diagnostics, differentials, and a review of prior literature) or original research (must include review of prior literature and significance to the practicing veterinarian).

Publication of the published report should be in a peer-reviewed scientific journal (defined by ranking in *Indicus Medicus*, which essentially requires the review process by specialists to be rigorous, and that the review process is independent from the editorial board and editorial processes). This requirement excludes several publications, including *Proceedings of the North American Veterinary Conference*, *Small Animal and Exotic Practice Medicine*, and *Compendium*. The *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, the *American Journal of Veterinary Research*, the *Journal of Zoological and Wildlife Medicine*, and various lab animal journals would be included. Because the publishing world for exotics is small, we would accept publication in *ExoticDVM* and *Seminars in Avian and Exotic Pet Medicine* (this journal is working toward inclusion in the approved *Indicus Medicus* journals).

5. A self-evaluation form. This is one form still being reviewed by ABVP.
6. A current curriculum vitae and proof of graduation from veterinary college.

Your credential package is due at the ABVP by January 15 of the year of the exam. If your credential package is found to be deficient, you have 2 years to correct the deficiency (extra fees are required for repeat credential evaluation).

Once an applicant passes credentialing, then they would sit for the examination. The 3-day examination would consist of multiple choice questions and would have a practical part that would include pictures and video. All questions will be from referenced sources currently available to the private practitioner. A reading list is available at <http://www.abvp.com>.

You have 3 years to pass all 3 parts of the examination (extra fees are required for repeat examinations).

Once you have passed the examination, you are credentialed as a specialist for 10 years. Your specialty status needs to be recertified by then or it will expire. You can recertify in years 8, 9, or 10 before expiration.

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