Record Keeping in Veterinary Practices

These guidelines constitute a minimum requirement.

The Board believes that there is sufficient justification in contemporary veterinary practice for record keeping, and as a consequence the Board will, in the event of a complaint against a veterinary surgeon, consider these guidelines in the assessment of a case of misconduct in a professional respect. Points of justification include -

- Certain records are required by law such as prescribing records for restricted drugs (see the PAR Policy);
- Records provide a significant aid in treatment;
- Particularly in multi-person practices records provide a continuity of recorded treatment between veterinary surgeons;
- Good records can be a valuable source of information to clients, particularly farmers, regarding the management of their animals (eg with respect to withholding periods and residues), or the management of a particular case;
- In cases of complaint records will aid in the defence of veterinary surgeons.

Essential features of all individual records -

- Standard information on the individual animal or group of animals -
  - ownership,
  - description : adequate to identify the individual or group,
  - date, and
  - history : signs, diagnosis, treatment proposed.
- Treatment : can be recorded within the terms and by reference to standard operating procedures : details required will vary in accordance with the complexity of the case.
- It is essential to provide sufficient records to allow another veterinary surgeon to continue the treatment without reference to the previous veterinary surgeon.
- Records should be made contemporaneously.

Records should be able to stand alone in the event of an inquiry and be sufficient to justify the treatment and management of the particular case.

The development of documented standard procedures for routine practice activities (vaccinations, spays, etc) would considerably reduce the amount of writing up records so that much of what is then written up will be deviations from the standard procedure.

The keeping of the records may be in a manner to suit the practice (computer, cards, books, any combination) but must be such that all relevant information can be readily accessed.