

Defining Veterinary service and service providers – with special reference to para-vets and ILO’s International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO)-2008

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Being a regulated profession, definition of ‘veterinary service’ and related occupations is of great significance. The nature and nomenclature of occupations varies from country to country.

As per the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), “Veterinary Services” means¹ the governmental and non-governmental organizations that implement animal health and welfare measures and other standards and recommendations in the Terrestrial Code and the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code in the territory. The Veterinary Services are under the overall control and direction of the Veterinary Authority. Private sector organizations, veterinarians, veterinary paraprofessionals or aquatic animal health professionals are normally accredited or approved by the Veterinary Authority to deliver the delegated functions.

As per glossary of OIE’ Terrestrial Animal Health code veterinarian means a person with appropriate education, registered or licensed by the relevant veterinary statutory body of a country to practice veterinary medicine/science in that country.

A “Veterinary para-professional” is defined in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code² as “a person who, for the purposes of the Terrestrial Code, is authorized by the veterinary statutory body to carry out certain designated tasks (dependent upon the category of veterinary para professional) in a territory, and delegated to them under the responsibility and direction of a veterinarian. The tasks for each category of veterinary para-professional should be defined by the veterinary statutory body depending on qualifications and training, and according to need.

The OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code has not defined Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) as a separate category of veterinary para-professionals. There is no mention of CAHWs in current Terrestrial

¹ Extracted from the Terrestrial Animal Health Code

² Refer glossary section of Terrestrial Animal Health Code-V8 15.07.2014

Animal Health Code. However, as per a policy document³ formulated in reference to Terrestrial Animal Health Code of the OIE, the African Union/Inter-african Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR) has defined a 'community animal health worker' as a person who performs a limited range of veterinary tasks as defined by the statutory body in a given country. CAHW are regarded by AU/IBAR as a category of para-professional. The policy of AU/IBAR is that CAHW activities should be regulated by the statutory body of a country. The bureau policy document recommends that duties to ensure the quality of CAHWs are to be assigned to named officers of the statutory body and that these duties are defined in the job descriptions and performance assessment procedures for the named officers. The bureau also recommends that the statutory body is enabled to delegate tasks to government veterinary officers to ensure quality of CAHWs at field level.

As per International Labor Organization (ILO)'s International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO) the definition of various categories of veterinary service providers are shown in box-1 to 3. The current version of ISCO was published in 2008 and is the fourth iteration, following ISCO-58, ISCO-68 and ISCO-88. The corresponding ISCO-8 codes for veterinary related occupations are: 2250 (for veterinarian), 3240 (for Veterinary Technicians and Assistants) and 5164 (for pet groomers and animal care workers).

<p>Unit Group 2250 Veterinarians</p> <p>Veterinarians diagnose, prevent and treat diseases, injuries and dysfunctions of animals. They may provide care to a wide range of animals or specialize in the treatment of a particular animal group or in a particular speciality area, or provide professional services to commercial firms producing biological and pharmaceutical products.</p> <p>Tasks include –</p> <p>(a) determining the presence and nature of abnormal conditions by physical examination, laboratory testing and through diagnostic imaging techniques including radiography and ultrasound;</p> <p>(b) treating animals medically and surgically, and administering and prescribing drugs, analgesics, and general and local anaesthetics;</p> <p>(c) performing surgery, dressing wounds and setting broken bones;</p>	<p>(d) rendering obstetric and dental services to animals;</p> <p>(e) participating in programmes designed to prevent the occurrence and spread of animal diseases;</p> <p>(f) inoculating animals against, and testing for infectious diseases and notifying authorities of outbreaks of infectious animal diseases;</p> <p>(g) performing autopsies to determine cause of death;</p> <p>(h) advising clients on health, nutrition and feeding, hygiene, breeding and care of animals;</p> <p>(i) providing euthanasia services for animals.</p> <p><i>Examples of the occupations classified here:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal pathologist • Veterinarian • Veterinary epidemiologist • Veterinary intern • Veterinary surgeon
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Box 1 Definition of veterinarian as per ISCO 08

³ AU/IBAR policy on Community Based Animal Health Workers: <http://sites.tufts.edu/capeipst/files/2011/03/AU-IBAR-CAHW-Policy.pdf> (As accessed on 20th Aug'2015)

Minor Group 324**Veterinary Technicians and Assistants**

Veterinary technicians and assistants carry out advisory, diagnostic, preventive and curative veterinary tasks more limited in scope and complexity than those carried out by veterinarians. They care for animals under treatment and in temporary residence at veterinary facilities and assist veterinarians to perform procedures and operations.

Tasks performed usually include: advising communities and individuals on the treatment of animals and their diseases and injuries; conducting examinations of animals to make diagnoses or refer more difficult cases to veterinarians when needed; treating ill or injured animals, especially for common diseases and disorders; cleaning and sterilizing examination tables and instruments and preparing materials used in the examination and treatment of animals; carrying out technical tasks connected with artificial insemination of animals; getting animals ready for examination or treatment and restraining or holding them during treatment; assisting veterinarians to administer anaesthetics and oxygen during treatment; placing animals in cages for recovery from operations and monitoring their condition.

Occupations in this minor group are classified into the following unit group:

Unit Group 3240**Veterinary Technicians and Assistants**

Veterinary technicians and assistants carry out advisory, diagnostic, preventive and curative veterinary tasks more limited in scope and complexity than those carried out by, and with the guidance of, veterinarians. They care for animals under treatment and in temporary residence at veterinary facilities, perform routine procedures and assist veterinarians to perform procedures and operations.

Tasks include –

- (a) advising communities and individuals on the treatment of animals and their diseases and injuries;
- (b) conducting examinations of animals to make diagnoses or refer more difficult cases to veterinarians when needed;
- (c) treating ill or injured animals, especially for common diseases and disorders;
- (d) cleaning and sterilizing examination tables and instruments and preparing materials used in the examination and treatment of animals;
- (e) carrying out technical tasks connected with artificial insemination of animals;

- (f) getting animals ready for examination or treatment and restraining or holding them during treatment;
- (g) assisting veterinarians to administer anaesthetics and oxygen during treatment;
- (h) placing animals in cages for recovery from operations and monitoring their condition;
- (i) producing radiographs, collecting samples and performing other laboratory tests to assist in diagnosis of animal health problems;
- (j) performing routine animal dental procedures and assisting veterinarians with animal dentistry.

Examples of the occupations classified here:

- Artificial inseminator
- Veterinary assistant
- Veterinary nurse
- Veterinary vaccinator

Some related occupations classified elsewhere:

- Veterinarian – 2250
- Animal attendant – 5164
- Veterinary aide – 5164

Unit Group 5164**Pet Groomers and Animal Care Workers**

Pet groomers and animal care workers feed, handle, train and groom animals and assist veterinarians, animal health technologists and technicians in veterinary facilities, animal shelters, breeding and boarding kennels, zoos, laboratories, retail pet shops, riding schools, dog training schools and pet grooming and similar establishments.

Tasks include –

- (a) bathing and feeding animals;
- (b) leading or carrying animals to treatment rooms and holding them during treatment;
- (c) cleaning and sterilizing veterinary surgical instruments;
- (d) labelling drugs, chemicals and other pharmaceutical preparations and replenishing stock;
- (e) sterilizing bottles, beakers and other equipment;
- (f) cleaning, organizing and disinfecting animal quarters such as pens, stables, cages at yards, and animal equipment such as saddles and bridles;
- (g) collecting and recording animal information such as weight, size, physical condition, treatments received, medications given and food intake;
- (h) training animals to develop and maintain desired behaviours for competition, entertainment, obedience, security, riding and other activities;
- (i) grooming animals by performing tasks such as washing, brushing, clipping and trimming coats, cutting nails and cleaning ears.

Examples of the occupations classified here:

- Animal attendant
- Dog trainer
- Horse breaker
- Veterinary aide
- Zoo keeper

Box 3 Definition of animal care workers as per ISCO 8

It is to be noted that for human health sector there is a distinct occupation titled “Community Health worker” (ISCO-08 code 3253) and Village Healers (ISCO-08 Code 3230). However, Community Animal Health Worker (CAHWs) – a distinct category of veterinary service providers in many countries, is yet to find mention in ISCO-08 standards. It is unclear as if Community Animal Health Workers can be mapped either as separate category or under ISCO-08 code 3253, 3230, 3240 or 5164. A review of the ISCO-08 definition for community Health workers (Refer box: 4) indicates need for separate definition and work profile of CAHWs. In this context, one also needs to look into similarity of the related occupations and the feasibility and scope of collaboration between them in the context of ‘one health’ and sustainable development agenda (SDG 2015)⁴.

Unit Group 3253
Community Health Workers

Community health workers provide health education, referral and follow-up, case management, basic preventive health care and home visiting services to specific communities. They provide support and assistance to individuals and families in navigating the health and social services system.

Tasks include –

- (a) providing information to families and communities on a range of health issues including nutrition, hygiene, infant and child care, immunizations, family planning, risk factors and prevention of common infectious diseases, poisoning prevention, first aid for treatment of simple and common ailments, substance abuse, domestic violence and other topics;
- (b) visiting families in their homes to provide information on the health, social and other services available and support them in gaining access to these services;
- (c) visiting families who do not usually access medical establishments to monitor on a regular basis certain conditions such as progress with pregnancy, child growth and development, and environmental sanitation;
- (d) distributing to households medical supplies for the prevention and treatment of endemic diseases such as malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoeal diseases, and instructing family and community members in the use of these products;
- (e) conducting outreach efforts to groups who do not usually access medical establishments with information and basic medical supplies for prevention and management of certain health conditions for which they are most at risk, such as HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases;
- (f) collecting data from households and communities who do not usually access medical establishments for purposes of patient monitoring and referral and reporting to meet health regulations.

Box 4 Definition Community Health workers

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.html>

The ILO describes the purpose of the ISCO classification as a tool for organizing jobs into a clearly defined set of groups according to the tasks and duties undertaken in the job. It is intended for use in statistical applications and in a variety of client oriented applications. Client oriented applications include the matching of job seekers with job vacancies, the management of short or long term migration of workers between countries and the development of vocational training programmes and guidance.

World Health Organization (WHO) has classified human health workers mapping them to the International Standard classifications⁵. The classification uses a hierarchical structure of occupational titles and ISCO codes, essentially reflecting the distinction of subgroups of the health workforce according to assumed differences in skill level and skill specialization required to fulfil the tasks and duties of jobs. The classification of human health workers maps occupation categories into five broad groupings: health professionals, health associate professionals, personal care workers in health services, health management and support personnel, and other health service providers not elsewhere classified. Not much information is available on any initiative on the part of World Organization of Animal Health (OIE) to classify animal health workers mapping them to ILO's International Standard Classification (ISCO-08).

There are other definitions at national level. In some countries like India, the job function of a veterinarian includes animal husbandry related functions. In number of developing countries, definitions of para-professionals are vague and are not regulated under any statutory body which is mandatory as per OIE provisions. In majority of countries para-vet occupations are neither accredited nor aligned to any standards. The definition used in developed countries like USA is shown in Box 5. Amongst developing countries in Asia, India under the aegis of Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI) has taken an initiative in the year 2015 to define various categories of para professionals as a part of its exercise to prepare National Occupational Standards for various occupations. However, these definitions are yet to be recognized by veterinary statutory body of the country. Box 6 highlights definition given by Agriculture Skill Council of India⁶.

⁵ http://www.who.int/hrh/statistics/Health_workers_classification.pdf

⁶ Extracted from National Occupational Standards (NOS) and Qualification Pack for Veterinary Para-professionals in India available at: <http://www.nsdindia.org/nos>

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor publication the 'Occupational Outlook Handbook', 2014-15 Edition defines various para-vet categories in US as following:

Veterinary Technologist and Technicians:

Veterinary technologists and technicians perform medical tests under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian to help diagnose the illnesses and injuries of animals. Veterinary technologists and technicians must complete a postsecondary program in veterinary technology. Technologists need a 4-year bachelor's degree, and technicians need a 2-year associate's degree. Typically, both technologists and technicians must take a credentialing exam and must become registered, licensed, or certified, depending on the requirements of the state in which they work.

Veterinary Assistant:

Veterinary assistants and laboratory animal caretakers look after animals in laboratories, animal hospitals, and clinics. They care for the well-being of animals by performing routine tasks under the supervision of veterinarians, scientists, and veterinary technologists and technicians. Most veterinary assistants and laboratory animal caretakers have a high school diploma and learn on the job.

Animal Care and service workers:

Animal care and service workers provide care for animals. They feed, water, groom, bathe, and exercise pets and other nonfarm animals. Job tasks vary by position and place of work. Most animal care and service workers learn on the job. Still, many employers prefer to hire candidates who have experience working with animals. Some positions require formal education.

Veterinary Field Assistant:

A Veterinary Field Assistant also known as Livestock Assistant is a person who assist a registered veterinarian or work under the supervision of registered veterinarian to provide a set of field based "Minor Veterinary services" required for a given job role as per the provision of Indian Veterinary Council Act (No.52 of 1984).

A Veterinary Field Assistant assist veterinarians mostly in domesticated farm / wild animal and poultry related veterinary service delivery mostly in diverse outdoor setting. They play role in animal disease control, preventive and curative care, besides other responsibilities related to animal breeding, farm management, veterinary extension, food inspection, disaster management and other environmental and public health related services.

Veterinary Clinical Assistant:

A Veterinary Clinical Assistant is a person who assist a registered veterinarian or work under the supervision of registered veterinarian to provide a set of "Minor Veterinary services" in indoor setting required for a given job role as per the provision of Indian Veterinary Council Act (No.52 of 1984)

A Veterinary Clinical Assistant assists veterinarians in veterinary service delivery mostly in indoor setting such as Pet clinics, hospitals organized farms and laboratories. They play role in preventive and curative care, besides other responsibilities related to hospital / practice management, drug dispensing and animal welfare.

Animal Health Worker:

An Animal Health Worker also known as Community Animal Health Worker / Community Resource Person (Veterinary) or Livestock Service Provider is a person selected from his/her own community to provide a set of "Minor Veterinary services" required for a given job role as per the provision of Indian Veterinary Council Act (No.52 of 1984). He / she works under indirect or distant supervision of registered veterinarian, under over-all monitoring of any registered development / private / producer led agency.

An Animal Health Worker provides preventive health care, assistance in contagious disease control and basic first aid services to farm animal and poultry, mostly in the outdoor setting. He / she also play a role in veterinary extension, disaster management and other environmental, public health related services.

Artificial Insemination Technicians:

An Artificial Insemination Technician (AI Technician) also known as Community Animal Husbandry Assistant, Gopal mitra, prani-bandhu etc. is a person preferably selected from his/her own community, primarily to assist farmers in cattle breeding and management of dairy animals. He / she normally works under direct supervision and monitoring of any registered development / private / producer led agency.

An Artificial Insemination Technician (AI Technician) provides cattle breeding, management and development related services mostly in the outdoor setting.

In the case of Africa, a review of veterinary council registered para professionals in South Africa indicates well defined categories such as veterinary nurse (Care of animals in hospital setting), veterinary technologist (Related to laboratory activities), Laboratory Animal Technologist (Humane care of experimental animals) and Animal Health Technicians (Assistance in disease control). However, occupations like animal attendant and Community Animal Health Workers are not registered with the council⁷.

Registration or enrolment of veterinary para-professional of different types is relatively recent in many other African countries. In the case of Burundi and Tanzania, 30-40% of all veterinary para-professionals that have been registered are within last three years or less⁸. Kenya has made recent changes in its statutory law⁹ to define and register veterinary para-professionals. However, even new laws / notifications in many countries have no provision to define and regulate Community Animal Health Workers. As the countries are increasingly going for registration of veterinary para-professionals as suggested by OIE, a concerted effort is needed to define various types of para-professionals. Besides developing occupational standards for various categories of para-professional it will be helpful to classify them in the context of ILO standard code (ISCO-08) and / or standard code used for regional trade negotiations.

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⁷ Refer South African Veterinary Council website: <http://www.savc.org.za/>

⁸ Veterinary Services in the EAC - A Report prepared to facilitate MRA Negotiations for Veterinary Professionals

⁹ Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Para-professionals Act (No.29 of 2011)