

NAVLE Exam:

The low-down from students who've taken the exam

For the past two years the SAVMA Education and Licensure Committee has been conducting a survey of senior vet students about the NAVLE exam. This sheet summarizes the replies of about 500 students from across the country. We hope this information helps you in your board preparation, and ask you to PLEASE fill out our survey after you take the boards.

To take the survey go to: <http://www.cvm.msstate.edu/ap/NAVLEsurvey.tp3>

Although about half of the survey participants seemed satisfied with their NAVLE test experience, most of the comments below are complaints and criticisms. This is because those who were unhappy wrote more detailed comments on our survey (after all, what is there to say if your happy with the test).

What to study

The majority of students used class notes, Mosby review books, NBE practice tests, and (when available) school courses. Several students commented that the Mosby books were not as helpful as they expected, and that the MERCK manual was a very useful study aid. Another useful study aid is the "Boyce List". According to rumor, this list of animal diseases and conditions includes every ailment considered test worthy. This list, a link to other study guides, and the complete results from our survey are available from your SAVMA delegate or on the ELC website at which you can find in the Student AVMA area of the AVMA website (www.avma.org).

Clear as a bell

Students found the NAVLE instructions to be very clear (80% of surveys marked very good or excellent). So don't worry about understanding the questions, just figuring out the answers.

Mediocre Assessment of Competency

Students are split down the middle as to whether the NAVLE fairly assesses clinical competency. Many students thought that the majority of the questions were appropriate, but that a substantial portion of the questions were seriously flawed. There were three observed problems, none of which are likely to go away: 1) Questions were on obscure and trivial material (a very common comment). 2) Questions had more than one reasonable answer (a flaw inherent a multiple choice exams trying to tackle complex subjects) 3) Students were required to answer questions about species they will never treat (see below)

Whines about Swines

Roughly half of those surveyed thought there was an appropriate distribution of questions by species, while half definitely did not. An overemphasis on pigs was far and away the

most common complaint, although too many questions about poultry and the random species covered under “exotics” were also common comments. The test does cover all species, and that is not going to change any time in the near future. Since the initiation of computerized testing there is significant variation in the questions presented on any given test, especially in the species covered in the “exotics” area. However, the species distribution of questions on the NAVLE is rigidly preset, and it is listed on page 13 of the NAVLE bulletin (<http://www.nbvme.org/information.html>).

Also, be aware that 60 of the 360 questions DO NOT count and are only being evaluated for use in future tests.

UPDATE: The NBVME has changed the species distribution, including cutting swine from 7% to 4%. These changes should take effect by the time the class of 2005 takes boards.

Picture Imperfect

Most survey takes found the pictures substandard (Over 63% of students rated the images on the exam as Fair or Poor). In particular, radiographs were noted as particularly difficult to interpret, and the size of all images was too small (with no option to enlarge). Because of this survey, we brought up the issue of image quality to the NBVME (the group that writes the exam). They considered the issue, but replied, “We do all we can.” The NBVME considers us it’s customers, and values the student input, but we NEED at least a majority of students to respond for this survey to carry enough weight to initiate improvements on your national boards.

When you take the NAVLE, please fill out our very brief survey about your experience. The survey can be found at: <http://www.cvm.msstate.edu/ap/NAVLEsurvey.tp3>