Appendix 6

Definitions of Terms Applied to Veterinary Specialization

A. **Academy**—An exclusive body of learned persons with the objective of promoting scholarship and service. Membership is based on scientific or scholastic achievement and exercise of professional skills. An academy is not a recognized veterinary specialty organization.

B. **Active diplomate**—A diplomate of a recognized veterinary specialty organization (RVSO) who is in good standing with that organization through fulfilling specified requirements, including dues payments, and who is active in the practice of the recognized veterinary specialty (RVS).

C. **Alternate**—A member of VSOC that will serve as a VSOC member of ABVS in the event that one of the regular VSOC members cannot attend the annual ABVS meeting. The alternate travel will be paid by the AVMA and the alternate will have full voting rights afforded the VSOC member that he/she is representing.

D. **Association**—An organization of veterinarians with the objective of advancing mutual professional interest(s).

E. **Board**—The term “board” has two distinct and differing uses by ABVS and VSOC.
   a. A small group of members designated by a recognized veterinary specialty organization (RVSO) for a special purpose (e.g., Board of Regents or “certification board”, the latter of which are entities created by an RVSO solely for the purpose of credentialing candidates for the parent RVSO.
   b. An organization of specialists having the objective of examining candidates for certification. Some RVSOs have used the term “board” synonymously with the broader concept of college. This use of the term has been accepted by the ABVS. In such a case, within the parent RVSO there may be both a “College” (the parent organization) and a “Certification Board” which is affiliated with the college and certifies candidates seeking diplomate status within the college.

F. **Certificate**—Various organizations issue documents (certificates) attesting to attendance or participation in an educational program or series of programs. Some certificates are awarded after an individual demonstrates accomplishment of intended learning outcomes of a specific topic or skill by passing an examination based upon the information provided by the organization. The issuance of these certificates is not a diploma and should not be confused with the board-certification process (i.e., certificate holders are not ‘certified in’ the field) and is not comparable to the recognition of specialists in veterinary medicine.

G. **Board Certification**—The process of determining whether a veterinarian has successfully completed a training program and examination process designed to assess the knowledge and skills required for providing high quality professional services and patient care in a specialty. Individuals successfully completing such programs will be awarded Diplomas and are considered Diplomates of that veterinary specialty. See also Maintenance of Certification

H. **Board-Certified in**—The AVMA limits the use of “board-certified in” to those individuals who have completed the certification process of an AVMA-recognized veterinary specialty organization, veterinary specialty. See also Maintenance of Certification

I. **Certification Board**—(Independent)—In some circumstances an RVSO may create an independent certifying agency, typically referred to as a board, which will be affiliated with the parent RVSO from the perspective of reporting to ABVS, but whose sole purpose is the credentialing and examination of candidates for the RVSO. The decisions and determinations of
this certification board will be independent of influence from the associated RVSO.

J. Charter Diplomates—A historical term used to indicate a member of an RVSO organizing committee that was granted diplomate status, generally without examination. Often referred to as “grandfathered” diplomates, the term became obsolete in 2017. See Founder.

K. Clinical Training Program—see training program.

L. College—An organization of veterinarians that has as its objectives the establishment of standards for the education and experience necessary for qualification as a specialist, and the examination and certification of veterinarians in the specialty. The term college is favored by the ABVS and is synonymous with specialty board in the designation of a recognized veterinary specialty organization (RVSO) (see also definition of Board).

M. Criterion referencing—A criterion-referenced score interpretation involves comparing a test score to a cutoff score that represents a performance standard.

N. Degree program—A degree program is an educational program leading to an MS, PhD, or equivalent degree that may or may not be combined with residency training.

O. Diploma—A document awarded to an individual upon successful completion of the training and examination requirements established by a board of experts in a specific field of veterinary medicine, indicating that the individual has been board-certified in that field.

P. Diplomate—A veterinarian who is certified as a specialist in a particular discipline by one of the AVMA-recognized veterinary specialty organizations.

Q. Diplomate in good standing—see active diplomate.

R. Diplomate not in good standing—A diplomate of a recognized veterinary specialty organization (RVSO) who has not complied with the specified requirements of a diplomate in good standing established by that organization, (e.g., failure to pay dues). A diplomate who is not in good standing typically may not participate in governance activities of the RVSO, but the lack of good standing does not change their status as a board-certified specialist. A diplomate who does not successfully complete their maintenance of credential requirements does lose diplomate status and may no longer claim to be a board-certified specialist.

S. Discipline—A field of study or expertise definable as a distinct area of veterinary medicine.

T. Distinguished member—A diplomate of a recognized veterinary specialty organization (RVSO) who is acknowledged as distinguished based on criteria established by that organization.

U. Emeritus Diplomate—A diplomate of a recognized veterinary specialty organization (RVSO) who either reaches an age designated by the RVSO or has retired from active practice of the recognized veterinary specialty.

V. Fellow—In regard to specialty veterinary medicine, a fellow is considered to be an individual completing a fellowship subsequent to completion of a training program leading to board-certification in a veterinary specialty. Other organizing bodies may use the term to refer to members that have achieved educational or experiential benchmarks specific to their organization.

W. Fellowship—In regard to specialty veterinary medicine, a fellowship is a period of
advanced study in a narrow focus of a veterinary specialty, consisting of research and/or clinical training beyond that which is required for certification in the specialty as a whole.

X. Founder—A member of the organizing committee of an emerging specialty that assume the role previously implemented by charter diplomats (see section II, part D1 of the Policies of the ABVS. Founders will be involved in the successful submission of the emerging VSO’s petition for recognition by the ABVS. Upon successful recognition by the ABVS, founders must pursue board certification in the RVSO through examination. Examples of sufficient experience demonstrating competency and thus credentialing in the specialty by a founding member include:

i. at least 10 years of experience in the specialty, with no less than 75% of his/her professional time in each of the last five years being devoted to the specialty, and by teaching, research, or practice have contributed substantially to the development of the specialty,
ii. full professorship of the specialty in a college or department of veterinary medicine, and have contributed substantially to the development of the specialty,
iii. advanced training (PhD or equivalent) in the specialty; have demonstrated competency through teaching, research, or practice in the specialty to which the individual devotes most of his/her professional time; and be an author of important publications resulting from research or practice in the specialty.

Y. Full recognition—A classification assigned to a veterinary specialty organization that meets or exceeds all standards established by the ABVS for recognition by the AVMA.

Z. Graduate training program—see training program.

AA. Honorary member—RVSOs must not award a title of honorary diplomate but instead use honorary member. A veterinarian or non-veterinarian who is nominated by, meets criteria specified by, and is approved by the RVSO or an RVS. An honorary member shall be a nonvoting member and shall not hold office in the specialty organization and shall not claim certification status in the specialty.

BB. Internship—An internship shall be a one-year clinical training program that emphasizes mentorship, direct supervision, and didactic experiences including rounds, seminars, and formal presentations. It provides practical experience in applying knowledge gained during the professional curriculum and an opportunity to obtain additional training in the clinical sciences. An internship should prepare a veterinarian for high-quality service in practice or for advanced specialty training. It is primarily an educational program for the intern rather than a service benefit to the hospital. A Specialty internship refers to an internship experientially designed to focus on an RVSO or RVS specialty.

CC. Job/task analysis—A systematic procedure for defining the tasks required by a job and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other personal characteristics required of individuals performing that job. The results of a job/task analysis form the basis for determining the examination contents necessary to test mastery of that field.

DD. Letter of intent—A letter from an organizing group which plans to submit a petition for recognition as either an RVSO, or an RVS. This letter will indicate that the group has read and understands the standards of the ABVS which are applicable to their group, that they have read and understand the procedures for obtaining AVMA-recognition, and that they have the agreement of the RVSO under which they will apply if they are applying as an RVS. It will provide a list of the members of the organizing committee and their credentials. It will specify if there is going to be an affiliated, independent certifying board and, if so, the proposed relationship between the RVSO, or RVS, and the certifying agency.
EE. Maintenance of certification—Board-certification demonstrates a veterinarian’s expertise in a particular specialty of veterinary medicine at the time awarded. Maintenance of certification requires Diplomates to focus on continuous development to assure that the level of their knowledge and skillset meets contemporaneous expectations for certification in that specialty.

FF. Organizing committee—A group of individuals that must consist of no fewer than 25 members for a veterinary specialty organization or ten members for a veterinary specialty, that conduct the business of an emerging veterinary specialty seeking recognition by the AVMA.

GG. Petition—an organization seeking recognition as an RVSO or RVS must submit for consideration by the ABVS a petition describing the proposed specialty.
   a. An initial petition seeking provisional recognition must be submitted by the RVSO or RVS within four years of ABVS receipt of the letter of intent, with final changes submitted within five years of the letter of intent. A full description of the petition and an accompanying checklist can be found in Appendices 2 and 3.
   b. A full petition seeking full recognition must be submitted by the RVSO or RVS not before four but not after 10 years of ABVS receipt of the letter of intent, unless an extension is granted by ABVS. A full description of the petition and an accompanying checklist can be found in Appendices 2 and 3.

HH. Probationary recognition—A classification assigned to a previously fully recognized veterinary specialty organization (RVSO) that meets most, but not all, of the established criteria for continued full recognition.

II. Provisional recognition—A classification assigned to a new veterinary specialty organization, or veterinary specialty, that has not applied for full recognition or has not met all the criteria pertaining to complete formalization of its structure and objectives.

JJ. Qualifying pathways—A qualifying pathway for training is established by the RVSO or RVS, through education, training, or experience to qualify candidates for examination in a timely manner. Qualifying pathways can occur either within or outside a standard residency or degree program. Any experience requirements must be clearly defined, relevant to the objectives of the specialty, and amenable to evaluation and approval by the RVSO.

KK. Recognized veterinary specialist—A veterinarian who is certified by an AVMA-recognized veterinary specialty organization.

LL. Recognized veterinary specialty organization (RVSO)—An organization that has been recognized by the AVMA as establishing standards for a specialty, certifying veterinarians who meet those standards, and serving as the organizational and administrative unit for any recognized veterinary specialties of the RVSO. Veterinarians undergoing a formal program of credentialing and certification will be members of the RVSO and designated as a diplomate (a recognized specialist in one or more of the recognized veterinary specialties under the organizational umbrella).

MM. Recognized veterinary specialty (RVS)—A clearly defined field of veterinary medicine comprising a species, discipline, or system within veterinary medicine and whose members acquire knowledge and skills through formal training, experimentation, and a standard approach to veterinary medicine. These focused areas of practice are under the umbrella of a parent AVMA-recognized veterinary specialty organization. Examples include, but are not restricted to, the recognized veterinary specialties of neurology, cardiology, oncology, and internal medicine within the ACVIM and the practice categories of avian, feline, equine, dairy, swine health management and food animal within the ABVP.

NN. Reports—During its business, the ABVS reviews the following reports:
   a. Existing RVSO/RVS
Annual report: submitted by each RVSO or RVS each year, with the sole purpose of tracking specialty demographic data reflecting the growth of the respective recognized organization. The data included in the annual report should be reflected in the triennial report. The report should be submitted to ABVS by the deadline shown in Appendix 4. The form for the annual report can be found in Appendix 7.

Triennial report: submitted by each RVSO/RVS on a 3-year cycle, this in-depth report should be sufficiently detailed to allow ABVS review of the growth of the specialty and any major changes, challenges or circumstances that have occurred during the previous three-year period. ABVS review will assure that the respective specialty continues to meet the standards delineated for the respective specialty. During review at its annual meeting, ABVS may recommend that recognition of the specialty be continued, or it may identify issues or concerns. These concerns might simply be resolved with a written response by the specialty, or they may lead to recommendation of a probationary status or withdrawal of recognition. The form and an accompanying checklist for the triennial report can be found in Appendix 8.

Follow-up report: must be submitted by an RVSO or RVS in response to concerns promulgated by the ABVS during review of the triennial report, or in response to issues that arise in the interim. The follow-up report may simply address specific concerns or may be intended to resolve assignment of a probationary status or withdrawal of specialty recognition. Follow-up to questions generated during review of the triennial report might be submitted to ABVS prior to the annual ABVS meeting. However, response to probationary or withdrawal of recognition status should be submitted in advance of the annual ABVS meeting.

Petitioning organizations

After submission of a letter of intent but prior to submitting an initial petition, the prospective RVSO/RVS should annually provide an informal letter of update to the VSOC liaison who will then report to the ABVS at its annual meeting.

Interim report: During provisional recognition, the RVSO or RVS should submit an annual report that delineates the progress of the petitioning specialty toward full recognition. The form and an accompanying checklist for the annual petitioning specialty report can be found in Appendix 9.

Residency—Advanced training in a specialty in veterinary medicine that is intended to lead to specialty certification in an AVMA-recognized veterinary specialty organization. A residency program is conducted under the supervision of a board-certified specialist. A residency is usually narrowly confined to a specific discipline. A residency may in some instances be related to an advanced degree program.

Society—An organization of veterinarians and others having a common interest in a discipline of veterinary medicine. A society usually has as its objective the encouragement of scholarship, through educational programs, among those interested in the discipline. A society is not a recognized specialty certifying organization.

Specialist—See recognized veterinary specialist.

Specialty—See recognized veterinary specialty.

Specialty internship—See internship.

Training Program—A period of advanced, post-veterinary degree training or education
intended to provide additional expertise and an opportunity to applying knowledge gained during the professional curriculum. A training program does not necessarily lead to specialty certification (e.g., internships). The term "residency" may be used interchangeably with "training program" when the training program is intended to lead to specialty certification; however, in all cases, a training program emphasizes mentorship, direct supervision, and didactic experiences such as rounds, seminars, formal presentations, and graduate courses.

a. Clinical training program: A post-veterinary degree program involving the primary management of clinical cases. A clinical training program or fellowship generally provides opportunity to obtain additional training in the clinical sciences. An internship generally is a clinical training program. A residency or fellowship may or may not include a clinical training program component.

b. Graduate training: A post-degree program involving an accredited educational institute with the intended end point being graduate degree (e.g., Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy). Graduate training may or may not be a requirement for credentialing in some specialties. For specialty certification, the graduate training must be in addition to a veterinary degree.

c. Alternate pathway training program: for programs intended to lead to specialty certification, its implementation may be accomplished on a time-line that differs from the standard pathway training program. For example, an alternate pathway training program may provide flexibility for a resident in private practice to meet the credentialing requirements in a manner that is financially possible. An alternate pathway training program may allow a resident to meet credential requirements through distant mentorship if the institution does not employ a diplomate of the specialty in which the trainee is pursuing training. In all cases, the requirements for credentialing as stipulated by the specialty must be met.

d. Standard pathway training program: the credentialing process is accomplished by the trainee as delineated in the procedural guidelines of the respective specialty. This is in contrast to an alternate pathway training program which is intended to provide flexibility in the time line for the credentialing process.

UU. Waiting period—A waiting period is defined as a period of time between completion of a qualifying route and candidate eligibility to sit for the certifying examination that cannot be justified as necessary and relevant to the objectives of the RVSO. A waiting period is not permitted by the ABVS.