



25 March 2023

## **Members' Guidelines for Communications on the MVA WhatsApp Group**

The Executive of the MVA requests that all members contributing to the MVA WhatsApp group abide as much as possible with the following guidelines before posting content on the group. These guidelines are just that, guidelines, not prescriptive or inflexible rules. Suggestions for improvements are always welcome - just contact the MVA secretary with your suggestions.

### **Purpose of the Group**

The MVA WhatsApp Group was set up to enable informal exchange of information pertaining to animal and veterinary issues and matters of significance to the veterinary profession in Malawi. Let us as much as possible confine posts to such issues. Let us please keep the chat relevant to everyone.

The MVA Secretariat routinely adds new members to the WhatsApp group. However please feel free to exit the Group at any time. Formal MVA communications to members will still reach you through email.

### **Etiquette**

Respect and courtesy at all times please! Please don't shame, discredit or otherwise criticise fellow group members nor the institutions to which they belong. Always bear in mind other people's lives, other people's dignity. Ask yourself "Would I say this or use this tone in person to an acquaintance?"

This is not to stifle constructive debate and critique. Where you do disagree, think of how best to say "I beg to differ..." and follow with clear explanation of where your differences lie.

And where you have differences which cannot so politely or constructively expressed, contact the contributor individually, not by responding to the whole group.

Do use the group for support. If you need information, by all means ask. (As a courtesy, you should first check available sources as appropriate and indicate that you have done so).

### **Content**

MVA is a non political and non religious body. Matters of a political or religious nature should be posted only in cases where there are points pertinent to the Malawi veterinary profession.

Do please check the facts. Cite your references. Show the credentials of your sources. We are not asking for rigorous scientific proof but bear in mind the ease with which propaganda and misinformation can be circulated on groups such as ours.

Be careful also not to post material which is designed to 'normalise' the views of others, unless that is your intent.

Forwarded posts should preferably indicate where they came from. If you don't know, consider whether the content is really of relevance. Please avoid posts which are irrelevant to most readers.

Be especially careful when posting on cases of cruelty. Be aware that what may seem just interesting or amusing to you might be quite distressing to others. Material which is merely dramatic has no place - if there is no significant message, do not post. And if there is a message, try to convey that message.

Humour: Post humorous items by all means but before posting, please consider the readership. People vary widely in their sense of humour. Be careful too of underlying negative issues such as racism or cultural insensitivities.