The purpose of this paper is to consider if impaired emotional health contributes to loss of self-esteem and lack of job satisfaction, stress and depression and whether this may ultimately lead to suicide.1–3 This paper discusses the effect of work environment, and occupational injury on the emotional wellbeing of veterinarians.4

Method
In-depth structured interviews were conducted with 45 veterinarians who had incurred an occupational injury or disease. Responses identified new questions for a subsequent self-administered questionnaire administered to 850 Western Australian veterinarians. The instrument investigated occupational injury, disease and emotional health factors including job satisfaction, perceived stress and stressors in practices. Psychological distress levels were measured using the Kessler (K10+) scale.5 Suicide rates were determined from death records for veterinarians from Western Australia and Victoria.

Results
The 45 veterinarians interviewed revealed they had incurred a number of serious occupational injuries some of which were life-threatening including several cases of concussion. Of interest were the number of cases where veterinarians also revealed stress, distress and admitted to having considered suicide. In the self-reported survey, more than half the 419 veterinary respondents had experienced at least one acute injury requiring time off work. The results of the Kessler psychometric test showed 78% of respondents scored low to moderate distress, 22% scored high to very high distress levels with 5% scoring for very high distress. The latter group indicating a possible severe mental health disorder.

Comparisons with scores for W.A. and national general populations showed twice the proportion of veterinarians with high PD scores. With regard to job satisfaction, correlation of high and low distress scores showed that respondents with the highest distress scores also expressed greatest dissatisfaction with 10 aspects of the 11 items on the job satisfaction scale.6

Using a stepwise logistic regression to determine predictors of distress produced three variables:
1. being younger than 35 years of age,
2. having had a back injury in the previous five years and,
3. having taken drugs in the past 12 months.

Furthermore, the age-standardised suicide rate for veterinarians was found to be four times that of Victorian and Western Australian population rates.
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