

ADVICE NOTE 4

VETERINARY SURGEONS' PROFESSIONAL FEES

- 1) The RCVS receives a number of enquiries from veterinary surgeons' clients regarding fees.
- 2) The RCVS has no powers under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, or other legislation, to set or adjudicate upon the level of fees charged by veterinary surgeons. If the RCVS were to set fees this would be considered anti-competitive and would be unacceptable to the Office of Fair Trading (OFT). If you wish to contact the Office of Fair Trading for further information you should telephone 020 7211 8000.
- 3) Under the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct*, veterinary surgeons should discuss treatment options and corresponding fee estimates with clients; as cost is often an issue with the treatment of an animal, it should be recognised at the time of treatment rather than on presentation of the bill; the higher the fees, the greater the onus on the veterinary surgeon to obtain the client's agreement to those fees.
- 4) While fees may vary between practices and may be a factor in choosing a practice, you may wish to consider all the practice's facilities and services when choosing a practice – for example, whether veterinary surgeons make home visits routinely and what sort of arrangements are in place for 'out of hours' emergency calls. For example, are emergency consultations at the practice premises, or by another practice at another location?
- 5) In response to a request from a client or prospective client, a veterinary surgeon must provide the price of a medicine that may be dispensed for an animal under his or her care.
- 6) In the event of a fee dispute, whether a client must pay a bill is a matter to be resolved between the parties or by the civil courts and, therefore, in most cases disputes about the level of veterinary surgeons' fees fall outside the jurisdiction of the RCVS.

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