

**ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS**

**V**

**MR JOHN FRANCIS McKENNA**

**JUDGMENT**

The Committee has found Mr McKenna guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect. Mr Corless drew the Committee's attention to a bundle of references attesting to Mr McKenna's good character and veterinary skills. It is clear that he is held in high regard by an impressive number of his clients.

We are also aware that these proceedings have caused Mr McKenna great distress, especially since on the 6 December 2006 a local newspaper article was severely critical of him.

It is the duty of this Committee to ensure the welfare of animals, protect the public and uphold the reputation of the profession, but our sentence should be proportionate.

While we find that Mr McKenna's ignorance of the RCVS guidance on the docking of dogs' tails falls so far short of acceptable and responsible practice that it amounts to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect, we consider that his conduct was more cavalier than calculated. In our view his misdemeanours are at the lower end of the scale of disgraceful conduct as there is no evidence to show that he frequently and regularly docked puppies' tails, nor that he had a reputation for so doing. There were in fact certain docked breeds eg Dobermans and Rottweilers, which he would only dock for therapeutic reasons. This is a first offence and Mr McKenna has been entirely open with the Committee except perhaps in the matter of the use of the word 'cosmetic'. There is no suggestion that his surgical procedures were worthy of criticism and we have no reason to doubt his ability as a vet. Neither do we wish to make an example of him. We prefer then to take the lenient view and to instruct the Registrar to suspend Mr McKenna from the *Register* for a period of 28 days.

This should however be an indication to the profession that the RCVS is unequivocal in its opposition to docking and will act upon any evidence it receives of wrong doing and will enforce its guidance to the point of striking off, should a future respondent be guilty of seriously bending or breaking the rules.

**DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE**  
**14 DECEMBER 2006**