

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

V

JOHN BRENNAND WILLIAMS

DECISION ON APPLICATION FOR RESTORATION

1. Mr Williams appeared before the Disciplinary Committee of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons on 12 and 13 November 2007. He faced allegations that, in October 2006, he had falsely certified, as Official Veterinarian, the export certificates of three horses due to be exported to the USA. He signed certificates to the effect that negative test results had been received from a laboratory in respect of swabs he had taken from the horses when, at the time he signed, he had not known the results of the tests. On 13 October 2007, the Disciplinary Committee found Mr Williams guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect and ordered that his name be removed from the Register. On 17 December 2007, Mr Williams lodged a petition of appeal with the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, which was heard by the Judicial Committee on 9 June 2008. The Board ordered that the appeal should be dismissed and Mr Williams' name was removed from the Register on 24 July 2008. On 19 June 2009 Mr Williams made an application for restoration to the Register.
2. The Committee has given careful consideration to the advice of the Legal Assessor, the submissions of Counsel, and the written Disciplinary Committee Guidance. At this Hearing Mr Williams has given oral evidence, which has been supported by oral and written evidence from veterinary surgeons and clients in the equine world.
3. The Committee is satisfied that Mr Williams accepts the previous findings of the Committee and fully understands their seriousness. Although the decision of the Committee to remove him from the Register sent a clear message to the profession of the importance of certification, it should be emphasised that his removal was the consequence of his actions in signing certificates which he could not verify. This followed 3 previous occasions on which he had similarly signed certificates when he should not have done so.
4. The Committee has had the opportunity of hearing Mr Williams give oral evidence and accepts that he has found his removal from the Register a salutary experience. It is satisfied that he will not sign certificates in the future when he should not do so, even under severe client pressure.
5. The Committee does not consider that any further period off the Register would be of benefit either to the public or the veterinary profession.
6. In the light of its conclusion that Mr Williams fully understands the importance of accurate certification, it does not consider that there is a risk to the future welfare of animals in the event of his name being restored to the Register.

7. No questions have been raised over his conduct since the removal of his name from the Register.
8. The Committee is impressed by the Continuing Professional Development that he has undertaken since he was removed from the Register.
9. It is satisfied that removal from the Register has been highly significant for him and for his family both financially and emotionally.
10. He has received a large volume of public support from colleagues within the profession and from clients with significant knowledge of the horse world, who have all attested to his passion for and expertise in equine practice.
11. The Committee would like to make it clear that it always finds it distressing to remove from the Register clinically competent veterinary surgeons because of an irresponsible and cavalier attitude towards certification. It takes this opportunity again to emphasise that this would not be necessary if veterinary surgeons were to follow the Twelve Principles of Certification annexed to the Guide to Professional Conduct.
12. The Committee has concluded that the application is successful and directs the Registrar to restore Mr Williams' name to the Register.

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

26 OCTOBER 2009