

**ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS**

**V**

**MS ELERI WYN JONES MRCVS**

**DECISION ON SANCTION**

1. The Committee received further written evidence, submissions from Counsel and advice from the Legal Assessor at the outset of their deliberations on the sanction it could impose in the light of its findings. The Committee has had in mind that the primary purpose of the sanctions is not to punish but to protect the welfare of animals, maintain public confidence in the profession and declare and uphold proper standards of conduct. The Committee has considered the Disciplinary Committee Guidance on Outcomes and Sanctions, and paid particular regard to the aggravating and mitigating factors contained in the guidelines.
2. The Committee has taken into account the matters put before it in mitigation by Mr McPherson QC, on behalf of Ms Jones, and what the Committee has described as a fateful misjudgement on a single occasion and places importance on the lack of guidance and training where she practises. Ms Jones is a young woman, who was one year post-qualification at the time of the incident, of good character, and with no previous disciplinary findings against her. She has worked with horses throughout her life on the family farm and has clearly formed a strong attachment to the area in which she lives and practises as a veterinary surgeon. She has been described in submissions as having a passion for working with animals which the Committee accepts. Indeed, the significant number of references produced attest to the regard with which she is held by colleagues and clients alike. It has noted that several of the authors of the references have been present during this week.
3. The Committee would like to make it clear to members of the profession that cases involving improper certification will ordinarily attract a period of suspension or removal from the Register. The Committee strongly disapproves of the circumstances in which Ms Jones certified that Ms Tronet's horse had been vaccinated against equine influenza. The circumstances of this case have been fully set out in its decision. The Guide to Professional Conduct (2006 Edition) makes it clear that The Twelve Principles of Certification should be observed by all veterinary surgeons. The relationship between veterinary surgeon and client is one of mutual trust and respect. Clients, and external bodies, are entitled to rely upon the integrity of the veterinary surgeon in not certifying that horses have been vaccinated unless they have carried out the vaccinations themselves or have obtained full and proper evidence that vaccination has been carried out by another veterinary surgeon. The same principles should be applied whether one horse or

4. The Committee considered whether it was appropriate to postpone judgment in this case for a period of up to 2 years and concluded that this was not a case where undertakings as to further training or monitoring were required. It then considered the sanctions in order beginning with no further action. In the light of its finding that Ms Jones was reckless in certifying the vaccinations it does not consider that this is an appropriate case in which to take no further action. As Counsel on behalf of Ms Jones pointed out in his submissions, acting recklessly, whatever the circumstances, is an aggravating factor. The Committee has concluded that in view of the circumstances in which Ms Jones came to certify that the horse had been vaccinated that a reprimand would maintain public confidence and uphold proper standards of conduct in the profession. The Committee has considered that a reprimand is proportionate to the nature and extent of the charge, the public interest, and the interests of Ms Jones. It has taken into account the isolated nature of the incident, Ms Jones' age, her inexperience, and the inadequacy of her guidance and training at the practice. The decision of the Committee is that Ms Jones should be reprimanded.

**DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE**  
**18 JUNE 2009**