

# Role of the RCVS

1. The RCVS is the regulatory and standard-setting body for the veterinary profession in the UK. This can be summarised by the strap line:

*'Setting Veterinary Standards'*

and the mission statement:

*'The role of the RCVS is to safeguard the health and welfare of animals committed to veterinary care through the regulation of the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, thereby protecting the interests of those dependent on animals, and assuring public health. It also acts as an impartial source of informed opinion on relevant veterinary matters.'*

NB It is not the role of RCVS to represent members of the profession individually or collectively, that is for the BVA. However RCVS does have a role in promoting high standards in the profession, particularly in relation to education and professional conduct. There has been public concern expressed in the 4<sup>th</sup> Report of the Shipman Inquiry about the extent to which doctors on the GMC hold themselves out to represent doctors when the focus of the organisation should be to act in the public interest.

The RCVS aims to ensure that it is respected both by the public and the profession as a credible and effective organisation. It must be seen to be objectively fair and open in the way it works. It should not be perceived by the public as run by the profession, for the profession. Nor should it be seen by the profession as biased in favour of the public or unduly influenced by consumer or media criticism. In effect the RCVS manages the interface between the profession and the public.

2. The RCVS is made up of three distinct organisations:
  - a. **The RCVS** – as a statutory regulator: undertaking the statutory responsibilities set out in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 – to maintain a register, regulate veterinary education and to regulate professional conduct.
  - b. **The RCVS** – acting as a 'Royal College': exercising powers under the Royal Charter to award Fellowships, Diplomas and Certificates to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others and to act as informed and impartial source of opinion on veterinary matters.
  - c. **RCVS Trust** – a separate charity: established to promote and advance the study and practice of the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine – by providing the RCVS Library and Information Service and a range of grants largely to support educational and research activities.
3. The RCVS was established in 1844 by Royal Charter to be the governing body of the veterinary profession. Its statutory duties are currently laid out in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. The RCVS safeguards the interests of the public and animals by ensuring that only those registered with the RCVS can carry out acts of veterinary surgery.

4. In order to carry out its statutory duties a Council of 42 members governs the RCVS and meets three times a year.
5. The breakdown of members is as follows:
  - a. 24 members: elected to Council by the profession itself (in May of each year)
  - b. 14 members: two each nominated to Council by each of the seven UK veterinary schools
  - c. 4 members: appointed by the Privy Council
6. Council is supported by a system of Committees. RCVS policy issues put forward by working parties or the secretariat go first to Committees for recommendation and, if recommended, on to Council for approval or rejection. The terms of reference are laid down in the general administration bye-laws. Some decisions are delegated to Committees, but Council does receive reports of all Committees.
7. The President, Senior Vice-President, Junior Vice-President and Treasurer are elected by Council from its number. Together with the Registrar, they form a team of Officers and have the main responsibility for running the RCVS.
8. Further information is available on RCVSonline at [www.rcvs.org.uk/about](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/about)

## Role of Council Members

Appointed by the Privy Council (4) or Universities with a veterinary school (14) or elected by Members (24), for a four year term

1. To undertake the governance of the College, in accordance with the powers and obligations set out in the Charter and the Act.
2. To attend Council Meetings (normally three a year).
  - i. to make Bye-Laws under the Charter and to approve draft regulations for submission to the Privy Council, to be made under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966;
  - ii. to agree the Strategic Plan; the five year financial plan and the budget for the forthcoming year, including fees to be levied;
  - iii. to ensure that income and expenditure are properly accounted for, investments prudently made and audited accounts presented to the membership in the Annual Report and at the AGM;
  - iv. to receive reports from committees;

- v. to elect the President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer and determine the composition of committees;
  - vi. to appoint the Secretary and Registrar and any Assistant Registrars.
3. To sit on working parties, boards and committees (which can act with delegated authority on certain matters and make recommendations to Council on the more important and strategic issues). NB Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees are set up by statute and have autonomous powers.
  4. To represent the College on outside organisations and at meetings, or to speak to the media on behalf of the College, as requested or agreed with one of the Officers.
  5. To act in accordance with the public service principles set out in the Nolan Committee's First Report on Standards in Public Life, which include selflessness (acting solely in the public interest); integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty and leadership.
  6. To maintain an up to date declaration of interests for publication on the website and to provide the College with biographical information and photographs for publication on the website and elsewhere.
  7. To participate in induction and training sessions.

For further details see the Code of Conduct for Council and Committee Members, Code of Conduct for Managing Conflicts of Interest and the Handbook for Council and Committee Members and, in particular, the section on the Role of Council Members, all available on the intranet.

NB Council Members are not elected or appointed to represent any constituency and all have a responsibility equivalent to trustees for the governance of the College.