

"The Department did not have the resources to prepare legislative proposals for at least the next three years."

DEFRA: no money for new legislation

Post-EFRA Committee inquiry – where next for new legislation?

The RCVS Council has given a steer for the next steps to update the legal framework for the regulation of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.

In November 2005, following two consultations with the profession, the College proposed a new structure, with separate bodies to set standards and deal with complaints. The RCVS Council would be newly constituted. Veterinary nursing would become a fully regulated profession with an independent Veterinary Nurses Council. There would be more flexible powers to deal with disciplinary cases, new arrangements to make sure that practitioners keep up to date, and regulation of practices as well as individual professionals.

If the law is to be changed, Ministers at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will have to be convinced. Over the last two years they have indicated general sympathy but not committed themselves.

The position is now clearer. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, which scrutinises the work of the Department, launched an inquiry last year into "the need to replace the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966". In giving evidence to the Committee on 3 March, the Minister, Lord Rooker, said that the Department did not have the resources to prepare legislative proposals for at least the next three years.

The Committee's report, published on 14 May, agrees that there is "a pressing need for the disciplinary process for veterinary surgeons to be updated" and that "there ought to be a separation between the RCVS Council, which sets rules for the profession, and the Disciplinary Committee, which adjudicates complaints on the basis of those rules". The report recommends that the College should refine its other proposals, particularly for a newly constituted RCVS Council.

What happens next? The EFRA Committee suggested that the College should co-operate with DEFRA and the British Veterinary Association to bring forward legislation in the next session of Parliament in order to put the most urgent changes in place. Council has agreed to set up a new working party to take a new look at all the proposals, and DEFRA and BVA will be invited to take part. The working party will need to consider afresh what changes are needed and how urgently. It will also want to look for ways to make progress without the need for new legislation.

In this issue: funding for support, new *RCVS Review*, corporate governance, VNs on the radio, new Council/VN Council members, 24/7 update, more *Advice Notes*, careers launch, what is a Specialist?, VN exam update, RCVS Day, PI Lay Observers' Report, DC hearings, Trust's golden jubilee.



Putting up the money

Pledge to support the supporters

We have often gone on record to say that the College is concerned about levels of stress within the profession, which can frequently lead to drug and drink dependency or even suicide. More recently, our concern has extended to veterinary nurses, particularly Registered Veterinary Nurses, for whom new levels of accountability may bring new responsibilities which, sadly, can often go hand in hand with increased stress.

It's one thing to talk about it, another to give practical support. Excellent support exists, in the shape of the Veterinary Surgeons' Health Support Programme (VSHSP), Vet Helpline, and the one-stop online information source www.vetlife.org.uk, all run by the Veterinary Benevolent Fund (VBF).

All three can offer support to VNs as well as vets, and there are moves to consolidate this with the training of two veterinary nurse counsellors for the Vet Helpline. Three VNs have already been helped by the VSHSP and we will work with the media and the British Veterinary

Nursing Association to increase awareness of available support to veterinary nurses.

"We are very grateful to all our sponsors and especially to the RCVS who have been loyal supporters of the programme."

The College is putting its money where its mouth is by pledging to increase its support of the VSHSP to £30,000 per year for the next two years. Other funds come from Veterinary Defence Society, British Small Animal Veterinary Association, Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons, Fish Veterinary Society and other individual donations.

"We are very grateful to all our sponsors and especially to the RCVS who have been loyal supporters of the programme since its inception. The funding will be used to pay for the expenses incurred on the service to the benefit of the whole veterinary team," says Lydia Brown, Chairman of the VBF.



Perception is reality

New Working Party to ensure transparency and openness

A working party will be established to consider our corporate governance, as the result of a motion laid before Council at its June meeting.

The motion, which was put by Bob Partridge and seconded by Lt Col Neil Smith, proposed that a Corporate Governance Working Party should make recommendations to Council, and that it should take evidence from sources such as the Committee for Standards in Public Life.

In supporting the motion, Mr Partridge drew attention to the need for College business not only to be done in the right way, but to be seen to be done so. Perception was all-important in terms of maintaining confidence in the College, he said, citing the example of appropriate declarations of interest.

President Dr Bob Moore highlighted that the issue of declarations of interest was on the Officers' radar and had in fact been raised by several of the Committees recently. He

outlined that the item was due to appear on the agenda for the Officer team's three-day strategy planning

meeting that would take place at the start of the new presidential year. One option was for one of the College's honorary associates to become involved in the review, he said.

Council was evenly divided about an amendment to the motion proposed by Bradley Viner, which sought to leave the review to the Officer team. As a consequence it was not carried.

The original motion was, however, carried, and it was agreed that Officers would progress this, and that there would be a report back to the November meeting of Council.



All change on Councils

New Council Members to be welcomed at RCVS Day

There has been quite a change to the membership of RCVS Council, following this year's Council elections. Unfortunately, this wasn't mirrored by a change in the election turnout: at just over 17%, that remained about as low as last year.

Members successfully elected to Council for the first time, and due to take up office at RCVS Day on 4 July, were Richard Stephenson, Charles Gruchy and Catherine Goldie; existing Members Barry Johnson and Christopher Chesney will continue to serve, having been re-elected. Powys veterinary practitioner Bertie Ellis, described by President Bob Moore at June's Council meeting as "The Welsh Comeback Kid" will return to the Council once again, having previously been on Council for 18 years, albeit with two breaks.

VN Council

Turnout for the Veterinary Nurses Council elections was lower still, at just 9%. Nevertheless, Dot Creighton was returned and Katherine Kissick was newly elected – both will also serve four-year terms. Retired Nursing Officer Penelope Swindlehurst and practising veterinary surgeon Helen Torrington have also been selected to join the VN Council, as lay and veterinary surgeon appointed members, respectively.

Tributes and thanks

At the June Council meeting, the President also thanked those Members whose time on Council was drawing to a close for their commitment and contribution, including elected members

David McDowell and Neil Smith, and Liverpool University appointee Agnes Winter. Dr Moore also thanked Debby Reynolds, former Chief Veterinary Officer, for her assistance on the Council over the past four years.

Dr Moore then paid tribute to Wendy Harrison, one of the youngest people ever elected to the Council. During her eight years on Council, Dr Harrison had served on five separate Committees, as well as a number of Subcommittees and Subject Boards. As she will be moving abroad this year she had decided not to stand for re-election.

And special thanks went to long-standing Council Member and former RCVS President Stephen Ware (pictured). As well as holding presidential office in 2002, Mr Ware had served on almost all of the main Committees, VN Council and as Chairman of the RCVS Trust Board of Trustees. He had also been an RCVS representative for the UK in Europe for many years, and is currently Vice-President of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe.



Fee changes

At its June meeting, Council approved a proposal to seek agreement from the Privy Council for a 3% fee increase for veterinary surgeons for the year 2009-2010. The proposed fees, together with next year's fees for veterinary nurses, are set out below.

	Current fees (£)	2009/2010 fees (£)
Veterinary surgeons*		
Home-practising retention fee	285	294
Overseas-practising retention fee	143	147
Non-practising retention fee	47	48
Postgraduate retention fee	143	147
Registration fee	71	73
Temporary registration fee	285	294
Restoration fee	285	294
Veterinary nurses		
Retention/Listing fee	58	60

* Veterinary surgeons' fees subject to Privy Council approval



Taking the lead on dangerous dogs

New leaflet from DEFRA

In a move to highlight the existing legislation on dangerous dogs, DEFRA has recently published a leaflet providing information regarding the law on dogs that are dangerously out of control and dogs which are banned in the UK.

The leaflet aims to explain to dog owners, and people who come into contact with dogs, how the law prevents irresponsible dog ownership. The Department hopes that in helping people to understand the law, the leaflet may deter irresponsible dog owners from allowing their dogs to become dangerous.

It describes a number of situations in which a dog might be defined as being 'dangerously out of control', and sets out what penalties might be imposed on the owner of such a dog. It also describes the types of dogs that are banned: Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro, but explains that whether or not a dog is banned depends on what it looks like rather than the breed or name by which it is called.

A fact-sheet version of the leaflet has also been produced which can be printed from DEFRA's website (www.defra.gov.uk), and which might be a useful addition to existing literature in practice waiting rooms.

VN role under spotlight

Radio programme and Survey stimulate debate

On 25 May, veterinary practice came under the scrutiny of hard-hitting investigative journalist Donal Macintyre on Radio Five Live. The subject of the programme was inappropriate delegation of tasks to unqualified veterinary nursing assistants and student veterinary nurses. It did not make for very comfortable listening as pet owners and (albeit largely anonymous) nursing staff recounted the difficult situations in which they had been placed by being asked to carry out tasks that were beyond their level of competence, sometimes with severe animal welfare consequences.



How much should be read into a relatively small number of anecdotal cases is open to question. And with the introduction of the Register of Veterinary Nurses last year and

recent reminders to the veterinary profession about nursing job titles and appropriate delegation to unqualified staff, we continue to take steps to clarify areas of accountability and responsibility.

But the fact remains that veterinary nursing practice is not as clearly prescribed by law as the practice of veterinary surgery. The areas included in Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act as being legal for listed/registered veterinary nurses and enrolled students under supervision are only part of the broad range of tasks carried out by veterinary nurses on a daily basis.

"Veterinary nursing practice is not as clearly prescribed by law as the practice of veterinary surgery."

The results of our recent Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession suggest that it might be time for the veterinary nurse's role to be reviewed to ensure that his or her nursing skills are being best utilised within the practice team. For example, over 60% of qualified nurse respondents said they 'rarely' or 'never' scrub up to assist with surgical procedures, although this is an area assessed in the practical examinations. This either

means the syllabus needs to change or practices are missing a trick in terms of effective delegation. At the other end of the scale, 70% of student nurses and 50% of qualified nurses are being asked to carry out general domestic (as opposed to clinical) cleaning tasks on a daily basis.

The Radio Five Live programme has certainly stimulated debate as, no doubt, will the results of our Survey. The headline results were presented at BSAVA Congress in April by VN Council Chairman Andrea Jeffery (pictured left). The full report will be available online during June and summarised in a forthcoming issue of *RCVS News Extra* that will be sent to all registered/listed veterinary nurses.

Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession quick facts

- 35% response rate
- Mean age of respondents: 30
- 78% qualified; 65% registered
- 0.4% unemployed
- 13% have second jobs
- Mean salary is £17,104 for those in clinical practice; £19,831 for others
- 69% in clinical practice are in small animal practice
- Average week of 40.3 hours for full-timers (excluding overtime and on-call)

Divide and conquer?

New format for our annual reporting

This time every year, we suspect, veterinary households countrywide reverberate to the sounds of RCVS envelopes being ripped open, to sighs of relief when no complaint letter drops out, and to (recycling) bin lids springing open and clanging shut as they digest the latest wholesome edition of the *RCVS Annual Report* along with yesterday's paper and last night's empty wine bottle.

Disheartening for us though this may be, considering the love and devotion that goes into producing the thing, we can hardly blame you. Annual reports are not known for winning Pulitzers, or even coming close to rivalling that traditionally well-thumbed tome *Passing Time in the Loo*. Plus, there's enough paperwork to read these days without devoting more precious time to what the College might have to say for itself, much as we'd like to

think otherwise. So, this year, we've shaken things up a bit.

The enclosed *Annual Review*, as it's now called, is a leaner, greener beast. Half the size of its predecessor, it uses much less paper and is a lot lighter to post. The design and layout is a lot cleaner and simpler, too, making it easier on the eye than its former heavyweight cousins.

Gone are the reams of facts and figures and accounts normally associated with an annual report; gone, but not forgotten, as these are all still available on RCVSonline in our new digital publication *RCVS Facts* (www.rcvs.org.uk/facts) for those who like to peruse the changing face of the UK veterinary profession from year to year. (You can still get a paper copy of this – just let us know if you would like one.)

But, perhaps most importantly, you will find that the *Annual Review* is in your words, not ours.

It comprises six short accounts from people who have, over the past 12 months, been involved in, or affected by, RCVS activities in some form or another, including a new veterinary graduate, a recently registered veterinary nurse and a complainant. There is also a summary of our other activities, to give you an instant overview of our year's work.

Designed more to be dipped into than devoured from cover to cover, we hope you'll enjoy the new format, and find a moment to have a look through it next time you get chance for a coffee.



Prescription charges changes

Guide changes to reflect 'relaxation' in medicines legislation

Following the Competition Commission's 2002 investigation into the supply of prescription-only veterinary medicines, the Supply of Relevant Veterinary Medicinal Products Order came into force on 31 October 2005. The Order is enforced by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

There are two provisions relating to veterinary surgeons: the zero-rated prescription charge for a three-year period; and, the provision that prohibits veterinary surgeons from discriminating between clients who are given

a prescription and those who are not, either in a) the charges for relevant medicinal products (generally prescription-only medicines-veterinarian [POM-V]) or b) the fees charged for other veterinary services.

The law changes on 31 October 2008, from when veterinary surgeons will be allowed to charge for prescriptions.

At its June meeting, Council agreed that the RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct should reflect the change, indicate that charges for written prescriptions should be reasonable and highlight that the non-discrimination provision remains applicable. Part 1D of the Guide (and the relevant parts of Advice Note 15 – Prescription Charges) will be amended as follows:

From 31 October 2008, veterinary surgeons may make a reasonable charge for written prescriptions. Prescriptions for POM-V medicines may be issued only for animals under the care of the prescribing veterinary surgeon and following his or her clinical assessment of the animals.

A veterinary surgeon must not discriminate between clients who are supplied with a prescription and those who are not in relation to fees charged for other goods or services.

Advisory Committee has been informed that a further meeting with the OFT is planned for September 2008, when there is likely to be discussion of monitoring prescription charges for 12 months from 31 October 2008. It is therefore relevant to note the Competition Commission's recommendation that:

'...The Director General of Fair Trading (DGFT), with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), is to monitor the prescriptions written, and the charges made for them, over the 12 months following the end of that period. The DGFT is to set charges for prescriptions if, in his judgement, veterinary surgeons are charging for prescriptions so as to deter animal owners from asking for prescriptions or to influence the terms of competition with pharmacies to their own advantage.'



It's about time

Guidance on 24-7 and the Working Time Regulations

Veterinary surgeons in practice have a professional responsibility to take steps to provide 24-hour emergency cover for the care of animals of those species treated by the practice during normal working hours. The Working Time Regulations 1998 (as amended) need to be taken into account when considering how to meet this responsibility.

The long awaited *Advice Note on the Working Time Regulations* has now been agreed and is available on RCVSonline:

www.rcvs.org.uk/advicenotes. It provides an outline of the main provisions of the Regulations, the possible exceptions that might apply to veterinary practice, information on the 'compensatory rest' provisions, and guidance on when 'on call' time also amounts to 'working time'. It is guidance and should not

be regarded as a substitute for legal advice.

The RCVS Working Party on 24-hour Emergency Cover, which includes both veterinary surgeons and lay members, continues to review the extent of this professional responsibility. At its meeting of 26 March, where comments submitted by members were considered, a robust discussion took place with a variety of views being expressed by the Working Party's members. The minutes of the meeting are available on RCVSonline.

The Working Party decided that more information was required before any decision could be made and Council has approved a data-gathering exercise, to seek to ensure that any decisions are evidence-based.

Differing views were expressed at the March meeting of the Working Party, including:

- The role of the RCVS in regard to 24/7 is limited to ensuring that animals are seen out-of-hours for first-aid and pain relief and that the provisions allowing outsourcing and sharing are sufficient to prevent this becoming too onerous.
- The profession can no longer sustain the burden of providing 24/7.
- The RCVS should not have blanket provisions when some areas/circumstances exist where the provisions cannot be met.
- The RCVS should allow for members to apply individually for an exemption.
- There should be only an obligation for vets to comply with whatever services they have contracted to provide to their clients.
- Removal of 24/7 requirements will allow 'cherry picking' and have welfare implications.

VMD premises register

Practice premises registration draws nearer

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) has refined its proposals for the registration of veterinary premises following discussions with us.

Last year, VMD decided that premises from which veterinary surgeons supply medicines (and at which they are stored) should be registered, to help in the enforcement of the law on medicines. The Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2007 require registration with effect from 1 April 2009. We have agreed to establish and keep the register on behalf of the Secretary of State.

VMD consulted in March on the 2008 Regulations, which will come into operation on 1 October. Three significant changes, all prompted by the College, are proposed in the part of the Regulations that deals with the registration of premises.

One is that the requirement to register does not to apply to AVM-GSL medicines.

SQPs

The second point will affect practices that employ veterinary nurses or other staff who are suitably qualified persons (SQPs) for the supply of POM-VPS and NFA-VPS medicines. SQPs can only supply from premises approved by the Secretary of State. The new regulations will remove the need for practice premises to be approved for SQP purposes if they are already registered for

the storage and supply of medicines by veterinary surgeons.

The third, most important, change is that the requirement to register should apply to "veterinary practice premises", not all "premises". VMD says that this "should help to make it clear that, for instance, it is not necessary to register a client's farm simply because a veterinary surgeon is storing medicines there from the practice for future use on the farm". Also, registration should not be necessary where, for example, a veterinary surgeon stores medicines in an on-call bag at his or her home. It is likely that all such (unregistered) premises will need to be traceable from a registered "veterinary practice premises".

Definition of premises

So what are "veterinary practice premises"? The regulations will not define that expression and in many cases "veterinary practice premises" will be obvious: the main or branch practice premises in a town. At our suggestion, however, VMD proposes to offer the guidance that premises to be entered in the register are likely to fall into one or more of the categories, outlined in the box above right.

Additional guidance will be drafted and considered by the Advisory Committee in September this year. There will be difficult cases where the need to register is debatable and we will consider these individually, if necessary, with the VMD.

Premises likely to be entered into the register are those:

- From which the veterinary surgeons of a practice provide veterinary services
- Advertised or promoted as premises of a veterinary practice
- Open to members of the public to bring animals for veterinary treatment and care
- Not open to the public, but which are the base from which a veterinary surgeon practises or provides veterinary services to more than one client
- To which medicines are delivered wholesale, on the authority of one or more veterinary surgeons in practice.

Fees

We will start to compile the register when the 2008 regulations are in force. There will be an annual fee of £40 per premises registered (a statutory fee for which VAT is not applicable). There will be no extra charge for premises that belong to the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme, because the fee for membership of the Scheme will cover the costs of registration for the supply of medicines. There will, however, be one change for Scheme members. A number of practices within the Scheme are currently invoiced in June, but from 2009 it will be necessary to collect all fees in January of each year. Practices receiving a Practice Standards Scheme invoice in June 2008 will therefore only be billed for the six months to the end of December 2008.

Considering Bluetongue certification

Clarity on three different scenarios

The RCVS Certification Subcommittee was recently asked to comment on the certificates for DEFRA's Bluetongue vaccination plan. The plan has protocols for three different situations: a) vaccination to prevent disease, b) vaccination for export, and c) vaccination for regulated movement within Great Britain.

By way of background, before prescribing a POM-V vaccine, a veterinary surgeon must have the animals under his or her care and make a clinical assessment of the animals and, therefore, a farm visit may be necessary, whether the vaccination is to be certified, or not. If there is to be veterinary certification, the prescribing veterinary surgeon has responsibility for this.

For **vaccination to prevent disease**, it is not necessary to record individual animal identities and the farmer may administer the vaccine.

For **vaccination for export**, the veterinary surgeon must administer the vaccine and the animals' identification numbers must be recorded at the time of vaccination. If an export is planned, the official export certificate may be used. If export is only a possibility for the future, the farmer may request a separate vaccination certificate.

For **vaccination for regulated movement within Great Britain**, the farmer may administer the vaccine. At the time of vaccination, a record should be made of the animals' identification marks. The number of animals vaccinated should correspond with the quantity of vaccination used and the farmer should present the veterinary surgeon with a list of animals vaccinated and the empty vaccine bottles, with labels and batch numbers legible. The prescribing veterinary surgeon can then sign the relevant part of the certificate to

say the vaccine was prescribed and the correct number of empty bottles returned, and the farmer makes a declaration that he or she vaccinated the animals.

The Bluetongue control strategy is still unfolding, and the situation must be considered as evolving. Information on Bluetongue vaccine can be found on the DEFRA website at www.defra.gov.uk



Safe access to controlled drugs?

Tragedy triggers new guidance

Following the tragic death of a new employee at a veterinary practice last year, we have issued an *RCVS Advice Note* on access to controlled drugs.

At its April meeting, the Advisory Committee considered a transcript of an Inquest into the death of a woman who had been employed as an evening receptionist at a veterinary practice. She had been found dead at the premises where she worked, having taken drugs from the locked storage to which she had been given keys. Unbeknown to the practice, she had had a history of drug dependency, including criminal convictions.

Speaking at the Inquest, the Coroner said: "Looking at her past history and all the other problems, I am sure it would have happened at some stage, at some place. It would have

perhaps happened elsewhere, and I am sure that [she] would have taken her own life, but the fact that she was able to get to these drugs so easily is the thing that surprised us...hence I have called the surgery in.

"There were no checks on her past and this lady was simply taken on to work and had keys to even the drug cabinet so she could help herself to whatever she wanted."

Following the Inquest, the Coroner wrote to us suggesting the need for guidance and advice both on access to controlled drugs and appropriate checks to make before new staff are given such access.

The *Advice Note* focuses on the need to restrict and authorise staff access to controlled drugs stored on veterinary practice premises (including vehicles, homes and other premises where smaller supplies may be held on a temporary and occasional basis) and the appropriate checks to carry out before authorising such staff access.

Legislation and advice relating to the use, prescription, supply, storage and record-keeping of controlled drugs can be found in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the associated 2001 Regulations, the Veterinary Medicines Regulations, the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct* and the *BVA Code of Practice on Medicines*.



Clearing up confusion

Compulsory Period of Supervised Practice; optional Certificate

In our March 2008 issue, we covered the development of the proposed Return to Veterinary Nursing Practice course that will lead to a Certificate in Current Veterinary Nursing Practice. The course is designed to support Registered Veterinary Nurses who have deregistered for a period of five years or more and wish to return.

However, some confusion seems to exist about the course and its relationship to the 17-week Period of Supervised Practice (PSP).

In a nutshell: the PSP is compulsory for those returning to the Register after a break of five years or more; the Certificate in Current Veterinary Nursing Practice (CVNP) is not.

The PSP aims to ensure that re-registering nurses have the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills under the mentorship and supervision of other registered practitioners – either veterinary or veterinary nursing. The issue of whether this period of

practice must take place in a Training Practice or practice accredited at tier 2 or 3 of the Practice Standards Scheme, or if it could take place in any practice, has been the subject of much debate within VN Council and a decision has not yet been made.

A change to the VN Byelaws in 2003 means that, effectively, any VN qualifying since 2003 is considered to have registered at that time. This means that registered nurses could potentially be returning to practice after a five-year break as early as 2009.

The Certificate in CVNP is an optional continuing professional development qualification in support of the PSP period. It has been the subject of consultation amongst veterinary nurses and those involved with training and is currently being developed by a Working Party, under the chairmanship of Liz Branscombe, Vice-Chairman of the VN Council.

VMD proposes Animal Test Certificate amendments

The VMD has proposed amendments to the Animal Test Certificate (ATC) application system, to allow veterinary surgeons to conduct "small-scale clinical trials" that are "necessary for scientific advancement of clinical veterinary knowledge but may not be of commercial significance". The VMD's proposal seeks to simplify the current application system for clinical trials by pharmaceutical companies.

We have been involved in discussions with the VMD to explore the issues, which were identified in various letters published in the veterinary press following the publication of the article 'Clinical Trials in Practice' (*In Practice*, October 2007), co-written by James Anderson and Helen Jukes, and the letter published in *The Veterinary Record* (24 November 2007) by Polly Taylor and others.

Any amendments to the Veterinary Medicine Regulations are likely to be introduced with the 2008 Regulations issued in the autumn.

New Advice Notes published

On the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, and following Council's recent approval, we have extended the *RCVS Advice Notes* series to include advice on the following topics:

- Access to Controlled Drugs*
- Certification*
- Veterinary Medicines Regulations
- Working Time Regulations and 24-hour Emergency Cover*

The *Advice Note on the Veterinary Medicines Regulations* (VMRs) follows a request by the Advisory Committee for the main requirements of these Regulations to be highlighted for the benefit of practitioners. The *Advice Note on Certification* aims to clarify the fact that not all inaccurate certification amounts to false or dishonest certification.

Advice Notes can be found on the website www.rcvs.org.uk/advicenotes and copies are also available from the Professional Conduct Department (profcon@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0789).

*Please see separate articles in the issue.

All Walks of Life are here

Drive to increase diversity of the veterinary profession

It would be fair to say that the new veterinary careers materials launched on 8 May quite literally went down a storm. The venue was the Rainforest Café in London, home to a series of animatronic animals and special effects to put you right in the heart of South America. And just as the event was coming to a close, thunder and lightning and the sound of heavy rain broke out: pretty convincing, even though we were underground!

Quite how the materials will go down with the secondary schools to which they are being posted in a week or so remains to be seen, but early indications, based on pre-launch testing and feedback at the event, have been really positive.

The materials were produced by a collaboration that was led by the College and included six of the seven veterinary schools and DEFRA. Our funding was matched, to the tune of £90,000, by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), as part of its Gateways to the Professions initiative, which aims to widen access to the professions. Our particular objective was to broaden the range of applicants to veterinary school.



Under the theme 'Veterinary Science... for all walks of life', the new DVD and brochure demonstrate that vets can come from a variety of backgrounds. They explore the diversity of career opportunities available, as exemplified by Head of Veterinary Services at Bristol Zoo Gardens, Sharon Redrobe, small animal practitioner Sanjay Mangabhai, and TV vet Steve Leonard, all of whom spoke at the launch.

The current profile of the veterinary profession is 98% white, with a growing proportion of women: 79% of those admitted to veterinary school last year were female. In addition, it has traditionally been seen as a profession for those from the higher socioeconomic groups. An increasingly homogenised profession may

mean the UK is missing out on some potentially excellent vets. We hope that the new materials will attract those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, those without professionals in the family, and boys.

As Sanjay Mangabhai, who featured in the DVD, stressed at the launch, a lack of awareness about the veterinary profession is a barrier to some from ethnic backgrounds: "Although my family and friends actively tried to persuade me out of my career choice, this was largely due to a poor understanding of the profession," he said. In fact, a veterinary degree gave Sanjay a greater degree of flexibility and opportunity than a human medical career would have, with the added benefit of allowing him to set up his own business: "I always had a desire to run my own business and be an entrepreneur – being a vet has allowed me to do this," he added, having recently opened his second practice.

"Veterinary graduates develop skills that are of potential benefit to the population at large."

Modular in approach, the DVD features vets involved with small animal, large animal and equine practice, government service, the army, research, academia, commerce and zoo work.

Chairman of the project's Steering Group, Professor Phillip Duffus, believes that the veterinary profession's role in wider society is becoming more important: "With a growing number of diseases that can be passed from animals to humans, the risk of bioterrorism, and global climate change placing many animal species under threat, veterinary scientists are taking a more central role," he said. "Veterinary graduates develop skills that are of potential benefit to the population at large, not just animal owners. We hope to attract a broad base of applications to veterinary school so that the profession can benefit from the best talent available."

Central role

TV vet Steve Leonard, who also spoke at the launch, is a good example of how these transferable skills can be put to diverse use: "Being a vet is all about communication. All animals we see come with a person attached. The BBC recognised that I had the ability to explain often complex messages in simple terms, and that this would be a good quality in a TV presenter. I have ended up a long way from where I thought I would be and have had



some fantastic experiences along the way," he said. (You can hear all about his adventures if you come to RCVS Day on 4 July, where he will be the guest speaker: see page 15 for details of how to secure your ticket.)

Our project was only one of 24 supported in DIUS's two-round funding programme, which gave away a total of £4million. Others included the Engineering Council UK developing a work-based pathway to registration as a professional engineer; a new framework for work-based learning for solicitors from the Law Society; and, the General Medical Council developing advice for medical schools in encouraging disabled people into medicine and retaining them in the profession.

"I welcome this new DVD and brochure developed by the RCVS and its partners to encourage diversity within the veterinary profession."

Our Steering Group for the project included two individuals who were involved with other Gateways projects: Ruth Wright from the Engineering Council and Libby Steele from the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC). They

both provided very useful independent viewpoints on the issues faced by the profession. You can read about the RSC's own Gateways project, which aims to support non-specialist chemistry teachers, in the Guest Column to the right.

Bill Rammell MP, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, DIUS, has been supportive of our efforts: "I welcome this new DVD and brochure developed by the RCVS and its partners to encourage diversity within the veterinary profession. This is exactly the sort of project which we are looking to encourage through our recently-launched High Level Skills Strategy consultation, which highlighted the importance of improving information, advice and guidance," he said.

Publicity drive

The materials are aimed at 14 to 18-year-olds and their parents, teachers and careers advisors. The long-term effects of the campaign will take some time to be seen, however, we will continue to promote the materials and their messages through PR activities. We have contracted with a specialist PR consultancy specifically to help to promote veterinary careers to black and ethnic minority audiences, through media relations, advertising and posters.

We aim to send a copy of the brochure to each practice in the UK over the coming months. If you are involved with careers activities and would like to receive copies of the DVD and brochure more speedily, please contact info@walksoflife.org.uk or 020 7202 0791. Alternatively, visit www.walksoflife.org.uk for an e-brochure that includes the DVD modules.



The veterinary profession today – a snapshot

Number of vets registered with RCVS	22,793
Number of UK-practising vets	16,205
Male: female split of UK-practising vets	50:50
Average age of UK-practising vets	40.5
Number of veterinary graduates	650
Male: female split of UK graduates	26:74
Male: female split of UK admissions	21:79
UK vets considering themselves 'non-white'	2%



How do you strengthen chemistry teaching in schools when only a quarter of science teachers hold a chemistry degree?

Kirstie Hampson, National Project Manager, Chemistry for Non-Specialists, Royal Society of Chemistry

Chemistry for Non-Specialists

A 2006 report published by the then Department for Education and Skills showed a worrying shortage of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 science teachers who were chemistry specialists, with only 25% of science teachers holding a chemistry degree.

So the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), working in collaboration with the National Network of Science Learning Centres, took advantage of the DIUS Gateways to the Professions fund to develop a programme aimed at raising confidence and expertise in teaching chemistry among non-specialist secondary school science teachers.

The Chemistry for Non-Specialists programme was set up using £645,000 from the Gateways fund, together with matched sponsorship from GlaxoSmithKline. It aims to give teachers the confidence and skills to inspire their students with exciting practical demonstrations and experiments, as well as giving them a good grounding in theory.

Course tutors are all experienced chemistry teachers who have been trained by the RSC to deliver the programme. Each course begins with a two-day residential followed by two follow-up days at termly intervals. Participants are given the freedom to request certain topics or activities on days three and four and are encouraged to remain in contact with the course tutor and other participants in between. Every participant receives a resource pack, including a course handbook, RSC textbooks, careers resources and health and safety advice from CLEAPSS (Consortium of Local Education Authorities for the Provision of Science Services).

To date, nearly 600 teachers have been trained, and feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive: teachers particularly value the practical ideas, tips and tricks that only an experienced chemistry teacher would know. They also benefit from building a support network with others in the same position. The courses will continue into the 2008-2009 academic year with the help of generous sponsorship from GSK and additional funding from the RSC. An evaluation of the impact of the programme to date is currently being carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research.

Chemistry is a central science and doesn't just lead to a career as a chemist – a good A-level in chemistry is a requirement for entrance to many degrees including medicine and veterinary science. So it's vital that any would-be vets are taught chemistry from Key Stage 3 onwards by a confident and knowledgeable teacher. This programme will hopefully help non-specialist teachers to give their students a good grounding in chemistry and improve their future career prospects.

The RSC is the largest organisation in Europe for advancing the chemical sciences. Supported by a network of over 44,000 members worldwide, and an internationally-acclaimed publishing business, its activities span education and training, conferences and science policy, and the promotion of the chemical sciences to the public.

Call in the specialists

We take a closer look at what it means to be an RCVS Recognised Specialist

"Can I call myself a specialist if I am not an RCVS Recognised Specialist?" It's something we are commonly asked at Regional Question Time meetings.

The answer generally given by the President of the day is: "Yes, providing you do not hold yourself out to be an RCVS Recognised Specialist, or practise, or claim to practise, beyond your area of competence."

In its most basic sense, it seems to come down to the use of the capital 'S'. So what's the point of the RCVS List of Recognised Specialists? With around 30 applications per year, there are evidently some recognised benefits in joining. But the word 'specialist' is not legally protected in the veterinary field, meaning that confusion blurs the edges between those who are on the List and those who are not.

Standing at 384, the number of Specialists only represents about 2.5% of the practising arm of the profession, and with 433 Diploma holders out there, all of whom are eligible to List, there's obviously some room for growth.

"The Specialist List is also a good place to start if you are seeking a mentor or supervisor."

The RCVS has maintained and published a List of Recognised Specialists since 1992. Its objective is to promote specialisation within the veterinary profession and to identify, for the public and the profession, vets who have specialised knowledge and skills, who are active practitioners within a recognised field of specialisation and who maintain specialised competence through continuing professional development. It also aims to encourage veterinary surgeons to refer cases, as appropriate, to RCVS Recognised Specialists.

"The Specialist List is also a good place to start if you are seeking a mentor or supervisor for a Fellowship or PhD, or RCVS or European Diploma," according to Geoff Skerritt, Recognised Specialist in Veterinary Neurology and Chairman of the Specialist Recognition Subcommittee.

"In addition, Recognised Specialists are frequently asked to become involved with the RCVS Subject Boards for the Certificate and Diploma examinations. RCVS examiners play a key role in the direction a subject takes," he says.

RCVS Recognised Specialist status is not easily achieved. To be eligible for inclusion on the List, Specialists must have achieved a



Geoff Skerritt, Specialist in Veterinary Neurology

postgraduate qualification at least at Diploma level, and must additionally satisfy the College that they make an active contribution to the specialty. They must have national and international acclaim and must also be available for consultation and referrals by other veterinary colleagues.

The categories for the Specialist List are broader than for Diplomas, and include some areas, for example, Veterinary Neurology, where there is not an RCVS Diploma available. The European Diploma, PhD and Fellowship are each suitable qualifications in these cases.

Keeping up to date

One key difference between Specialist status and holding a Certificate, Diploma or Fellowship, is that the former is time-bound. The individual must reapply for recognition every five years (or earlier in certain cases) to maintain their name on the List. In the advent of new veterinary legislation, there are proposals that the List of RCVS Recognised Specialists may become a Register, with the rules for attaining and maintaining registration further tightened.



Sally Turner, Specialist in Veterinary Ophthalmology

This re-listing is a critical advantage, according to Sally Turner, Recognised Specialist in Veterinary Ophthalmology: "It's important for first-opinion vets – and their clients – to know that a Specialist to whom they refer a case is going to be at the top of their game," she says. Sally has experienced the fall-out when clients are sent on to her following a first referral to a non-listed 'specialist' that has not worked out. Although she is the first to admit that, as she only sees such cases when they have gone wrong, she may have a skewed view.

"Working out of first-opinion practices helps me to maintain a realistic approach to more complex cases, mindful of the client's likely resources."

A Cambridge graduate, Sally's route to specialisation came following a residency at the Animal Health Trust (AHT). She completed her Diploma in 1997 while working part-time at the AHT and in practice, and joined the Specialist List as soon as she could. Her Specialist status enables her to work as a self-employed practitioner offering and referral services at two first-opinion and referral practices: the Stone Lion Veterinary Centre in Wimbledon and the Mandeville Veterinary Hospital in Middlesex. "Working out of first-opinion practices helps me to maintain a realistic approach to more complex cases, mindful of the client's likely resources," she believes.

It initially costs £28 to List as a Specialist, providing your qualification is one from an approved group (£196 if not), then £96 per year to maintain your Listing and £25 to re-apply every five years. It works out at just over £100 per year for a 10-year term. Is it value for money in terms of increased case load?

Greater confidence

This might not be the right way to look at it, according to Sally: "Joining the Specialist List was more a matter of personal satisfaction for me than a question of securing referrals," she explains, "Yet while I could have done this work without being listed as a Specialist, it gives you greater confidence to know that you are keeping up to date. It also chimed with the way the Stone Lion practice was moving, in terms of only using Recognised Specialists for referrals," she adds.

The time-bound nature of Specialist Status does bring consequences for the knowledge

base of the profession. Dr Agnes Winter, RCVS Council Member and Head of the Department of Veterinary Clinical Science at Liverpool, is coming up for retirement. A Specialist in Sheep Health and Production, she was one of the first to List. But she regrets the fact that, once retired, she will struggle to maintain the requisite hours of clinical practice in her field, and so may be forced to let her Specialist status lapse: "I feel that I, and others in my position, still have an awful lot to offer the profession in terms of specialist knowledge," she says.



Dr Agnes Winter, Specialist in Sheep Health and Production

With 51 being the average age of Recognised Specialists, the potential loss to the profession of similar expertise could be considerable. It is something the College has considered before and no doubt will again. "I will be sad to leave the List but will without doubt continue to contribute to the discipline via the Sheep Veterinary Society. We only have four Specialists in sheep veterinary medicine, so I feel it's important to maintain an active role," adds Agnes.

"I feel that I, and others in my position, still have an awful lot to offer the profession."

The small number of experts in Agnes' field – and indeed many other production animal areas – means that word of mouth is important for referral work. Joining the Specialist List may not be as advantageous here as it might be for some small animal Specialists, where standing out from the crowd is more important.

Agnes' Specialist services have been in much demand: she has travelled as far afield as Scotland to see valuable breeding stock. On the small animal side, of course, clients are more inclined to travel to the practice. One

practice that fields a team comprising a mix of RCVS Recognised Specialists, European Specialists and Diploma holders is Davies Veterinary Specialists in Bedfordshire. The practice currently employs 18 RCVS Recognised Specialists, and is eligible to have its own practice-based residency programme in some disciplines. Rob Rayward, Specialist in Small Animal Surgery (Orthopaedics), was inspired by his Cambridge University lecturer in Orthopaedics, John Houlton, to study for his Diploma at the practice. He was keen to become more deeply knowledgeable in one subject and saw his Diploma, and thereafter listing as a Specialist, as a passport to a more challenging and interesting case load.

Motivation

"My incentive to become a Diploma holder was to increase my skill and knowledge base and to be recognised as achieving a level that would enable me to take referrals in my own name," he explains. "The added drive to become a Recognised Specialist was to fit in with the philosophy of the practice and for the additional financial benefit that this brought."

"Although studying for a Diploma whilst working was a good option financially, it was quite hard to find the motivation and time to publish the papers while not in an academic environment."

The five-year training wasn't an easy route though, as he explains: "Although studying for a Diploma whilst working was a good option financially, it was quite hard to find the motivation and time to publish the papers while not in an academic environment."

Rob does believe that coming from a general practice background and going on to take a practice-based Diploma has helped him to build and maintain good communication skills and an awareness of the client's perspective. "I am also less likely to be judgemental of the decisions made by first-opinion vets under the

pressure of 10-minute consultations," he adds, "I've been there."

So, three very different routes to, and uses of, Recognised Specialist status. Yet one thing that all of the Specialists we spoke to agree on is that animal owners, and possibly many general practitioners, are unaware of the different qualifications and status of veterinary surgeons: Recognised Specialist Status carries little weight outside the profession. It's an issue that the College needs to tackle from a communications point of view.

It is already possible for members of the profession and the public to seek the Recognised Specialists closest to them via RCVSONline's Find a Vet search tool, and the Specialist List is included in the *RCVS Register and Directory of Practices*. Yet there is no doubt that more needs to be done before the public sees the real differentiation between the small 's' of a practitioner with some knowledge and experience, and someone who has committed themselves sufficiently to their discipline to be able to use the capital 'S' of an RCVS Recognised Specialist and receive the recognition they deserve.



Rob Rayward, Specialist in Small Animal Surgery (Orthopaedics)

Criteria for listing as an RCVS Recognised Specialist

- Possession of an RCVS, or RCVS-approved Diploma, or other relevant postgraduate qualification
- Being acknowledged by peers in the area of specialisation
- Maintaining and providing acceptable CPD
- Contributing to the specialty through publication, teaching, reviewing and examining
- Attending and participating in national and international meetings within the specialised field
- Being available for referral by other veterinary colleagues
- Being a current active practitioner within the specialised field

The deadline for Specialist applications this year is 12 September, for listing in 2009.

VN exams on track

First e-assessments due and new practicals pass muster

In a few weeks, the first student veterinary nurses will sit the new e-exams.

Feedback following April's pilot of the system has been very positive, with candidates appreciating the simple online booking system, choice of 150 nationwide test centres and easy-to-follow assessment.

Crunch time will be when the first cohort sits the exam for real but indications so far are that the investment in the new system will pay off in terms of accessibility to assessments for candidates, who now have a greater choice of centres, with generally shorter journey time, over a longer examination window.

There are also benefits for practices with more than one candidate, where previously all would have been absent from the practice on a single day.

More information, including an online demo, is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/etest

Meanwhile, the new approach to practical exams introduced this year, running

examinations over weekends and with four test opportunities through the year, has proved successful. The results of the first of the new practicals were released in May, with a record pass-rate of 76%. However, as the cohort comprised many re-take candidates, it is too soon to say if there is a correlation between the high pass-rate and the need for prior



portfolio completion. This has been introduced by the Awarding Body this year with the hope that it would reduce the number of candidates put forward for the practical too soon and subsequently failing.

“The results of the first of the new practicals were released in May, with a record pass-rate of 76%.”

One effect of requiring candidates to complete their portfolios before taking the practical exam has been a drop in the usual number of entries this summer. This highlights the fact that it takes most student VNs longer than the expected two years to complete training (30 months or more in most cases). We are expecting a higher number to attempt at the autumn and winter sessions.

More information on examination progress will be available in the August issue of *VN Standard* www.rcvs.org.uk/vnstandard.

CPD or not CPD?

What can count towards your CPD requirement?

We ask for feedback at each of our Regional Question Time meetings. Each time, there is at least one person who suggests the meeting would be better attended if it “could count as continuing professional development”.

This question, and others we receive asking for us to allocate ‘CPD points’ to courses and events, reveals a widespread misunderstanding about CPD: that someone somewhere needs to say what counts and what doesn’t.

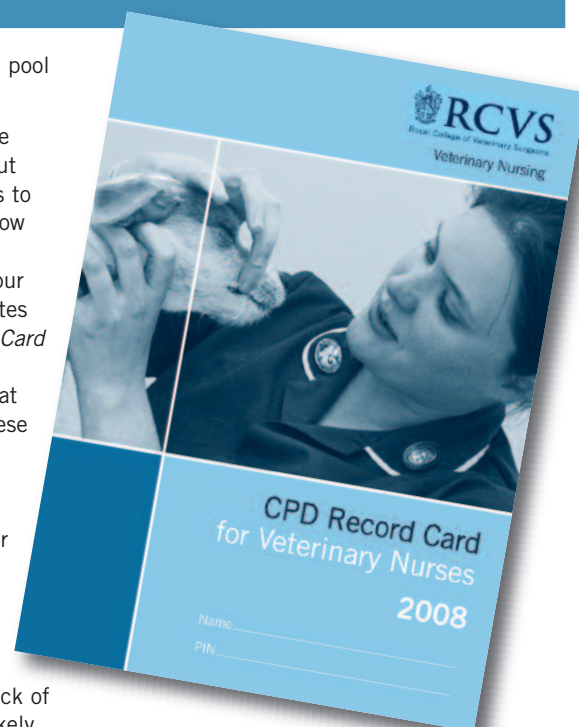
The bottom line is that for both vets and Registered Veterinary Nurses, what counts is up to the individual. We recommend that everyone develops their own professional development plans and works out what journals they need to read, meetings to attend, in-house sessions to organise or partake in, congresses to visit etc, in order to meet their goals.

The objective of setting CPD requirements – 45 hours over three years for RVNs, 105 for vets – is to ensure that individuals keep their skills and knowledge up to date in a way that is relevant for their role. This is to the benefit of their clients and their animals, the

development of the veterinary knowledge pool and the individual’s career progression.

We are often taken to task for, on the one hand, not being prescriptive enough about CPD, and, on the other, requiring records to be kept. Other than giving guidance on how much undocumented personal study is acceptable, we are deliberately open in our recommendations, although guidance notes are available on the annual *CPD Record Card* and online (www.rcvs.org.uk/cpd). We do, however, ask for records to be kept so that CPD can be seen to have been done. These are often asked for in the instance of a complaint being made to the College, as part of a Practice Standards Scheme inspection or as part of an application for a postgraduate qualification.

We plan a ‘spot check’ of *CPD Record Cards* for RVNs in spring 2009, when will ask for a random sample of 500 RVNs to return their cards. A similar check of veterinary surgeon record cards is also likely to follow in the near future.



PDP – what's it all about?

Guidance for those employing new graduates

We have spent a lot of time talking to final-year students and new graduates about the Professional Development Phase (PDP) and what it means. We have also done a fair bit of communication to practices, via adverts, the media, RCVSonline and congresses. But feedback from employers at recent Meet the RCVS Days and Regional Question Times would suggest that the message is not being received. So if you employ new graduates and you've got five minutes, here are ten things you need to know:

1. All new graduates need to complete the PDP during their first year in practice, regardless of where they graduated.
2. Having a new graduate on the PDP should not impact unduly on the practice, in fact, those who are well supported are more likely to stay in their first job.
3. The PDP is designed to help new graduates put theory into practice by encouraging them to record and reflect on their experiences via an online, password-protected database. It also allows them to benchmark their progress against their graduate cohort.
4. The new graduate is responsible for joining the PDP, by emailing us for a password (pdp@rcvs.org.uk), and for signing themselves off when they've finished (usually around 12 months later).
5. The PDP can focus on small animal, large animal or equine, or any combination.
6. Postgraduate Deans are on hand to give online support to those carrying out the PDP.
7. The practice should nominate a senior veterinary colleague as mentor to ensure time is allocated for the new graduate to fill out the PDP, discuss progress and sign the completion form. The mentor does not have to assess the new graduate – just confirm that the process has been completed.
8. For best results, the PDP should be integrated into ongoing appraisals, with the graduate encouraged to share progress with their manager.
9. If properly completed, the PDP forms the first year of continuing professional development.
10. PDP completion certificates may be requested in the event of a complaint being made against an individual or as part of enrolment for postgraduate qualifications.

See for yourself at: <http://pdp.rcvs.org.uk>



Recent Cambridge graduate Ed Ives is currently undertaking the PDP

Could you offer PDP support?

We are seeking to recruit a third Postgraduate Dean to support recent graduates as they complete their PDP. The role involves answering queries from graduates – usually via email – and monitoring the completion of PDP records online.

A time commitment of up to 20 days per year is envisaged. As the majority of input required is online, hours can be flexible.

If you are interested, please contact Emma Tyler on **020 7202 0778** or e.tyler@rcvs.org.uk

A full job specification is available on RCVSonline. The closing deadline for applications is 30 June 2008.



Final call for final approval

If you are already enrolled on one of the 'old-style' RCVS Certificates and wish to sit the examination in summer 2009, the deadline for receipt of your Final Approval of Experience application is 1 November.

The annual deadline for enrolment on the RCVS Diplomas is also 1 November.

VN admissions



Congratulations to the 52 newly-qualified veterinary nurses who are due to receive their certificates and badges from President Bob Moore in a ceremony at the College on 13 June.

Meet the RCVS team



Christine Fraser BA(Hons) Law Solicitor

What's your role?

Head of Registration

What's your background?

I was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 1983, and worked in Local Government as a Solicitor and then Principal Solicitor until 1990. I undertook a variety of legal work, from prosecutions, such as speeding on the river, to working on child-care proceedings. Following a short career break I returned to work in a different role, as a Lay Inspector for Ofsted. I then returned to Local Government as a Town Clerk and eventually moved on to work at the Law Society in their Practice Standards Unit, inspecting solicitors' practices. From there I joined the RCVS in May 2006.

What do you do?

I supervise all functions of the Registration Department, which is responsible for all veterinary surgeons' registrations, maintaining the Register and dealing with removals from it. Since commencing in my role, the Department has taken on responsibility for maintaining the List and Register of Veterinary Nurses and we now also administer the Practice Standards Scheme.

What's been your biggest challenge?

Integrating additional areas of work within the Department, which has involved not only increasing the team's knowledge base, but also physically incorporating additional staff within the office. I now have a knowledgeable and supportive staff with an excellent team spirit! Also, working with our Corporate Services team to develop IT systems to meet the needs of the Practice Standards Scheme.

Surprise us...

I briefly worked for Williams F1 and I have a certificate qualifying me to operate a Refuse Disposal Vehicle!

Meeting our Members

New dates to Meet the RCVS

On 19 May, ten guests spent a day finding out what goes on inside Belgravia House, meeting Officers and staff and gaining a deeper understanding of what we do for the profession and the public, at one of our regular Meet the RCVS Days.

Open to all Members, listed/registered veterinary nurses and those involved in the profession, the day starts at 10:30am with a brief overview of our activities from the President, followed by a tour of the building visiting departments and meeting staff. A frank question and answer

session with the President finishes the event – often cited by delegates as the most interesting part of the day. Lunch and refreshments are provided and reasonable travel expenses are paid.

If you would like to spend a day getting to know the RCVS, or know of a colleague who might, please get in touch. The next meetings will be held on 15 September and 17 November. Please contact Fiona Clark in the Communications Department on f.clark@rcvs.org.uk or **020 7202 0773** to reserve your place.



Successful meeting in Somerset

Bumper turn-out for President's last stand

RCVS Question Time recently travelled to Ilminster in Somerset, home of RCVS President Bob Moore, for a lively and topical meeting on Thursday 22 May. Almost 100 veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and practice staff were present at the event, held at The Shrubbery Hotel, for the final Question Time of the presidential year.

Guests had the opportunity to catch up with colleagues and chat with the RCVS Officer team over drinks and a buffet supper before a short overview from the President of our recent activities. The event then opened to questions from the floor.

The provision of 24-hour cover was a hot topic, with the majority seeking to maintain

some kind of out-of-hours service (see page 5 for an update on the issue). The Practice Standards Scheme, EFRA Committee inquiry into the Veterinary Surgeons Act and the Professional Development Phase were also all debated by the panel and audience. VN Council Chairman Andrea Jeffery gave an overview of the initial results from the recent Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession and took questions from the many VNs who were present.

The next Question Time meetings will be held in Cardiff on Thursday 27 November and in Worcestershire and Cornwall in 2009. Further details will be available nearer the time.

RCVS Day celebrations

AGM, awards and a vet comes in from the wild at RCVS Day

All Members and listed/registered veterinary nurses are welcome to attend RCVS Day – our annual awards presentation and AGM – on Friday 4 July 2008. This year, the celebration will be held at One Great George Street, located in the heart of London's cultural and political life, adjacent to Parliament Square, in Westminster.

One Great George Street is the headquarters of the Institution of Civil Engineers and was built between 1910 and 1913 as the result of an architectural competition won by James Miller RSA. The Thomas Telford Theatre, where the meeting will be held, is named after the Institution's first President.

The building has been the location for a number of key events over the years, including the signing of the charter establishing UNESCO in 1945. It has also featured in TV productions and films.

Following the AGM and presentation of awards, veterinary surgeon and TV presenter Steve Leonard (right) will give a talk entitled "Right time, right place: how veterinary science took me around the world," about his adventures travelling the globe filming BBC wildlife documentaries.

Steve's TV career started when he was selected to take part in 'Vet School', which followed the lives of final-year students at Bristol Vet

School. This led to 'Vets in Practice' filming him during three years in mixed practice in Lancaster. Subsequent programmes, including 'Vets in the Wild' and 'Ultimate Killers', have given Steve the opportunity to come face-to-face with all manner of creatures around the world. In between projects, Steve also works as a small animal vet in Cheshire.

A drinks reception will be held in the Smeaton and Brunel rooms, followed by lunch in the Great Hall.



RCVS Day 2008 - Agenda

10:00 am
AGM

Coffee break

11:00 am
Presentation of awards
President's address
Introduction of new President

12:00 pm
Talk from Steve Leonard MRCVS

12:40 pm
Drinks reception

1:00 pm
Fork luncheon

Coffee will be available from
9:30am – 11:00am

To apply for tickets, which are free, please contact Fiona Clark in the Communications Department on f.clark@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0773 by 20 June.

Bigger on the inside...

BSAVA Congress: new stand, lots of visitors

At this year's BSAVA Congress we managed to pull off a feat that would have made Dr Who proud. People kept complementing us on our new larger stand. In fact it was exactly the same size as usual, but a new stand design and lay-out gave a tardis-like perception of internal space.

It was a good job the stand felt airy as it was very busy this year. A steady stream of vets and veterinary nurses came to talk to us, most frequently about the VN Register, Practice Standards, professional conduct issues and the new postgraduate Certificate.

The latter was the subject of one of our two sessions at Congress, where Dr Bradley Viner, chairman of the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice Subcommittee, outlined the structure and approach of the new Certificate. He followed Andrea Jeffery, who presented the headline results of our Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession (see page 4).

Delegate packs for congresses are always stuffed with competitions and give-aways to entice people to the stands. This year, in the spirit of 'if you can't beat them, join them' we followed suit by holding two prize-draws, each for £50 high street gift vouchers. Sarah Halliday MRCVS and Nadine Jackson RVN were the lucky winners.



Hosting the Lords



The Officer team hosted a dinner for a small group of members of the House of Lords on 20 May, in order to build and maintain good relations and share information on relevant topics.

Six peers attended, and discussion ranged from the control of Bluetongue to how we might progress with new veterinary legislation in the absence of short-term backing from DEFRA. We hold this type of event twice a year and always benefit from the advice and guidance of our guests.

Similar events are hosted regularly for members of the House of Commons, with the next being a lunch at the College on 26 June.

Lay Observers' Report 2008

Diane Mark, Chris Mattinson, Jane Ramsey

Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings are carried out in the presence of three Lay Observers who provide valuable independent input. Each June, the Lay Observers report to Council setting out their views on the year's activities and making recommendations for change. An edited version of this Report is available below, together with responses from the PIC.

New procedures

The PIC has spent much time during the year reviewing the complaints process and the ways in which it can be improved. It was appreciated that when a complaint is made, it is an anxious time for both the complainant and the veterinary surgeon against whom a complaint has been made. Careful thought has therefore been given to an effective method of accelerating the decision-making process whilst still giving full consideration to the views of all the parties. A new procedure has just been introduced, with indicative timings for each stage. It is hoped that this procedural change will significantly improve satisfaction with the way complaints are processed.

PIC responds...

We welcome the new complaints procedures for the reasons set out by the Lay Observers. There has been increased use of IT systems within the Professional Conduct Department and PIC members and Lay Observers can now view complaints papers electronically and, if necessary, off-site. Additionally, case examiners may give advice to the veterinary surgeon; previously only the full PIC gave such advice. These changes have speeded up complaints handling.

See www.rcvs.org.uk/complaints for more information on handling complaints.

Lay case examiners

In our last report, we expressed the hope that, in the absence of a new Veterinary Surgeons Act, the College would identify a way of incorporating a lay role at an earlier stage in the complaints process. We are pleased that as a result of the procedural review referred to above, a Lay Observer and a veterinary member of the PIC both independently act as case examiners once a response to a complaint has been received from the veterinary surgeon. As this new procedure has only just been introduced it would be premature to comment on its impact, but it is hoped that more complaints will be considered and, in many cases, closed sooner than was possible under the previous protocol.

PIC responds...

We welcome the Lay Observers' extended role and participation in complaints handling. Under the new procedures, they will act as case examiners, alongside veterinary surgeons, assessing whether there is any arguable complaint against a veterinary surgeon. If the Lay Observers need any clarification of veterinary matters, they may seek this from a veterinary surgeon involved with the Preliminary Investigation Committee.

See *The Role of the Lay Observer* at www.rcvs.org.uk/complaints.

Non-PIC vet visits

Since our last report, in which we highlighted the importance of transparency in evaluating complaints, we are pleased that when visits are made to practices and complainants, these are now undertaken by veterinary surgeons who are not members of the PIC. We feel that this development has been beneficial to all parties as well as being of assistance to the Committee, by virtue of the independence of any assessment that is made.

PIC responds...

We consider that this change to the complaints procedure has been beneficial. Generally, visits (and interviews at the time of visits) are undertaken by a suitably qualified or experienced veterinary surgeon, for example, a veterinary surgeon who is also an inspector with the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme, and the senior case manager in the Professional Conduct Department. Evidence from both persons, from visits or interviews, may be given at the Disciplinary Committee hearing.

Communication

Looking back over our reports from previous years, it is disappointing that there are certain themes that continue to dominate the cases the PIC considers. Poor communication continues to be a major area of concern, as is informed consent for procedures undertaken, as well as the failure to provide estimates before treatment begins and when costs escalate. It would be beneficial to all parties if more focus were given to these critical areas by practices, as it would significantly decrease the dissatisfaction being expressed by members of the public.

PIC responds...

Following last year's report by the Lay Observers, we have set up a working party to consider communication and consent issues. The working party will include a Lay Observer as well as representatives from the profession.

Negligence

As in previous years, we continue to receive complaints where, if proved, the allegation would amount to negligence – an area the PIC is not capable to deal with under the terms of the Veterinary Surgeons Act. This continues to be a source of frustration for complainants, but it is hoped that the new complaints procedure protocol will help in clarifying the reason for this as well as the standard that has to be reached to have the potential to amount to serious professional misconduct.

PIC responds...

We have introduced protocols for the Assessment, Case Examination and Preliminary Investigation Committee Consideration of Complaints, which explain the decision-making process for each stage. In addition, *RCVS Advice Notes* (www.rcvs.org.uk/advicenotes) provide more information about serious professional misconduct and negligence.

Statistical analysis

In our last two reports, we have highlighted the need for more statistical analysis of all aspects of complaints referred to the College, so that any trends can be recognised more easily and training requirements identified. Sadly, the PIC has not yet had the benefit of receiving or considering such data. We believe that if the Committee were regularly to consider statistical information associated with complaints received by the College, this would help it in the performance of its role. It is to be hoped that with the increased computerisation of the complaints process, this will soon be possible so that areas of particular risk can be more readily identified and remedial action implemented sooner.

PIC responds...

The PIC Chairman provides reports to RCVS Council three times a year, which are available in full on RCVSonline (www.rcvs.org.uk/pic); these provide such details as the numbers of complaints opened and closed in the last three years and the stages each complaint reached in the RCVS complaints procedure. Information is also provided in the *RCVS Annual Report* (now *RCVS Facts*), including average times taken to deal with complaints which close at certain stages of the procedure.

RCVS News Extra

We were pleased to see the special report issued by the College in February 2008 giving details about those areas of practice that commonly lead to a complaint being made to

the College, including suggestions as to how such matters should be addressed. It is to be hoped that all practising veterinary surgeons will have read this very helpful report, as following the advice and suggestions contained therein could substantially reduce the likelihood of a complaint being made.

PIC responds...

We are grateful to RCVS President Bob Moore, who took the lead in preparing this edition of *RCVS News Extra* 'Don't become a complaints statistic' in February 2008. The Committee is confident that the advice contained within the report will be of assistance to practising veterinary surgeons.

Workload

The past year has seen a very heavy workload through the PIC, and we are grateful for the assistance given to us, in particular to help clarify matters of a clinical nature. It is often the case that the approaches of Lay Observers and veterinary members of the Committee to certain issues vary, and we hope that this different perspective highlights the value of a lay presence at the committee.

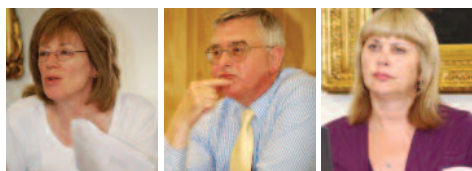
PIC responds...

We are always willing to assist the Lay Observers and value the contribution they make to the complaints handling process and the public's perception of it. We are particularly appreciative of the new extended role accepted by the Lay Observers, which includes participation in the complaints procedures as case examiners, as outlined above.

Timelier responses

The year for the Professional Conduct Department has been very demanding, not only because of staff changes but also, in the short term, because of the increased drive towards computerisation. Notwithstanding this challenging working environment, cases appear to be being considered on a much timelier basis than in the past, an improvement which we hope will continue.

The full Lay Observers' Report and PIC's responses are available on RCVSonline (www.rcvs.org.uk/pic).



Diane Mark, Chris Mattinson, Jane Ramsey

New Lay Observer

Catherine Harvey will join the panel of Lay Observers effective from 4 July 2008. Having held many previous regulatory and audit roles with Primary Care Trusts and Health Authorities, Catherine will serve for three years and replaces retiring Lay Observer Diane Mark.

Report to Council June 2008

PI Committee Chairman Lynne Hill



There have been three meetings of the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) since the last Council meeting, during which 16 new complaints as well as ongoing complaints were considered. In that time, the Committee has:

- referred one complaint to solicitors for statements;
- requested further investigation by the Professional Conduct Department for three complaints; and,
- carried out five announced and two unannounced visits to veterinary practices (the visits included interviewing complainants, veterinary surgeons and witnesses).

One of the complaints reported to Council is summarised below. This was closed at the first stage of the complaints process – the Assessment Stage.

Assessment with visit – communications confusion

A very confused, unsigned and incomplete complaint form was received from an 84-year-old person, enclosing numerous pages of handwritten information containing serious allegations.

The complainant's dog had been treated by the veterinary practice for a number of years. Some time after the dog's death, the complainant alleged that the practice took advantage of her vulnerability. She alleged that two veterinary surgeons and other practice staff had changed her Will, adding themselves as beneficiaries, and that the practice was retaining keys to her home.

The complainant wrote that since her dog's death, the practice had withdrawn veterinary services and threatened her. She also alleged that the practice had deliberately concealed the results of a scan and believed her dog had died of starvation because it was being fed weight-reducing food. However, photographs provided by the complainant showed that the dog was overweight.

There was concern that the complainant was confused and the allegations were a mistake, but there was an unwillingness to close such a complaint without investigation. The PIC Chairman therefore authorised a visit to interview the complainant and practice staff.

It was quickly established that poor communication between the complainant and the practice had led to confusion and misunderstanding. In addition, following her dog's death, the complainant had regularly visited the practice and engaged the staff in lengthy conversation. She had no other animals so, in the interests of other clients, the veterinary practice decided to withdraw its veterinary services.

As to the Will, it was established that, at the complainant's request, practice members had been named as potential beneficiaries if the dog had needed to be cared for after the complainant's death. This was no longer relevant and the understanding was that practice members were no longer beneficiaries in her Will.

The investigation showed that the veterinary practice had treated the dog appropriately and had acted in good faith regarding the Will. There was no potential for serious professional misconduct against the veterinary surgeons and the complaint was closed at the assessment stage.

The full report is available on RCVSonline (www.rcvs.org.uk/pic)

Mr Russell L Oakes

Inquiry concerning: fraudulent registration.

DC decision: adjourned.

On Friday 18 April 2008, the RCVS Disciplinary Committee (DC) considered an allegation of 'fraudulent registration' but decided it was in the public interest to adjourn the proceedings.

It was alleged that in 2006, Russell Lewis Oakes was registered as a veterinary surgeon, after the RCVS was presented with a forged veterinary degree certificate and a forged letter of good standing.

The RCVS reported Mr Oakes to the police earlier this year, after local veterinary surgeons brought the matter to the College's attention. Following his arrest on 1 March, Mr Oakes is subject to ongoing police investigations, although he is currently released on bail – a condition of which being that he does not practise as a veterinary surgeon.

Due to the police investigation, full details of the RCVS charge against Mr Oakes have not been made public, although the charge was in the alternative: either (A) that Mr Oakes is guilty of a fraud against the RCVS; or (B) making no allegation against Mr Oakes, but stating that the registration was on the basis of forged documents.

Although Mr Oakes was not present at the hearing, his solicitors had made written representations on his behalf. It was suggested to the Committee that the hearing should proceed on the basis of the lower charge (B) without consideration of whether Mr Oakes had acted fraudulently. Mr Oakes agreed with this approach. If the Committee had accepted this suggestion, it would have heard the allegation in private, due to the ongoing police investigation. However, the Committee decided it was not in the public interest for the hearing to proceed in private, deciding

that Mr Oakes should face the more serious RCVS charge and in public. This is now likely to be after the police investigation and any resulting prosecution.

Chairing the Committee, Mrs Alison Bruce said: "The bail conditions to which the Respondent is currently subjected, which include a condition that he will not undertake any acts of veterinary surgery, will serve to ensure that the public interest and the welfare of animals will be properly protected."

The Disciplinary Committee asked that Mr Oakes' bail conditions be monitored, advising that if they were varied or lifted, the adjourned hearing should be reinstated without delay.

Footnote

Formerly registered with the General Osteopathic Council, Mr Oakes was subject to a two-month interim suspension order by the GOC in May, pending the outcome of the police investigations. Under the current Veterinary Surgeons Act, the RCVS does not have the power to issue a similar order.

Mr Leslie Higgott

Inquiry concerning: inadequate care/hospitalisation conditions; lack of courtesy to client; failure to obtain informed consent to use off-label medication; failure to heed College advice re CPD/record-keeping.

DC decision: facts found proved; judgment postponed due to time constraints.

Between 29 April and 2 May 2008, Leslie Higgott MRCVS appeared before the Disciplinary Committee (DC) to face a number of charges regarding his in-patient treatment of a Springer Spaniel: namely, that he had not carried out any or sufficient investigative procedures; had not sought any additional veterinary opinion; and, did not sufficiently observe or monitor the animal. Further, that he did not provide an adequately-sized cage/box for the dog's hospitalisation and failed to ensure that the box was adequately cleaned. Also, that by his remarks and behaviour, he had failed to treat his client with respect, courtesy and consideration.

The facts of all of these charges were denied by Mr Higgott, although he admitted that, notwithstanding advice from representatives of the College, he had failed to keep up to date with CPD and kept no clinical notes for animals he treated between April 2006 and August 2007. He also admitted failing to obtain his client's informed consent to use off-label medication and supplying the medicine in a paper envelope without adequate labelling. The DC heard that the dog, displaying symptoms of depression and vomiting, was taken to Mr Higgott as the owner's usual veterinary surgeon was not available for several days.

Initially treating the dog as an out-patient, Mr Higgott diagnosed a liver problem though later revising diagnosis to a kidney problem. When symptoms persisted, the owner returned the dog to Mr Higgott where it remained hospitalised for a period of 11 days, until it was found dead by the owner. A subsequent post-mortem examination revealed that the dog had suffered from a heart tumour.

The DC heard that during the period of hospitalisation, the dog was kept in a travelling box and that the owner, who visited almost daily, repeatedly complained to Mr Higgott about the conditions in which the dog was being kept, with vomit, faeces and urine on the floor of the box. The owner told the DC that Mr Higgott had dismissed these concerns saying they would do the dog no harm. Mr Higgott also maintained it was an unfortunate coincidence that the owner visited at times when the dog was dirty. The DC also heard that the owner, on several occasions, asked Mr Higgott if blood tests or x-rays would be useful, but was told that these were not necessary as the dog was responding to treatment. Mr Higgott maintained he had faith in his ability to make a correct diagnosis based on palpation and the use of urine dipsticks.

The owner reported that on her last visit at around 1.45pm, after searching behind boxes and cages, she had found her dog dead in her box, cold, stiff and covered with faeces, mucus, blood and urine. Initially, Mr Higgott had told the owner that he had last seen the dog the previous night around 11pm but later contradicted this saying that he had examined the dog at 9am that day.

College representatives had visited Mr Higgott's practice on several occasions between 2005 and 2007. They reported at the hearing that, despite a move to new premises, inadequate standards of hygiene and cleanliness persisted at Mr Higgott's practice and that, regardless of advice, Mr Higgott had failed to maintain clinical records or undertake any CPD. During one visit, they pointed out the travelling box in which Mr Higgott had kept the Spaniel; the DC heard veterinary evidence that while this might have been suitable for 24 hours, it was wholly inadequate for longer periods of hospitalisation.

The Committee found the facts of the charges proved. However, there was insufficient time to conclude the hearing and it was adjourned to a date to be fixed [since set to resume on 28 July 2008]. At the resumed hearing, it will be for the Committee to decide whether the facts as proved amount to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect and, if so, whether to postpone judgment or proceed to judgment. If proceeding to judgment, the DC will then decide what sanction, if any, to impose.

Mr Joseph Holmes

Mr Joseph Holmes, on whose hearing we reported in the March 2008 issue, has indicated his intention to apply for a Judicial Review of his case. He wishes to challenge the DC's finding that he was guilty of disgraceful conduct, as well as the conditions on which the Committee decided to postpone judgment. A Privy Council appeal is only available following a final decision to remove or suspend from the Register.

Celebrating 50 years of the RCVS Trust



The RCVS Trust is turning 50 this year and is marking this most golden of jubilees with a packed programme of fundraising events. Gerri McHugh, Trust Director, runs through what's happened to date, and what's still to come.

We launched our Golden Jubilee year celebrations in February with an author's evening hosted at Belgravia House. The world's first professor of animal welfare, Donald Broom, presented the major developments in animal welfare over the past decade to an audience of veterinary surgeons and animal welfare experts. It was a very informative and enjoyable evening.

At the same event, we unveiled a £50,000 fundraising campaign for our veterinary educational and animal welfare programmes, fronted by James Yeates, who received a grant from the RCVS Trust to fund his PhD in veterinary medical ethics in 2006.

James has courageously taken on the challenge of finding 1,000 people to donate £50 each to the campaign. Speaking to me that evening, he seemed more than aware of the challenge ahead: "Obviously, that's quite a lot of people, so it's a very ambitious thing to be doing but, of course, it is very worthwhile," he said. To start the ball rolling, and despite now being "an impoverished residency student", James even pledged the first £50 donation!

We are truly indebted to James for accepting the £50,000 Golden Jubilee challenge, and very much hope that lots of people will be inspired to support him with this very ambitious initiative. If you would like to help him reach his target, please visit www.justgiving.com/jamesraises50k to donate your £50, or send us a cheque.

Donations flood in

A little later in February, we were delighted to

receive a cheque for nearly £1,700 from the National Office of Animal Health (NOAH). This generous sum was raised through a £1 donation levied on the sale of additional copies of the *NOAH Compendium*. On presenting the cheque Phil Sketchley, NOAH Chief Executive and Trustee of the charity, told me how pleased he was with the level of support given to the Trust by the veterinary profession and everyone who had bought extra copies of the book.

A 50:50 challenge

We then launched a second £50,000 fundraising challenge early in March, kick-started by an anonymous £1,000 donation from a member of RCVS Council. We've since been lucky enough to receive two further £1,000 cheques and are now looking to secure similar donations from another 47 equally generous benefactors. The race is on to see which Golden Jubilee £50k target will be reached first!

Hitting the million

So, what do we use all these donations for? Well, later in March, we were delighted to announce our 2008 grants round, which, this year, hit the £1 million mark for the first time and marked our Golden Jubilee splendidly.

Comparing very favourably with the £60,000 we dispersed just five years ago, this £1,000,000 represents a significant uplift in funding that has enabled us to fund a much wider range of innovative research and animal welfare initiatives across the seven UK veterinary schools and in practices around the country.

In addition to a £250,000 investment in six new UK residencies, and nearly £120,000 across nine new Blue Sky Research projects, we have released an additional £500,000 to fund two Golden Jubilee Awards: one at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies looking at canine ageing and regeneration and another at Liverpool Veterinary School in veterinary pathogen genomics.

We have also been able to fund a number of extremely worthy overseas projects through our network of charity partners including SPANA, Wildlife Vets International and the Worldwide Veterinary Service.

We are very pleased to have made a significant investment in a range of welfare initiatives for the veterinary profession; these include an evaluation of young graduate wellbeing, the development of support schemes for recent graduates and a three-year commitment to the excellent Lancaster Final-Year Seminar.

By way of a small thank you to our donors, and to mark our Golden Jubilee, we held a champagne lunch at BSAVA Congress in April.

Feeling energetic?

There will be no let-up in fundraising during the second half of our birthday year either, as we have a full calendar of events planned for the rest of 2008. We are always on the look out for willing, enthusiastic and sometimes even energetic people to take part in our Golden Jubilee challenges. Have a look at our calendar of events, and if there is something you would like to take part in to help raise funds for the Trust, do get in touch!

You can also keep track of our latest news and golden events, and find details on how to donate to the Trust, via our website at www.rcvs.org.uk/goldenjubilee.

Calendar of events

- 12-18 June: sponsored walk along the Herriot Ramblers Inn Way in the Yorkshire Dales (pictured)
- 6 July: team of 12 runners in the British 10K London Run
- 24 August: trio of new-graduate skydivers to jump from 12,000 feet
- 9 September: Golf Day at Beau Desert Golf Club including breakfast, 18 holes and a three-course dinner
- September: 'Vet's Foot Forward' – Fred Nind's sponsored 411-mile walk from Edinburgh to London
- 12 October: one runner in the inaugural Royal Parks Half-Marathon
- 25 November: Sportsman's Lunch at Twickenham Rugby Club with England squad member

RCVS News at a glance...

Too busy to read the lot? Start here for important dates for your diary and story summaries, so you can decide what might be worth reading in full.

1 Where next for legislation?

DEFRA has no available resources, EFRA Com reports, Council looks afresh at its plans.

2 Supporting role

We increase vet support funding to £30K.

Interested?

Declarations of interest to be reviewed by Working Party.

3 Dog bites man

New DEFRA guidance leaflet on Dangerous Dogs.

New kids on the block

New Council and VN Council members revealed. Some new faces, some returners and some bidding farewell.

4 Five Live investigates

Radio programme looks at role of unqualified veterinary nursing assistants, while our Survey reveals snapshot of VN profession today.

Double trouble

The *Annual Report* has spawned twins: please welcome the *RCVS Review* and *RCVS Facts*.

5 Change of script

Guide updated to reflect end of zero-prescription order.

Open all hours

Update from 24/7 Working Party, including Council agreement to data-gathering exercise.

6 Registered premises

1 April 2009 start for VMD's register of practice premises for purposes of handling medicines.

Bluetongue

Certificate Subcommittee comments on DEFRA's protocols.

7 Lock-up

New *Advice Notes* include access to controlled drugs and medicines guidance.

Many happy returns

Clarification on Period of Supervised Practice for returning RVNs.

Testing times

Animal Test Certificate changes.

8 Following in your footsteps...

Launch of new veterinary careers materials.

10 Special branch

What makes RCVS Recognised Specialists different? Three of them tell us what being on the List means.

12 E-assessments are go!

Latest news on VN e-assessments, starting in June, plus, best-ever practicals pass-rates.

Who's counting?

What counts towards your CPD requirement? It's up to you, if you plan it properly.

13 Employ new graduates?

Then you need to be clued up on the PDP. Here's a five-minute guide.

PDP support?

We're seeking an additional Postgraduate Dean to support new graduates through the PDP.

14 Meet the team

Don't try giving Christine Fraser any rubbish, she's a qualified bin-lorry driver!

Presidential audience

Want to put your question to the President? Come to an open-day at Belgravia House, or join our Regional Question Time in Cardiff.

15 Put out the bunting...

... it's RCVS Day! 4 July, be there for fun and frolics at One Great George Street.

16 Acute observations

The Annual Report of the Lay Observers comments on the work of the Preliminary Investigation Committee. Issues include communication, new processes and data analysis.

17 Reporting in

PIC Report to Council outlines case of confused client that was closed following assessment with a visit.

18 DC cases

Mr L Higgott found guilty of inadequate care, lack of courtesy, use of off-label medication without consent and failure to follow CPD advice - judgement postponed due to time constraints; inquiry into charge of fraudulent registration against Mr R Oakes adjourned in the public interest.

19 Golden days for Trust

Run-down of the Trust's 50th anniversary fund-raising challenges.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

24 June

'One planet, one disease' seminar RSM

30 June

Deadline for PDP Post-graduate Dean applications

4 July

RCVS Day; Fellows' Dinner

8 July

Diploma written exams

22 or 23 July

Certificate written exams

22 August

Deadline for Recognised Specialist re-applications

12 September

Deadline for new Recognised Specialist applications

15 September

Meet the RCVS Day

1 November

Deadline for Final Approval of Experience for RCVS Certificates and for enrolment on RCVS Diplomas

17 November

Meet the RCVS Day

27 November

Question Time, Cardiff



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