

*“The new Codes are easily accessible and much more concise, bringing them into line with those of other regulatory bodies.”*

## Cracking the Codes

### Council approves new principles-based codes of conduct

**The new Codes of Professional Conduct for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses have now been formally approved by RCVS Council and VN Council, and will be launched to both professions in April.**

The new Codes are principles-based, easily accessible and much more concise, bringing them into line with the codes of conduct of other regulatory bodies and helping to describe those professional responsibilities that are fundamental to veterinary surgeons' and veterinary nurses' practice. They will be augmented with comprehensive supporting guidance, which expands and clarifies these professional responsibilities, and is a consolidation and update of all existing RCVS guidance for vets and RVNs.

The previous *RCVS Guides to Professional Conduct* were introduced for veterinary surgeons in 2000 and in 2007 for veterinary nurses, and ran to some 50 pages. The new Codes, which are the product of a review that began in September 2009 and involved two consultation exercises, numerous meetings and considerable drafting and re-drafting, are around just 16 pages each. The veterinary surgeons' Code features an update to the declaration made on admission to the profession, and both Codes then state five principles of practice: professional competence; honest and integrity; independence and impartiality; client confidentiality and trust; and, professional accountability. The VN Code includes a declaration for the first time.

Amongst the professional responsibilities introduced in the Codes are mandatory reporting of continuing professional development (CPD), a mandatory professional development phase for veterinary surgeons, a Performance Protocol (see page 8), and notification to the RCVS of any matter that may affect fitness to practise, including convictions (although this will require further consideration by the College).

For the first time, mandatory clinical governance has been introduced (see feature on pages 10 and 11) and minimum practice standards have also been incorporated, at equivalence to the core standards set out in the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme.

To help make the Codes as accessible as possible, we will publish them in a variety of user-friendly formats. A pocket-sized hard copy will be posted to all vets and VNs in a few weeks' time, and the Code, together with all supporting guidance, will have a dedicated area on our website, allowing you to browse through it, search via keywords, register for updates and download a full PDF copy. We are also exploring a digital version to enable you to access the Codes and guidance on your phone, wherever you may be.

Although only registered veterinary nurses have agreed to abide by the VN Code of Professional Conduct, we hope that all veterinary nurses will consider it a useful benchmark of professional standards.

More detail about the new Codes will be published in a special edition of *RCVS News Extra* in due course.



**In this issue:** new VP, elections open, President's view, Register update, fake VN, protecting VN title, VN and vet Diploma news, retention fees due, LRO consultation, Core standards for all, Bristol full approval, PPE certs, Health Protocol, clinical governance, PDP and CPD policy changes, new online CPD recording system, insurance fraud, meetings and events, PI advice, DC hearings and Trust updates.

# Neil Smith elected Vice President

**New VP keen to enhance understanding of College remit**

**C**olonel Neil Smith was elected Vice-President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons at the March meeting of RCVS Council. He was uncontested and is due to take up office at RCVS Day on 6 July 2012.

Neil Smith graduated from the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) in 1989, and was commissioned into the Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC) with the intention of staying for four years. Twenty-two years later, he is now the Director Army Veterinary and Remount Services, effectively the Chief Veterinary Officer for the Army and head of the RAVC, which currently has over 35 Veterinary Officers.

***"I aim to ensure that we remain focused on our primary role in safeguarding the health and welfare of animals committed to veterinary care."***

He has held a mixture of clinical, staff and command positions, and has worked in the UK, US and Germany. He has Masters' Degrees in Food Science, Defence Administration and Defence Studies. He has also worked part-time in small



animal practice (including the Blue Cross, of which he is now a Trustee), and was heavily involved in the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in 2001.

First elected to Council in 2004, Neil was re-elected in 2010 after a short break. He has served on Education, Advisory, Preliminary Investigation and Planning and Resources Committees, and on

VN Council (currently Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Awarding Body).

He has also previously been President of the RVC Student Union Society, the RVC Alumnus Association, Southern Counties, and the Association of Government Veterinarians. He is currently a Council member of the Central Veterinary Society, and has previously sat on the BVA's Veterinary Policy Group.

Commenting on his election, Neil said: "I am honoured to have been elected as the next Vice-President. The College is about to go through some significant organisational changes, not least because of the proposed legislative reform order. However, I aim to ensure that we remain focused on our primary role in safeguarding the health and welfare of animals committed to veterinary care. The functions of the RCVS are quite diverse, and I am keen that we try to enhance the profession and the public's understanding of our remit, including our responsibility for educational, ethical and clinical standards."

Also at the meeting, Jacqui Molyneux was confirmed as President, and Jerry Davies as Vice-President, effective July 2012.

## RCVS elections now open

**Counting on your votes**

**T**his year sees the highest number of candidates in over ten years standing in the RCVS Council elections – and both these vets, and the veterinary nurses (VNs) standing in the RCVS VN Council elections, are counting on your votes.

In concert with their appointed colleagues, elected vets and veterinary nurses carry the weighty responsibility of regulating the veterinary professions in the public interest. So, please take the opportunity to vote for those you feel are most appropriate for the job.

***"Please take the opportunity to vote for those you feel are most appropriate for the job."***

This year, 14 vets are contesting the six seats available on RCVS Council, and three veterinary nurses are vying for the two seats on VN Council: please do read their manifestos and make your choices.



Included in this mailing are the full instructions about how to vote, candidate lists and manifestos, and a ballot paper. You can either return your completed ballot paper by post, or use the individual, two-part security code on the back to vote online or by text. However they are cast, all votes must be received by **5pm on Friday, 27 April 2012**.

If you are a veterinary surgeon and any of the election information is missing from your pack, please contact Ian Holloway (020 7202 0727 or [i.holloway@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:i.holloway@rcvs.org.uk)) urgently.

If you are a veterinary nurse and you are missing some documents, please contact Annette Amato, on [a.amato@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:a.amato@rcvs.org.uk) or 020 7202 0713, for a replacement.

To ensure that the ballot is properly independent, we have again asked Electoral Reform Services, an organisation noted for its expertise in running elections, to administer both elections.

# Change for the better

Jerry Davies, RCVS President

## Changes ahead as College moves forward

**RCVS News reaches you three times a year, in March, June and November. The timing might seem a little odd, but it ties in with our Council meetings, so that we can update you on new decisions and initiatives as soon as possible.**

I am writing this column the day after our 1 March meeting, and, as you might expect, given the recent publicity surrounding the 'overspends' at the College, yesterday's session of Council spent some time considering our governance and structure.

Three key recommendations of the Overspend Report were: the establishment of an Audit and Risk committee; the production of notes for Officers from the fortnightly informal meetings of the Management Team (essentially Heads of Department and the Registrar); and, the development of a protocol for the management of projects within the College.

***"It is fitting that at a time when we are requiring practitioners to consider clinical governance, we are now moving towards improved structures and protocols to manage our own governance."***

All three of these issues have now been addressed, with Council approving terms of reference, membership and appointment for an Audit and Risk Committee yesterday. The remaining issues will be addressed this year and are linked to the structure and function of College committees.

### Restructure

In an afternoon session, Council considered the future structure of College committees – their remit, composition and reporting structure – to ensure that we have the most appropriate and effective structure through which Council can set clear strategy and policy for the executive staff to deliver upon. This has been a long process, which started well before the Overspend Report was published. Ideas have been developed by various groups, including past Presidents and others.

Part of this process has been the consideration of the role of Registrar: a new post of Chief Executive and Secretary has been developed and is currently being recruited for, with the aim of someone being in place by June. However, the role of Registrar must also remain, as it's in the Veterinary Surgeons Act, and the recommendation is for this role to combine with a 'Head of Legal Services',

focusing on the complex legal aspects of running the College, rather than leading the executive body.

The discussions about committee structure will be returned to in June, when Council hopes to agree a draft set of proposals. The new Chief Executive will then consider these as they begin to get to grips with the needs of the organisation, with the objective being that they are put in place on RCVS Day in July 2013.

I have stated before that I regret the overspends that led to the Report being required, and have apologised for them. However, it is important to reflect on, and learn from, mistakes, and it is fitting that at a time when we are requiring practitioners to consider clinical governance, we are now moving towards improved structures and protocols to manage our own governance.

### New protocols

While these issues have been addressed over the last few months, we have also been continuing to modernise our regulatory framework and, with the approval at Council of the new Code of Professional Conduct, which includes mandatory Professional Development Phase (PDP) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD), clinical governance and the new Performance and Health Protocols, some of this is now coming to fruition. This is complemented by a new Code of Professional Conduct for veterinary nurses, and both Codes have a single set of supporting guidance.

The new Code will be launched in April, and, as you can read on the cover of this issue of RCVS News, it is a simpler, more principles-based approach. The more detailed guidance will not be lost, though, and will remain available online. More information about the new Code will come to you in April.

***"I am confident that... the profession and the College will be in better shape, for the benefit of animal welfare and the public."***

The Health Protocol has been in place since November 2010, but is now formalised in the Code. We hope that very few of you will ever need to use it, but it does ensure that we can offer structured support for vets and veterinary nurses with health problems that impair their fitness to practise, without resorting to a public disciplinary hearing.

The Performance Protocol aims to manage any justified concerns about the professional performance of vets and RVNs in a similar manner. Managing serious performance-related issues without resorting to the full disciplinary process, by



introducing measures such as supervision and undertakings, can help veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses regain the necessary skills.

Both the Health and the Performance Protocols require engagement from the profession at large in order to work, and the new Code asks team members to be aware of any limitations of their colleagues in relevant respects, and, in extreme cases where it is not possible to address the issue locally, then to make the College aware of the problem. This won't be easy, we know that. And we certainly do not wish to engender a culture of mistrust. But animal health and welfare must be the College's primary concern. We would urge the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions to work together to ensure that the trust, which the public has placed in them, can be maintained. Facing up to performance issues will, in the end, benefit all concerned.

### Independent committee members

A further piece in the regulatory jigsaw is the legislative reform order (LRO), which seeks to make the membership of the Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees independent from College Council. The arguments for this are well summarised in the Defra consultation document, and we feel that it will bring faster, fairer and more effective regulation to the profession. I would urge you to read the consultation document and support this legislation.

When you are elected to become President, it can be a lottery in terms of what kind of year you will have. What I thought was going to be a time of consolidation has turned into a year of significant change. Such change can be challenging, but I am confident that by the time I hand over to the new President on 7 July, the profession and the College will be in better shape, for the benefit of both animal welfare and the public.



## Huge increase in student VNs

### Enrolments up by a third

**L**ast year saw the highest ever increase in the number of people enrolling as veterinary nursing (VN) students on vocational courses. In 2011, some 1,041 students registered with us to pursue vocational VN qualifications, compared with 809 in 2010 – a 29% increase.

Meanwhile the number of degree students rose from 274 in 2010 to 398 in 2011, an increase of 45%. This brings the overall increase in VN students, combining vocational and higher education students, to 33%.

"The overall increase could partially be explained by degree students seeking to avoid increased university tuition fees," says Libby Earle, Head of the VN Department. "However, although there is a noticeable increase in enrolments linked to higher educational courses, this does not explain the increase in further education students.

"A more significant factor is likely to be the introduction of the Level 3 Diploma, as this can be undertaken as a full-time programme," Libby continued.

"As Colleges running such programmes arrange the practical training placements for their students, this opens up opportunities for the considerable number of people who want to become VNs, but who are not employed by a training practice. When we introduced the qualification in 2010, we hoped that this would help to increase the number of VN students – so it's great to see this is happening already and with such a marked increase."

## Fake VN convicted

### Reminder to check status of potential employees

**T**he recent conviction of a woman holding herself out to be a veterinary nurse has again highlighted the need for practices to check the credentials of clinical staff when recruiting (see also **RCVS News November 2011**).

Amber Henshaw was convicted for false representation by Worthing Magistrates' Court on 17 February, after posing as a qualified veterinary nurse. She was fined £240 for the fraud, and ordered to pay a further £100 in costs.

***"This underlines yet again the importance of making full checks with the College about the status of clinical staff due to be employed, even when being placed via an agency."***

Miss Henshaw, who pleaded guilty to the charge, had worked at the Grove Lodge Veterinary Group in Worthing during August 2011, having been placed there by an employment agency. Her CV claimed that she held NVQ Levels 2 and 3 in veterinary nursing, but she had neither. Although she had commenced training, she failed the NVQ Level 2 theory exam in 2009.

She had gone as far as wearing a VN badge, the number of which, when checked with the RCVS, was found to belong to a different person.



"We were pleased to have been able to help the police in verifying the status of Miss Henshaw, and to assist with bringing the case to court," says Gordon Hockey, Acting Registrar. "This underlines yet again the importance of making full checks with the College about the status of clinical staff due to be employed, even when being placed via an agency."

A related story on the legal status of student veterinary nurses while working as locums can be found on page 8.

To check if a veterinary nurse or veterinary surgeon is registered or listed, visit **<http://findavet.rcvs.org.uk/check-the-registers>**.

To check if someone is enrolled with the College as a student nurse, please contact **[vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk)** or 020 7202 0788.

Listed and registered veterinary nurses are issued with RCVS cards on an annual basis, which should be checked by potential employers.

## When's a VN not a VN?

### Drive towards statutory regulation of veterinary nurses

**L**ast year, during the veterinary nursing profession's Golden Jubilee, the RCVS VN Council set up a Working Party to lead the way in the drive towards the statutory regulation of veterinary nurses.

The Veterinary Nurses Legislation Working Party (VN LWP) has been tasked with developing detailed proposals for the statutory regulation of veterinary nurses.

***"We must flesh out the details of our proposals and provide advice as to how these can be brought to fruition."***

The VN LWP is chaired by VN Council member Hilary Orpet (pictured), and will feed into the wider work of the RCVS Legislation Working Party, which will report to the Defra Minister of State with proposals as to how the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) could be brought into line with modern regulatory legislation.

The group includes veterinary nurse, veterinary surgeon and lay members, together with representatives of the British Veterinary Association and the British Veterinary Nursing Association. Since its inception in May 2011, the VN LWP has met on three occasions.



The VN LWP has been unanimous in agreeing to recommend that veterinary nurses should be subject to a statutory regulatory regime under the umbrella of the RCVS. This regime would protect the title 'veterinary nurse' and ensure that veterinary nurses who are struck off the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses are also struck off the List. This would prevent those found guilty of professional misconduct from performing Schedule 3 activities under the VSA.

"The Veterinary Nurses Legislation Working Party has made great progress to date, and has agreed the principles upon which an effective framework for the regulation of veterinary nurses should be built," says Hilary. "But the real challenge will occur in the coming months, when we must flesh out the details of our proposals and provide advice as to how these can be brought to fruition."

The College is currently liaising with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), to seek its advice as to how statutory regulation could be achieved, given the context of a deregulatory political environment.

# City & Guilds to take on VN Diploma

## Smooth hand-over envisaged



**The intellectual property and equipment relating to the RCVS Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing will transfer to City & Guilds, effective from the 2012 academic year.**

The move follows the decision by RCVS Council (RCVS News, November 2011) to close the College's awarding body, in order to avoid a potential conflict of interest between the RCVS's role as regulator of veterinary nurse education and assessment, and as an awarding organisation.

The transfer of information and materials to City & Guilds, an awarding organisation well established in the land-based sector and with whom most veterinary nurse colleges already have a relationship, will ensure that there remains a choice of awarding institutions in the veterinary nursing sector.

"RCVS Council listed criteria that any awarding organisation taking over the VN Diploma must meet, including a demonstrable track-record in awarding, experience of awarding veterinary-related qualifications and a diverse portfolio of qualifications. City & Guilds fits the profile well," says Neil Smith, Chairman of the RCVS Awarding Body Board.

"Cooperation with VN training centres and the wider veterinary profession will take place over the coming months, to ensure a smooth transition for those current RCVS candidates who wish to move to City & Guilds," he adds.

"City & Guilds is delighted that we shall be offering the Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing. It's a welcome addition to our portfolio of land-based

qualifications and will enable further progression for our learners who are already working towards our Animal Care qualifications," says John Yates, Product Development Director for City & Guilds.

Those students still in the process of completing the old NVQ qualifications, the accreditation of which is due to expire in 2013, will continue to be serviced by the RCVS.

***"City & Guilds is delighted that we shall be offering the Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing. It's a welcome addition to our portfolio of land-based qualifications."***

### Fee changes

In line with this change, the way in which veterinary nurse student fees are structured is also changing, so that we can separate those fees that students pay to enrol with the College as the professional regulator from those paid to the awarding body to register for a qualification.

In the past, students on the RCVS Level 3 Diploma (and previously the NVQ qualification) have paid an integrated fee. This included enrolment with the RCVS and registration with the awarding body for a qualification. The fee covered a six-year period, and in 2011 it was £199. VN students on degree courses have in the past paid the same fee, in addition to any registration fees payable to their awarding institution (their university).

With the divestment of the RCVS Awarding Body, it was no longer practical to consider an integrated fee, such as that outlined above, so the fee has been separated into two parts:

- 1) A fee of **£190** for enrolment with the RCVS as regulator (to cover a period of six years), which pays for the regulation of veterinary nurse education and training for all students (in vocational or higher education) and the enrolment of the individual as a bona fide student for Schedule 3 purposes; and,
- 2) A smaller registration fee of **£15** to cover the additional costs of registering RCVS Level 3 Diploma students with the RCVS Awarding Body.

The total fees for RCVS students have therefore gone up by £6, in line with inflation.

Students not registering on the RCVS Level 3 Diploma will pay the first fee (£190) and then the appropriate fees levied by their awarding institution. These fees vary according to the type of qualification and the nature of the awarding institution.

## Core principles

### Practice Standards at 'Core' for all

**C**ore Standards under the Practice Standards Scheme are the minimum standards that any practice (whether in the Scheme or not) should achieve. This is now reflected in the new Code of Professional Conduct, which states that "veterinary surgeons must maintain minimum practice standards equivalent to the Core Standards of the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme".

This means that if you are not already working in a practice that's accredited, you need to take a look at the Standards, as outlined in the Manual ([www.rcvs.org.uk/practicestandards](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/practicestandards)).

Minor updates are made to the Manual quite regularly – for example, new guidance was added in January on issues such as medicines and electrical testing – so it's worth keeping an eye on the website. The Manual will also be updated again during April, to take account of the new Code of Professional Conduct.

### Five-year review

The Scheme is continually reviewed to ensure it is up to date and informative. The last five-year review resulted in new a Manual being launched in 2010, and we have just started the process of the second five-year review, with the objective of a major overhaul of the Standards for 2015. All of the main veterinary organisations have representation on the Practice Standards Group, so, please contact your representative with any views or comments you may have on the future of the Scheme.

### Marking success

Meanwhile, we have been continuing to promote the Scheme to animal owners, by placing the new 'We're heading to an accredited practice' bookmarks in animal owner publications, alongside adverts. Budget is limited as the Scheme is self-funding, so this has not been a huge campaign, but we hope it will have had some impact.

Bookmarks are available to accredited practices to give to their clients, and so far over 100 practices have placed orders. Those in the Scheme who wish to order bookmarks can do so online, or by contacting [practicestandards@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:practicestandards@rcvs.org.uk).

If you have not received your new logos yet, contact [psslogos@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:psslogos@rcvs.org.uk).

Accredited practices can also sign up to receive our e-newsletter, *The Practice Standard*, by emailing [pss@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:pss@rcvs.org.uk).





## Edinburgh to Basseterre

We wish Elaine Watson well in her new role as Dean of Ross University's School of Veterinary Medicine, at Basseterre, St Kitts. In her place, we welcome to the RCVS Council Professor David Argyle, as a member appointed by the University of Edinburgh. A graduate of the University of Glasgow, David is an RCVS/European Specialist in Veterinary Oncology and Diplomat of the European College of Internal Medicine in Oncology. He became Head of Edinburgh's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in 2011.

## Pet projects

National Pet Month helps a host of veterinary charities, including the RCVS Charitable Trust, as well as promoting responsible pet ownership. Running from 7 April to 7 May, it encourages veterinary practices to organise events along the theme of 'Happiness is... time with your pet'. If you're interested in finding out more, please visit [www.nationalpetmonth.org.uk](http://www.nationalpetmonth.org.uk).

## CPD Card included

Hopefully not too hidden amongst the information in your mailing should be your Continuing Professional Development Record Card. If not, then please get in touch and we'll send you one – or you can download it from the RCVS website. From April, you will be able to record your CPD online using the Professional Development Record, although the record card will remain available (see page 13 for details).



## Fraud awareness training

Staff from various departments of the College attended fraud awareness training towards the end of 2011. Fraudsters are increasingly sophisticated and it was useful for staff to be made aware of some of the things to look out for when considering, for example, registration documents.

# Ship-shape and Bristol fashion

## Full approval for Bristol vet school

**The University of Bristol's School of Veterinary Science has been restored to full RCVS approval status, following a recommendation made to Council in March by the Education Policy and Specialisation Committee.**

The School had been under conditional approval since a visit in March 2007, and a subsequent revisit in October 2009, had identified that, although progress had been made, work still needed to be completed to improve some of the facilities, particularly in small animal surgery and on the farm.

***"Council was delighted to commend the hard work and improvements displayed by the School."***

Following the positive report of a further visitation, carried out in mid-December under the chairmanship of former RCVS President Stephen Ware, Council was delighted to commend the hard work and improvements displayed by the School,



Professor Jo Price, Dean of the Bristol School of Veterinary Science

and to restore it to full approval status. It was particularly pleasing to note the strength of support and investment the School has had from the University at a time of economic stringency within the higher education sector. The School is next scheduled for a full visitation in 2014.

# Remember to renew registrations

## Fees due by 31 March

**Most years, vets pay their retention fees in good time – and last year was no exception. They'll shortly be due again – on 31 March – and can be paid in a variety of ways, for example, through our website, via a bank transfer, by direct debit or by cheque. (We're sorry, but we can't take payments over the phone.)**

If you have set up a direct debit, we generally aim to take the payment on 31 March – although this year, as that falls on a Saturday, we'll take the payment as soon as possible afterwards. If you want to make a bank transfer (from your bank account online, telephone banking, or a branch, depending what your bank offers), then please phone the Finance Department for our account details (020 7202 0723).

We also need to know to whom each payment relates – so please put your name and Membership number on the back of your cheque, or use this as a reference on a bank transfer.

Those who pay the retention fee after 30 April have to pay an extra £35 to cover the additional costs involved in sending reminders (as this does cost

money). Last year, the vast majority of vets – over 95% – did not have to pay this additional fee, and we hope that they spent the £35 on something more interesting.

Newly introduced in 2011 was a requirement to renew your registration by confirming or updating your registration details. The deadline for this is 30 September, although you might find it convenient to do this at the same time as you make the fee payment. You can renew your registration through our website, or use the form included with your annual renewal notice – regardless of how you choose to pay. Both UK- and Overseas-practising members should also confirm in this process that they have met the continuing professional development requirements.

If you're a vet, then we don't need to tell you that you must be registered with the RCVS in order to practise in the UK, and that those whose retention fees remain unpaid after 31 May are removed from the Register. We're mentioning the fact for readers who might not know – such as newly-appointed practice managers, or veterinary students, or those encountering RCVS News via our website.

# Better, fairer and more effective regulation

## Independent statutory committees in sight

**We are urging the profession to support long-awaited proposals for a legislative reform order (LRO) that will enable the College disciplinary committees to be independent of the RCVS Council, to ensure that the same group of people is not responsible for setting the rules, investigating complaints and hearing cases.**

In January, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched a public consultation on the proposals to use an LRO to amend Part I of Schedule 2 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, to require the RCVS Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees to be made up of veterinary surgeons and lay members who are not RCVS Council members, and who are appointed at arm's length.

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is supportive of the proposed LRO.

Under the proposals, following a transitional period, the Committees would cease to include Council members. The bodies, which consider allegations of misconduct on the part of veterinary surgeons, would thus be independently constituted and detached from policy discussions.

The proposals would improve the independence of the disciplinary processes by bringing lay people formally into the relevant Committees. The changes would also increase the pool of people available to investigate complaints and sit on disciplinary hearings, ensuring that complaints are heard swiftly.



RCVS President, Dr Jerry Davies, says: "The LRO provides a unique opportunity to bring our disciplinary procedures up to speed with those of other healthcare regulators, to improve the public perception of the independence of the disciplinary committees, and to allow us to deliver better, fairer and more effective regulation. I would urge members of both the veterinary professions and the public to respond to the Defra consultation and support the proposals."

The Defra public consultation closes on 10 April, and can be accessed at: <http://bit.ly/rcvsiro>.

# Register changes

## No more free hard copies

**The 2011 issues of the RCVS Register of Veterinary Surgeons and the RCVS List and Register of Veterinary Nurses were the last to be made available free of charge to all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, a decision which was confirmed by the Planning and Resources Committee and the Veterinary Nurses Council at their meetings in February (see also RCVS News November 2011).**

Each year, many Registers are returned to us as uncollected from the post office or undeliverable, and we also receive many requests from people who wish to be removed from the mailing list.

In addition, the financial and environmental cost of printing and mailing many thousands of copies of the Registers is high, and would have continued to increase.

For those who prefer to have a hard copy, these can be purchased from the College at a cost of £40 for the veterinary Register and £20 for the VN Register and List. A hard copy will also be available in the RCVS Charitable Trust Library for reference purposes.

Although the Register is a public document, it was felt by the Committee that to make all the details contained in the hard copy available online was a step too far. The online 'Check the Register' tool will continue to provide the most up-to-date information about who is registered with the College, but this includes more limited information than the hard copy, such as town rather than full address. In order to assist with locating individuals, links will be created between the search results of 'Check the Register' and those on 'Find a Vet', but only when the Register address of an individual matches their workplace address on Find a Vet. We are aware that this will exclude a percentage of individuals, but it was felt the safest way to proceed because it does not put new information online.

Reasonable requests for information previously published in the hard copy Register can be made to the Registration Department.



# Withdrawal of all RCVS Diplomas

## Last enrolment date to be 1 November 2012

**Following a recommendation by the Education Policy and Specialisation Committee, RCVS Council has agreed to speed up the process of phasing out all of the remaining RCVS Diplomas in favour of the increasingly popular European Diplomas.**

A number of RCVS Diplomas have already been phased out, and new enrolments are no longer being taken in subjects such as Small Animal Medicine, Dermatology, Anaesthesia and Diagnostic Imaging. But with such small numbers of candidates sitting RCVS Diploma exams, it has become increasingly unsustainable to continue, as it is difficult to benchmark and determine a consistent standard. For example, only two candidates have entered the Diploma in Small Animal Surgery (Orthopaedics) exam for each of the past three years, and, in 2008, there was only one candidate. Similarly, there tend to be only one or two

candidates for the Diploma exams in Zoo Medicine, Cattle Health and Production or Ophthalmology.

### Last enrolment

The last opportunity for candidates to enrol on the remaining RCVS Diplomas will be 1 November 2012. Examinations will continue to be arranged for enrolled candidates, so that the last examinations would be held in 2019, or earlier, depending when the last candidate for each subject completes.

### Routes to specialisation

Those who have ambitions to become specialists will still have multiple routes to RCVS Recognised Specialist status – either via a European Diploma (which can be achieved through an alternate route for those not in a residency position), or the RCVS Fellowship.



# Student VN locum warning

## Guidance on legal implications

**T**he locum agency sends you a student nurse. Is she RCVS-enrolled? Yes. Great, so that means you can delegate Schedule 3 tasks to her, under supervision, right? Wrong...

Legally speaking, student veterinary nurses can only carry out Schedule 3 tasks, even under close personal supervision, when working in their own training practice, or in a placement under the supervision of their centre (college or university), in the course of their veterinary nursing qualification. This is because the dispensation under Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 is meant to assist students in the course of their structured studies. It would otherwise be akin to a veterinary student working as a locum vet in the holidays, on the basis that they are allowed to carry out veterinary tasks under supervision while on extra-mural studies – which would clearly be wrong.

So, if you hire a locum who is a student nurse, even if they are properly enrolled with the College as such, they can only carry out the same tasks as a lay member of staff, no matter how experienced they are. This is true even if your practice is a Training Practice in its own right, training other veterinary nurse students. We also hear reports of individuals who never completed their studies, and are therefore neither student nor qualified veterinary nurse, acting as a locum in a 'qualified' capacity. This is equally illegal.

A veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse who delegates medical treatment or minor surgery to student or lapsed student veterinary nurses acting as locums would be committing an offence.

We recognise that some locum agencies do not seem to understand this point and may therefore be sending student VNs to practices as qualified nurses, or as 'experienced students', which can be misleading in terms of the work they are entitled to carry out. We will communicate with them on the issue.



# Keep it local

## Advice on terms of engagement for Riding Establishment Inspectors

**We would like to remind all Riding Establishment Inspectors that the terms of their engagement as inspectors should be made with the relevant Local Authority, and not directly with the riding establishment, in order to avoid a potential conflict of interest.**

The Riding Establishment Acts of 1964 and 1970 give local authorities legal responsibility to regulate riding establishments. Under the statutory inspection and licensing regime, local authorities are required to authorise veterinary surgeons as riding establishment inspectors from the list of inspectors maintained by the RCVS and BVA ([www.rcvs.org.uk/ridingestablishments](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/ridingestablishments)); this authorisation must be in writing.

We will be contacting Local Authorities to remind them that they, and not the riding establishments themselves, must engage veterinary inspectors,

including payment for professional fees incurred. This would avoid the potential for veterinary surgeons so engaged to contravene both existing RCVS guidance on avoiding conflicts of interest (*RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct*, parts 2D and 3D) and the aim and intent of the legislation. We also intend to publish a reminder in *TS Today*, the official publication of the Trading Standards Institute, and for the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

If you have any concerns or questions about your engagement as a Riding Establishment Inspector, please contact the Professional Conduct Department for advice (020 7202 0789 / [profcon@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:profcon@rcvs.org.uk)). More information is also available at <http://findavet.rcvs.org.uk/about/riding-establishments>.



# A fine performance?

## New Performance Protocol approved for inclusion in Code of Conduct

**RCVS Council has approved a new Performance Protocol, which formalises a remedial approach to veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) who fail to address poor professional performance.**

The Protocol forms part of the supporting guidance to the new Code of Professional Conduct and recognises that the first response to ongoing concerns about performance will normally be taken by practices. However, in those rare cases where steps cannot be taken, or where they are ineffective, the Protocol will allow – in appropriate circumstances – poor performance by vets and RVNs that affects their ability to practise safely, to be dealt with confidentially and without progressing to a full public Disciplinary Committee hearing. It will allow individuals to access appropriate training and support away from the public spotlight, while ensuring that they do not put animals or the public at risk.

According to the independent legal advice we have sought, such an approach is appropriate and necessary in order for us to fulfil our regulatory responsibilities – similar systems exist within other

regulators. The proposed inclusion of professional responsibilities in the new Code of Professional Conduct, to support the introduction of the Protocol, were also approved by Council.

The Protocol encourages anyone coming into contact with vets – including other vets, VNs, members of practice staff, clients and healthcare professionals – who have concerns about the professional performance of a vet or RVN, to report those concerns to us as soon as is reasonably practicable. Vets and VNs who are concerned about the professional performance of a professional colleague must also take steps to ensure that animals are not put at risk and that the interests of the public, including those of their colleagues, are protected.

The draft Protocol was the subject of recent consultation amongst the profession and the public (*RCVS News*, November 2011). In response to feedback received, Council endorsed the decision to establish a group involving representatives from the veterinary professions to help implement the new Protocol and consider developing further guidance on its operation.



# Emergency cover by referral practices

## A reminder for referral veterinary surgeons of their 24/7 responsibilities

**The obligation to take steps to provide 24-hour emergency cover for the care of animal species treated during normal working hours applies equally to all practising veterinary surgeons, including those working in referral practices and in universities.**

Referral practices should provide 24-hour availability in all their specialties, or they should, by prior arrangement, direct referring veterinary surgeons to an alternative source of appropriate assistance.

Any practice accepting a referral should make arrangements in advance to provide advice to the referring veterinary surgeon on a 24-hour basis, for the care of that patient.

Appropriate post-operative or in-patient care should be provided by the veterinary surgeon to whom the case is referred, or by another veterinary surgeon with appropriate expertise (and at a practice with appropriate facilities).

# Joint understanding on Health Protocol

## Procedures to help vets and VNs with health problems agreed

**The RCVS Health Protocol – which sets out the compassionate approach that we will take towards veterinary surgeons with health problems that may affect their fitness to practise – was approved by RCVS Council in November 2010, and has since been applied to registered veterinary nurses under the new disciplinary procedures that came into force on 1 April 2011. The protocol encourages people with concerns about health problems to contact us and take steps to ensure that animals are not put at risk, and that the public interest, which includes that of colleagues, is protected.**

As the first part of the implementation of the Health Protocol, we have now signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Veterinary Surgeons'

Health Support Programme (VSHSP). The MoU acknowledges that the first step in approaching health problems is often for contact to be made with the VSHSP, to allow appropriate support to be provided.

Where health problems cannot be sufficiently addressed in this way, the MoU sets out a procedure for the VSHSP to raise concerns with us. Under this procedure, the overriding duty of the VSHSP and the RCVS remains to protect the safety of animals receiving veterinary care and the public, while, as far as possible, protecting confidential health information.

The Health Protocol will form part of the supporting guidance to the new Codes of Professional Conduct for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses (see cover).

# Destructive advice

## Make use of free police service

**A**ccording to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001, Schedule 1 and 2 Controlled Drugs **must only be destroyed in the presence, and under the direction, of an authorised person.**

An 'authorised person' could be a member of the Animal Medicines Inspectorate, an RCVS Practice Standards Scheme Inspector, a veterinary surgeon who is independent of the practice or a police officer.

Practices may not be aware that the police has a nationwide network of Controlled Drugs Liaison Officers (CDLOs) who are able to assist.

"Our role includes the safe management of controlled drugs in the healthcare arena, which includes veterinary practices, and we are authorised witnesses to destroy expired stocks of controlled drugs," explains Detective Sergeant Jane Shingles, part of a team of CDLOs in the Metropolitan Police Service.

"The Metropolitan Police offers a free service and I would urge London-based practices to make use of it. Other constabularies may not always be able to offer this service, but a list of all CDLOs is available online to initiate contact," she adds.

Other aspects on which a CDLO can offer advice include safe storage, auditing, suspicious activity, internal thefts and forged or stolen prescriptions.

Find your nearest CDLO via [www.apcdlo.org.uk](http://www.apcdlo.org.uk), and ask what level of services is available in your area.



# Switch to new PPE certs

## Old certificates not valid after 31 March

**A**s reported in the June 2011 issue of **ARCVS News**, new pre-purchase examination (PPE) certificates were developed by the British Equine Veterinary Association and approved by the RCVS over summer 2011. The revised certificate and supporting guidance is both less ambiguous and more suited to current practice. These documents, which were last revised in 1986, were launched by BEVA at its Congress in September 2011.

A period of several months has been allowed for veterinary surgeons to switch to the new format, but in the event of a claim, the old-style certificates will no longer be supported by the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS) after 31 March 2012.

The new certificate addresses issues such as establishing any relationship between the veterinary surgeon and seller, disclosure of known clinical records and establishing whether commonly-performed additional parts of the examination have taken place.

"The revised certificates had been in development for many years and have been well received by the majority of equine veterinary surgeons," reports Malcolm Morley, Chairman of BEVA's PPE Committee.

The new certificates are available from the VDS and the new Guidance Notes are available from BEVA.

# Clinical governance: a closer look

Up to speed on clinical governance? Bradley Viner explains some of the theory behind the practice



**T**he new RCVS Code of Professional Conduct states: “Veterinary surgeons/nurses must ensure that clinical governance forms part of their professional activities” and, in its supporting guidance, sets out practical advice to help veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses meet this responsibility. But what is clinical governance, and what aspects of everyday working need to be considered? Small animal practitioner and RCVS Treasurer Bradley Viner explains some of the theory to help underpin the practice.

## Defining clinical governance

Clinical governance can be described as a framework through which an organisation is accountable for continually improving the quality of its services and safeguarding high standards of care by creating an environment in which excellence in clinical care will flourish. It is a continuing process of reflection, analysis and improvement in professional practice, for the benefit of the animal patient and the client owner. In order to achieve this, clinical managers need to consider the following seven broad areas, although there is significant overlap between them.

## Risk management

It is necessary to consider the factors that could pose a risk to the practice and develop a strategy to minimise this and cope with any adverse events. For example, biosecurity is an important issue within veterinary practice, so managers need to consider how to minimise the risks of a biosecurity breakdown (such as an outbreak of MRSA in small animal practice), and how to tackle such a breakdown if it should occur.

Many such risks are covered by existing regulation, although the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme provides a very useful check to ensure that the veterinary business is managing such risks effectively.

Should an adverse event occur, the organisation should carry out and document a critical incident review to explore what went wrong and investigate if changes to their guidelines need to be put in place to minimise the future risk. It is essential that members of the practice team are able to contribute openly without fear of blame or retribution.

## Information management

The effective handling of information is crucial for a veterinary business to run effectively and to allow veterinary professionals to meet their obligations under the Code. This primarily involves the maintenance of clinical records and associated financial information, but may influence other key areas of the practice, such as internal/external communications and continuing professional development (CPD). It is likely to involve the use of computer systems and thus requires an understanding of both the necessary hardware and software required. The protection of stored data from abuse or loss must form a part of the business risk management strategy.

***“Clinical governance is a continuing process of reflection, analysis and improvement in professional practice, for the benefit of the animal patient and the client owner.”***

## Human resource management and team-working

All employers are required to have systems in place to enable them to meet UK employment law. Employees need to know who is responsible for their employment and have the training and motivation to fulfil the role. Whilst the law demands employment contracts, clearly-defined job descriptions and regular appraisals are also good practice.

Issues that are more specific to veterinary clinical practice involve the development of an integrated practice team to provide optimum clinical and client care. In particular, all clinical and non-clinical staff should understand their respective roles within the organisation and the limits of their responsibilities; the division of clinical and management roles for employed veterinary staff should be clearly defined.

Other human resource issues, such as long-term or sudden short-term staff shortages, should also form part of the risk management strategy.

## Continuing professional development

The veterinary business should have a structure to encourage CPD at all levels within the organisation,

whilst also ensuring it meets the specific requirements for veterinary and registered veterinary nursing staff. Learning and development should be embedded into the staff appraisal process.

For veterinary surgeons, the Professional Development Phase is a compulsory requirement and it is not only incumbent upon the recent graduate to ensure that it is satisfactorily completed, but also upon the employer to ensure that appropriate mentoring and coaching is in place.

The College's CPD guidance outlines many different forms of learning that are acceptable for both veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses, including work-based training.

## Evidence-based medicine

Evidence-based medicine is defined as the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients. This means integrating individual clinical expertise and the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research. The evaluation of such evidence requires an understanding of the statistical basis of clinical research and the different methodologies available.

In veterinary practice, the evidence base is often patchy and the resources to enable authoritative evaluations may not be available. The decision-making process may therefore be imperfect, but by learning to ask the correct questions, meaningful results for clinical cases can still be obtained.

## Clinical effectiveness

Clinical effectiveness is regarded as the application of the best available knowledge, derived from research, clinical experience and patient preferences, to achieve optimum processes and outcomes of care for patients. This involves the development





of protocols and/or guidelines to encourage the incorporation of an evidence-based approach into practice, a structure to encourage the integration of CPD into clinical practice and the dissemination of best practice amongst the clinical team.

The measurement of clinical performance should be an integral part of this process, which could involve regular case discussion meetings, but is most effective when specific and relevant criteria are monitored to measure changes in clinical performance. The clinical audit cycle is a quality improvement process in clinical practice that seeks to establish guidelines for dealing with particular problems, based on documented evidence when it is available, measuring the effectiveness of these guidelines once they have been put into effect, and modifying them as appropriate. As such, it should be an integral part of the continual improvement process involved in effective clinical governance.



#### Client involvement

Feedback from clients is not only commercially valuable, but can also provide an important indicator of practice performance. Whilst animal welfare must always be of primary concern to veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, it is consumer satisfaction that will ultimately shape the nature of the profession on both a local and national basis.

Anecdotal feedback will often provide a highly distorted view of overall client perceptions, so good clinical governance should involve independent collection and analysis of client opinions using methodologies such as focus groups and client surveys, the results of which should then be shared with the practice team.

#### Documentation

It is essential that the collation and recall of clinical governance information is effectively and appropriately carried out. This should primarily take the form of a practice manual (hard/electronic copy or intranet) which can be modified readily as the need arises. This manual serves a range of functions, including staff training, the provision of clear and concise information in an accessible format, and protection in the event of any legal challenge.

#### Further help

More practical advice on clinical governance will be available in the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct (Chapter 6), to be published later in the spring. A more detailed article by the same author, including references, was published in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* (Vol 12) in July 2010.

# PDP – employers' responsibility

## New policy emphasises employers' role

**The role of employers in supporting new veterinary graduates has been highlighted by an update to the RCVS policy on continuing professional development (CPD).**

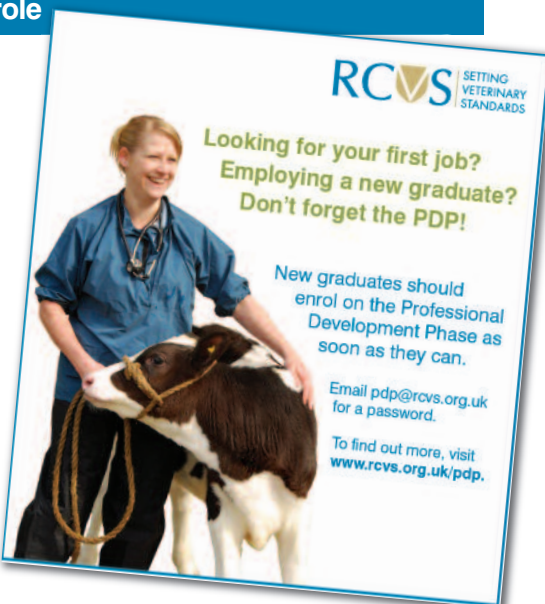
The CPD policy, agreed by Education Policy and Specialisation Committee in February, emphasises that we expect veterinary employers to check prospective employees' Professional Development Phase (PDP) progress or fulfilment.

The PDP, carried out conscientiously, fulfils the first year's CPD requirement of a newly qualified vet. The new Performance Protocol, also approved at the March Council, meeting states that: "there is an expectation that veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses will take part in a regular system of performance review and self-assessment designed to plan development and address any performance issues. This should be supported by the other members of the veterinary team or business." This is the essence of PDP and use of the PDP online system provides a structure to support this process of self-assessment and review.

The expectation that veterinary employers should check the CPD records of any vet who they are considering employing, as part of ensuring that the candidate is qualified for the position under consideration, remains unchanged.

To further demonstrate how PDP forms part of the career-long CPD process, the current, online PDP interface will be enhanced later this year, and integrated within the new RCVS Professional Development Record due to be launched this spring (see facing page). Those already undertaking PDP will be able to continue to use the current system.

"The RCVS expects employers to consider both their personal CPD needs and those of their



employees," says Head of Education, Freda Andrews. "This includes making sure that new graduates are employed only in roles where support will be provided for them to complete their PDP, and using CPD records within employment processes, such as recruitment and appraisal."

To remind recent graduates and employers about their responsibilities with regards to PDP, we ran a series of adverts in the recruitment sections of the *Veterinary Record* and *Veterinary Times* during the first few months of the year. Guidance for both new graduates and employers can be found at [www.rcvs.org.uk/pdp](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/pdp), or contact our Education Department for help.

The revised CPD policy is available online at [www.rcvs.org.uk/cpd](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/cpd).

# CertAVP changes ahead

## Modules to be streamlined

**With five years now under its belt, the modular postgraduate RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP) may be about to see changes to some of its key skills modules.**

**The proposed changes draw both on our experience so far of the award's operation and on feedback from candidates.**

To be awarded a CertAVP, candidates need to achieve 60 credits from a combination of compulsory (A and B) and optional (C) modules. The changes being considered by the CertAVP Subcommittee are whether to combine the two compulsory modules A – Professional Key Skills, and B-0 – Clinical Key Skills, into a single, 10-credit module. Learning objectives relating to business and practice management would then be moved into an optional, business-related

C module. This would improve the way the learning objectives are set out and expressed, as well as providing more choice and flexibility for candidates.

By moving this content, candidates would then need to take one extra C module to gain sufficient credits to qualify for the award. This could be either the new, business-related module or a species-/discipline-based C module, meaning candidates have more choice to pick subjects that suit their individual learning and development needs.

We will be providing more information about these proposals on our website, with a link to the new draft module, and a questionnaire for those who are interested in more details. Any changes to the structure of the qualification would need to be reflected in revised bye-laws, which would in turn need to be approved by Council.

# Palm trees and woolly hats

## VECTAR goes abroad

**Last autumn, we made a successful bid for EU funding to develop our Nursing Progress Log into Europe. Julie Dugmore, VN Quality Assurance Manager, offers an update on project VECTAR's progress.**

Following the successful opening conference of the VECTAR (Veterinary European Clinical Training and Assessment Record) project in London last November, intrepid Veterinary Nursing Department staff spent January and February visiting Holland, Belgium, Portugal, Finland and Norway, to provide the clinical coach training to our partners. VN Colleges in these countries are currently piloting the Clinical Training and Assessment Record (CTAR) known to us native folk as the Nursing Progress Log (NPL).

***"Having worked within the training environment for the Clinical Training and Assessment Record, both clinical coaches and schools are now chomping at the bit to get started."***

Temperatures varied from 11 degrees, with palm trees, to -17 degrees, with snow, woolly hats and gloves. However, the warmth of our reception, and the participation and interaction of delegates in all the countries involved, was very encouraging and much appreciated.

Discussions highlighted that veterinary nurse training is relatively new in some of the countries, with some schools only having been training for six years, compared with the UK, where we have just celebrated 50 years of VN training.

Interesting topics identified ranged from legislation issues to placement locations (with some training practices being over five hours away from the school), and it became apparent that we all experience similar issues, for example:

- Student monitoring and progression
- Time allocation
- Student motivation

Training included two activities, each centred on the teaching of a practical skill. While delegates were able to demonstrate the technique of drawing up an injection, they were unable to agree on how many individual steps this skill actually involved. To make things more fun, using the Peyton (1998) 'four-stage approach' to teaching a practical skill, delegates were taught to dance the Macarena. Although, understandably, somewhat bemused at first, they found it helped to reinforce a methodical sequence to their teaching, while also rejuvenating them after lunch.

Numbers piloting the CTAR tool at this initial stage varied from country to country, with a minimum of three to a maximum of ten clinical coaches, across both higher and further education students. This allows a wide range of skills within the units to be piloted, with a view to adaption for the European market.



All delegates worked extremely hard over the two days, contributing well to group discussions, even though English is not their first language. Having worked within the training environment for the CTAR, both clinical coaches and schools are now chomping at the bit to get started.

The positive, enthusiastic responses from all participating countries made the 3.30am starts, below-zero temperatures and news of a drive-by shooting (in Oslo) not seem so bad!

For more information, visit our new VECTAR website at [www.vectar.org](http://www.vectar.org).

# Especially grateful

## Good response to specialisation consultation

**We'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who responded to the consultation on specialisation in the veterinary profession. With 265 individuals sending in responses, and 25 submissions received from organisations and groups, it is perhaps unsurprising that the range of opinions expressed has been wide. A diversity of views was also expressed from among specialists and non-specialists alike.**

This feedback is valuable, and the next step is for the RCVS Specialisation Working Party to consider its proposals in the light of these comments, before making its recommendations for RCVS Council to consider.

"In their report, the Working Party commented on how many of the responses we received were detailed and well thought out," said Freda Andrews, Head of the Education Department.

"We are very grateful to all those who took the time to respond to this important set of proposals."

A consensus is emerging about the value of introducing a 'middle tier' for the 'advanced veterinary practitioner', which would be subject to revalidation, like the existing RCVS Recognised Specialist List, but more detail would need to be worked out before something on these lines could be implemented.

***"A consensus is emerging about the value of introducing a 'middle tier' for the 'advanced veterinary practitioner'."***

The Working Party has emphasised there will no doubt need to be further iterations of these ideas, and it is more important for the proposals produced to be right than that any particular



committee timetable is met. However, it does hope that proposals will be prepared ready for RCVS Council consideration later this year.

In the meantime, the Working Party has set out its latest position on some of the key issues which emerged from the consultation, and these can be read at [www.rcvs.org.uk/specialisation](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/specialisation).



# Getting online with your CPD

## New online recording system coming soon

**H**elp is at hand for vets and VNs planning their continuing professional development (CPD), with the new online RCVS Professional Development Record (PDR), available soon.

"Under the new Codes of Professional Conduct, the fact that undertaking and recording CPD is a professional obligation for vets and registered veterinary nurses has been made clear," says Freda Andrews, Head of the RCVS Education Department. "We know that most vets and VNs take their CPD seriously and we want to support this. So, we have developed the online PDR which will help you plan, record and evaluate your CPD."

Available via the RCVS website from April, the CPD component of the Professional Development Record has been developed in two parallel versions, for vets and VNs to use in place of the paper CPD Record Card.

Later this year, further sections of the PDR will come online: one to replace the current PDP website for new veterinary graduates, and one to be used by veterinary undergraduates to record their clinical and practical experience on rotations and extra-mural studies placements. The veterinary nursing PDR will sit alongside the existing Nursing Progress Log used by student VNs. Bringing together the recording systems for students, new graduates and for all vets and veterinary nurses' CPD will demonstrate that professional development starts before you qualify and is a career-long commitment.

The main CPD screen of the PDR – and the only part of your CPD record that the RCVS can see without asking you personally – is similar to the paper CPD Record Card, where you fill in individual entries for each CPD activity. The box on the right outlines some of the key features of the system. There's a simple e-learning 'help' function to guide you through, as well as all the RCVS CPD policy and guidance documents.

Although we're still producing the hard copy CPD Record Cards for those who prefer paper, the PDR is designed to help you plan and keep track of your development plans, and also lets you keep useful information together in one safe place.

### PDP make-over

For vets qualifying this summer – and their employers – a new Professional Development Phase (PDP) recording system will be included as a component within the PDR, so that PDP and CPD records will be kept in one place. The new PDP component will include improvements based on feedback from users of the existing PDP website, such as a more user-friendly interface, improved 'save' facilities, as well as a more structured and intuitive system for adding progress notes and uploading documents. Those currently undertaking PDP will be able to use the current online record to complete it, and afterwards use the PDR for their CPD.

Once the PDR goes live, we will put out further information through the veterinary and VN press, and it will be available via the CPD pages of our website. If you are attending the British Small Animal Veterinary Association World Congress, visit our stand (F1 in the ICC) for a demo.

### The new online CPD record:

- Includes a progress bar, showing hours of CPD completed across a rolling three-year period, turning from red to green once the RCVS quota has been met.
- Allows you to add notes and upload other documents (which we cannot access without your permission). For example, presentations or photographs from courses attended, or academic papers relating to an interesting case.
- Includes a section for planning future CPD, setting objectives, defining criteria for success and noting the actions to take.
- Features a diary, which allows reminders to be set.
- Allows you to sort your CPD activities by type, by subject, where undertaken or by date, and check exactly how much time you're spending on different sorts of activities or subject areas.
- Categorises CPD under a number of new headings – such as taking part in a webinar, or undertaking a secondment – via a simple pull-down menu.



## Exam dates

The **Certificate** written examinations will be held at the Emmanuel Centre, Marsham Street, London SW1 3DW, on either **Tuesday 17** or **Wednesday 18 July 2012**. Candidates will be advised which date relates to their subject.

The **Diploma** written examinations will be held at the RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF, on **Tuesday 3 July 2012**.

The precise timetable for each Diploma and Certificate subject will shortly be published on the RCVS website, and each candidate will be notified individually.

Dates for clinical oral and practical examinations will be published and notified separately.

## Deadlines

### Specialist status

Specialists who first listed in 1993, 1998, 2003 or 2008 are required to reapply by **Friday 17 August 2012**.

The deadline for new applications is **Friday 7 September 2012**.

### Fellowship

The deadline for new applications for the RCVS Diploma of Fellowship is **Wednesday 1 August 2012** (by Thesis or by Meritorious Contributions to Learning).

The RCVS Diploma of Fellowship is the College's oldest and most prestigious award. It is awarded following examination of a thesis, or following examination of a collection of the candidate's work to assess their 'meritorious contributions to learning' over a period of 15 years. The subject of a thesis may cover any topic provided it relates to an "aspect of the art or science of veterinary medicine, whether clinical, experimental or otherwise, or may relate to the general development of the veterinary profession". The work must demonstrate originality and significantly advance knowledge of the subject. Further information about application procedures may be found on the RCVS website at [www.rcvs.org.uk/fellowship](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/fellowship) – or by contacting Janet Etheridge in the Education Department – [j.etheridge@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:j.etheridge@rcvs.org.uk).



# Ensuring insurance probity

## New police department to root out insurance fraudsters

**In the current 'bash the bankers' climate, where we all love to hate financial service providers, many might consider insurance fraud a victimless crime. But the police service doesn't think so, and has set up a new unit to combat insurance fraud, including its 'professional enablers'. We find out more...**



Over £2 billion was lost to the insurance industry in fraud last year, with the Association of British Insurers (ABI) calculating that insurance fraud costs honest customers around £44 more each year for their policies. Pet insurance fraud accounted for around £2m of this.

Although pet insurance was introduced longer ago than some might think – around the Second World War – in recent years, it has become vital in enabling many owners to benefit from the full range of diagnostic services and treatments available for their pets.

In November last year, the *Guardian* (online 18 November 2011) and *Daily Mail* (30 November 2011) printed articles suggesting that veterinary surgeons were complicit in pet insurance fraud, noting rising veterinary costs. The College, the British Veterinary Association and others were quick to respond. We stressed that although vet fees had risen, this was not due to the inflation of prices for insured animals. Instead, it was likely to be a function of several key factors, including the advancement of veterinary science, technology and novel medicines, which have extended the range of complex diagnostic techniques and treatment opportunities available to animal owners.

In a comment piece in the *Guardian* (online 1 December 2011), President Jerry Davies said that if the paper's readers had information about specific cases of vets involved with insurance fraud, the College would be keen to hear it.

So, when the City of London Police launched the UK's first ever Insurance Fraud Enforcement Department (IFED) in January this year, saying that one of its aims was to tackle 'professional enablers' such as veterinary surgeons, solicitors and doctors, we were keen to know more.

The new unit is funded by the ABI to the tune of £3m a year for three years – part of the £200m that the industry spends on fraud detection annually – and employs 34 members of staff. Although based in the City of London Police's Economic Crime Directorate, the IFED, unusually, has a remit across England and Wales, linking up with various other counter fraud agencies to tackle what are often cross-border crimes.

***"It's surprising how many offenders somehow feel the insurance companies 'deserve' to be ripped off."***

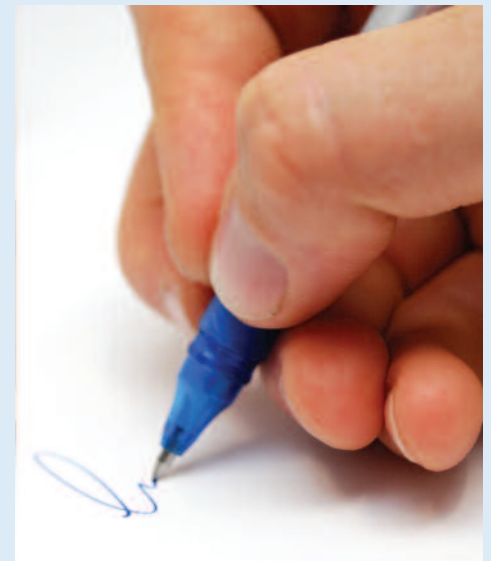
The IFED is led by Detective Chief Inspector David Wood (below), who explains the unit's remit: "We have an enforcement arm, to bring offenders to justice; we wish to instil a climate of fear, to make opportunist fraudsters realise that insurance fraud will not be tolerated; and, we also have an educational programme, working with the public and organisations to ensure people understand that insurance fraud is not a 'victimless crime', but something that is taken seriously."

Towards the end of this year, the ABI also seeks to set up an Insurance Fraud Register to be run by the Insurance Fraud Bureau, to share information about those who have claimed fraudulently. Such individuals may find it impossible to take out new

policies with other insurers: it will be akin to having a poor credit rating when seeking a loan.

"It's surprising how many offenders somehow feel the insurance companies 'deserve' to be ripped off. It seems to be part of today's culture of greed, and will not be tolerated," says David.

And so far, the unit has been successful, with more than 40 arrests in the first eight weeks of operation alone.



So where does pet insurance fraud fit into this, surely small fry? Not necessarily. Although David estimates that only 3% of insurance fraud is likely to come from the pet sector (the lion's share comes from motor insurance, especially 'crash for cash' whiplash cases), the IFED has already made three pet-related arrests, and more are in the pipeline. One arrest was made in Devon, where a woman made a claim for two Norwegian Forest cats, at £375 each, but she lied about the causes of their death. A vet assisted in this inquiry. In another case, a student has been arrested on suspicion of a fraudulent claim that both her Chihuahuas had been stolen.

Although there was no veterinary collaboration in either of these cases, others have reached the RCVS Disciplinary Committee. These include a veterinary surgeon who was removed from the Register and handed a fine and prison term for falsely certifying that he had carried out post-mortems on farm animals for which compensation was claimed by the farmer. In a second case, a veterinary surgeon was reprimanded by the College for false insurance certification – claiming on a policy for one animal when treating a second, uninsured animal (the sanction was reduced from 'removal' because the incident had happened a considerable time before the RCVS was able to deal with it).





Although we do not hear about many such cases, there may be more that pass under our radar. It could be argued that this is not a crime that is likely to be reported by a client, but we remain convinced that the veterinary profession is, in the main, working well with the insurance industry to the benefit of animals and their owners. However, it's important that vets do not feel coerced into doing something they know is wrong by a persuasive and powerful client. If someone is unsure, they should always contact the RCVS Professional Conduct Department.

***“We have heard about owners of litters of puppies who only get one insured then coerce the veterinary surgeon into completing claims for other puppies under that one policy.”***

The veterinary 'professional enablers' referred to in the IFED's launch release may be unwittingly assisting in insurance fraud. You may think this couldn't possibly apply to you as a veterinary surgeon. But consider that any insurance form that you put your signature to has the weight of a veterinary certificate. Are you still sure?

“We have heard about owners of litters of puppies who only get one insured then coerce the veterinary surgeon into completing claims for other puppies under that one policy,” says David.

This is precisely the kind of situation that perhaps previously used to go unchallenged but is now coming under the scrutiny of IFED. David has also heard accounts of veterinary surgeons being pressured into falsifying histories (for example, when a client changes insurance provider); stacks of blank, vet-signed, insurance forms being left for nurses and other staff to complete; falsification of microchip records; and charges for insured clients being routinely inflated.

“We will be working with the IFED on complaints it receives to ensure that, where any wrong doing by a veterinary professional is suspected, it is investigated appropriately, by the IFED or the RCVS,” explains Mike Hepper, Senior Case Manager at the RCVS.

The IFED is principally set up to act on reports from members of the ABI (which may include internal fraud), for which there is a sifting system in order to prioritise where and how resources are spent. This is not always based on the size of the case. However, David Wood would encourage anyone who knows anything that may be of relevance to contact the IFED directly or, if it concerns a veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary nurse, to contact the RCVS Professional Conduct Department.

“With around 40% of dogs and cats insured, the pet insurance industry could be described as a lifeline for veterinary practice,” says David. “We're here to make sure it's not a case of 'biting the hand that feeds'.”



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## Pet insurance claims may be rising, but vets are not to blame

Higher veterinary bills are due to more expensive treatments, not bigger profits

**Jerry Davies**  
guardian.co.uk, Thursday 1 December 2011 19:00 GMT  
Article history

You report on the growth in pet insurance fraud, including cases where, you allege, “cats, dogs and horses are facing deliberate injury – or even paying the ultimate price – as owners seek payouts” (Conman’s best friend? Pet insurance fraud rises fourfold, Money, 19 November). While, as president of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, I am unable to comment on the figures from the Association of British Insurers, as a veterinary surgeon for some 41 years I can say most owners I have met care passionately about their animals.

You say that, alongside the pressures of recession, “rising vet bills are another factor behind soaring claims”. Part of the reason for this, you say, is that “unlike GPs, vets are not required to choose the cheapest drug. A vet could choose more expensive drugs than necessary if they are aware that the animal is insured.” In fact, vets are not free to choose the cheapest medicine available, as they operate under a cascade system laid down by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. This states that the medicines tested and licensed for use in any particular species of animal, whether cat, dog, horse or cow, must be used in preference to a human generic equivalent to ensure safety and efficacy.

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The IFED can be contacted on:

IFED@cityoflondon.police.uk

020 7601 222

www.cityoflondon.police.uk/CityPolice/Departments/ECD/IFED//

### Authorised to sell?

Don't forget, unless you are registered with the Financial Services Authority, you can only offer clients general advice about pet insurance, and *not* recommend or favour specific policies. A recent survey amongst 287 veterinary surgeons carried about by Which? (formerly the Consumers Association) showed that 50% of them made specific pet insurance recommendations, despite not being authorised to do so.

### The College advice is as follows:

- Pet insurance should not result in work being carried out that does not promote the patient's welfare.
- Veterinary surgeons have responsibilities to both clients and insurance companies to disclose any material fact that may affect the claim.
- The fees charged to clients covered by pet insurance must be at the normal practice rate. Administrative charges should be itemised separately.
- Veterinary surgeons have professional responsibilities when certifying an insurance claim. If the facts are incorrect or misleading, the professional integrity of the veterinary surgeon may be questioned and allegations of false certification may be referred to the RCVS Disciplinary Committee.

## Join us in Birmingham

### Crack the Code!

If you're heading to Birmingham for the **British Small Animal Veterinary Association World Congress (12-15 April)**, and are interested in finding out how the new **Codes of Professional Conduct** could affect you, then come to our stand (F1, outside Hall 1 in the ICC), for more information.

Visitors can also have a go at our Code-cracking competition, and be in with a chance to win a Kindle.

Also at Congress, we will be previewing our new online CPD recording system – part one of the new Professional Development Record. This is the new, easy way to keep track of CPD and ensure you fulfil your requirements. A demo of the system for veterinary surgeons will be available to try on the stand.

## Walking in your footsteps

### Walks of Life careers materials

It's coming up to the time of year when school students decide what subjects they will be taking for their GCSEs, so it's a good point at which to flag up the range of opportunities a career as a veterinary surgeon can present.

To help get the message across, we have run adverts in the March issues of magazines aimed at 14-18 year olds (*Loud!* and *Full On!*) to promote the Walks of Life videos and brochures that were produced in 2008, with financial support from the veterinary schools, Defra and what was then the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

We will also be sending copies of the Walks of Life brochures to UK schools.

If you have been asked to talk to your local school about how students can follow in your footsteps with a career as a vet or VN, contact us for copies of our leaflets ([info@walksoflife.org.uk](mailto:info@walksoflife.org.uk) and [vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk) respectively). Or you can view the Walks of Life videos on [www.youtube.com/vetcareers](http://www.youtube.com/vetcareers).



## RCVS Day: new venue

### AGM and Presentation of Awards



**This year, RCVS Day – our Annual General Meeting and Presentation of Awards – will take place at the Royal College of Physicians, Regent's Park, on Friday 6 July.**

All veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are welcome to attend, and the presentation of awards will include Honorary Fellowships and Fellowships, and vet and veterinary nursing Diplomas. RCVS President Dr Jerry Davies will give a review of his year, welcome new members to Council and VN Council and formally introduce the new President for 2012-2013.

The day starts at 10am, followed by a talk from our guest speaker (still under wraps at the time of going to press). Lunch will be served at 1pm. Further details and information about how to apply for tickets will be in our June issue of *RCVS News*.

## Open house at Belgravia House

### Stakeholder open day planned

Although we have clear lines of communication with vets and veterinary nurses – *RCVS News* being one – it's more difficult to let the public know what we are up to. But with several changes in how the profession is regulated coming to fruition over the next few months, we thought it would be a good idea to host an open day for stakeholders, so that they can find out more.

On 2 May, we will invite representatives from animal charities, animal owner organisations (for example, the British Horse Society, the National Farmers Union and the Kennel Club), consumer groups and others to the College, in order to update them on new initiatives, such as the Code of Professional Conduct and the Health and Performance Protocols, and also to remind them of relevant topics such as the Practice Standards Scheme, vets' 24/7 obligations and the complaints process.

The day will also offer visitors the opportunity to take a tour of the historic collections at Belgravia House, and to talk to Officers and staff.

If you know of any organisations that you feel it would be appropriate for us to invite, please contact Fiona Harcourt on [f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk).

## Hampered – in a good way

### VPMA Congress winner announced

**Liz Burton, Marketing Co-ordinator at Loch Leven Equine Practice, Kinross, was the lucky winner of a hamper we donated as part of a quiz organised at the Veterinary Practice Management Association (VPMA) Congress (Kenilworth, January 27-28).**

Liz correctly answered 'five' to the question "How many principles of practice are set out in the new RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons?"

The question was one of 11 that Congress visitors needed to answer correctly in order to be entered into a prize draw. The correct answers could be found by visiting exhibitors' stands, and the prizes were contributed by various exhibitors.

"Getting out and about to meet the people working within veterinary practices is important to us," says Lizzie Lockett, Head of the RCVS Communications Department. "Congresses such as the VPMA's give us chance to hear what people have to say – and of course to help make sure that veterinary practices have the information they need from the College, such as knowing about our new Codes."

The prize was delivered to Liz at her practice in Kinross. "I am absolutely delighted to have won the hamper; it came as a really lovely surprise and rounded off two days of excellent lectures at the VPMA Congress," she says.





# Building the evidence base

## Royal Colleges host antimicrobial resistance symposium

In October, the RCVS, together with the Royal College of Physicians and Royal College of Pathologists, and in association with the Health Protection Agency, will be holding a one-day symposium on antimicrobial resistance.

'Antimicrobial resistance in human and veterinary medicine – one health, one problem?', will take place at the Royal College of Physicians in London. This symposium was originally planned for 15 March, but due to a conflicting meeting in Copenhagen, will now take place on 2 October 2012.

***"The symposium will bring together a broad audience, including veterinary and human medical scientists and practitioners."***

There is much debate about the sources of antimicrobial resistance in animals and humans, and the flow of resistance between them and the environment.

The symposium will bring together a broad audience, including veterinary and human medical scientists and practitioners, those from industry, opinion leaders and others with an interest in the subject, to discuss antimicrobial resistance in the spirit of 'one medicine'.

In due course, full details and online registration will be available at [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk), or via the Royal College of Physicians ([www.rcplondon.ac.uk](http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk)),



Royal College of Pathologists ([www.rcpath.org](http://www.rcpath.org)) or Health Protection Agency ([www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)), and will be promoted in the veterinary and medical media.

The event is supported by funding from the RCVS Charitable Trust, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, the Wellcome Trust and the British Society of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy.

# Super sleuthing specs winner

## London Vet Show competition results

Our 'Crack the Code' competition at the London Vet Show (Olympia, 24-25 November, 2011) was won by veterinary surgeon James Ward, of Chippenham in Wiltshire, who was delighted to receive a pair of video glasses. "The competition at the RCVS stand involved deciphering phrases in the new Code of Professional Conduct from pictorial clues, and provided an enjoyable break from the lecture halls," he said, adding, "I look forward to trying out the glasses on my next adventure race!"

We are already planning ahead for the London Vet Show 2012 (Olympia, 15-16 November), and are planning to host a lecture session to support overseas veterinary surgeons working in the UK. We understand that differences in culture and language, in addition to different regulatory and professional environments, can cause challenges,



so aim to provide some tips and advice on working in UK practice.

We would love to hear from any overseas graduates who have experiences to share, in order to make the session as effective and relevant as possible.

If you would like to contribute, please contact Lizzie Lockett on [l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk).

# Regional roving

## RCVS to visit NI in May

Three times a year, members of the RCVS Officer team, Council and VN Council, go out and about to meet local veterinary surgeons, nurses and those involved in the profession, to answer any queries or concerns. It's also a good chance for practitioners to complete some CPD, as well as catch up with colleagues.

As we go to press, on 8 March, the team will be at the Mercure Parkway Hotel in Leeds, and then on Thursday 17 May, they will be visiting Northern Ireland. The exact venue for Northern Ireland is to be confirmed, but all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses living in the area will receive a personal invitation in the post, and further details will be available online and in the veterinary press.

The dates and locations for Regional Question Time meetings during the next presidential year (which starts in July) will be announced soon, so keep an eye out to see if we are coming to a venue near you.

# Speaker? Sorted!

## RCVS speakers available



**D**o you run regional or local meetings or events? Do you find it tough to secure speakers? If the members of your group or association would enjoy hearing from an RCVS speaker, let us know!

We have speakers available who would be happy to talk on any topic that relates to the role and remit of the College, such as:

- The new Codes of Professional Conduct
- How to avoid becoming a complaints statistic
- What happens when someone complains about you to the RCVS
- The new online professional development recording system
- The future of veterinary regulation and legislation
- Passing a Practice Standards Scheme inspection
- The Professional Development Phase – guidance for employers

Such talks can be considered by your delegates to be continuing professional development (CPD).

So, if you have an upcoming event that would benefit from an RCVS speaker, please let Fiona Harcourt know, on [f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk) or 020 7202 0773.



# Report to Council, March 2012

## PI Committee Chairman Jill Nute

**S**ince the last Report to Council, there have been four Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings, during which time 25 complaints have been considered.

Of these, six complaints were closed; nine complaints were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon; one complaint was held open, three complaints were referred to the veterinary investigators for visits and interviews; one complaint was referred to the Professional Conduct Department for further investigations; two cases were referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken; two complaints were referred to the Professional Conduct Department for formal statements to be taken; and, one complaint was referred to the Senior Case Manager to liaise with the Health and Safety Executive.

The PIC is investigating 55 ongoing complaints, including those complaints referred to solicitors, visits and health cases. During the same period, the four Veterinary Investigators and the Senior Case Manager carried out 13 announced and three unannounced practice visits and two review visits.

### Health Protocol

Since its introduction, there have been three complaints handled under the RCVS Health Protocol. Of these, one veterinary surgeon retired from practice on the understanding that s/he will be the subject of ongoing review if they restore their name to the Register as a 'UK-practising' member, one veterinary surgeon has been taken off the Health Protocol and another remains on it.

### Reviewing closed complaints

For the most part, the purpose of a review visit is to explain to the complainant why the RCVS has closed their complaint. Since 2010, around 20 review visits have been carried out and, to date, the majority have resulted in a satisfactory resolution for the complainant and positive feedback from the complainants and veterinary surgeons.

Exceptionally, one disputed closure was resolved with a conciliation meeting between the practice and the complainant, following which, a written resolution agreement was prepared by the Senior Case Manager. All parties agreed to sign the resolution agreement and the matter was resolved.

Another complainant was visited following numerous telephone calls to the Professional Conduct Department (each lasting an hour on average). A Veterinary Investigator and Senior Case Manager visited the complainant in September 2010 and explained why the complaint was closed. The complainant was happy with the explanation and there has been no further contact with the RCVS.

### Assisting the authorities with breaches of the VSA

The RCVS has continued to assist the police and other authorities with a number of ongoing and new investigations with alleged breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA).

Since the last Report, one person has been convicted on 22 counts, involving importation of veterinary medicines, possession of veterinary medicines, possession with intent to supply human medicines, and fraud. The defendant was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment, suspended for two years, and three months' electronic (tag) curfew (7pm to 7am). The defendant is also subject to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, which provides for the confiscation or civil recovery of the proceeds of crime.

One person that allegedly purported to be a veterinary surgeon and supplied veterinary certificates has been committed to Crown Court for trial.

A bogus website purporting to provide veterinary services to farm clients was reported to the Senior Case Manager. It displayed information about bona fide veterinary surgeons from two veterinary practices and used the contact telephone numbers for one of them. The Senior Case Manager liaised with the police and the website has been closed down.

The full report is available on RCVSonline ([www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)).



# Report to Council, March 2012

## RVN PI Committee Chairman Lynne Hill

**T**here are currently 8,738 registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) on the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses and, as of 1 April 2011, they are subject to regulation under the Rules agreed by VN and RCVS Councils in November 2010. The procedures for complaints and disciplinary cases are very similar to those for veterinary surgeons.

Since the last Report to Council there has been one meeting of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee. One complaint was considered and adjourned for further investigation.

### Complaints received

There have been five new complaints received against RVNs. These complaints have been assessed and further information has been requested.

Currently, there are two complaints against the veterinary surgeons and the registered veterinary nurses as co-respondents. If these matters are progressed, the complaints against the veterinary surgeon respondents will take precedence because the Preliminary Investigation Committee is the statutory committee.

The full report is available on RCVSonline ([www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)).



## Dr Gary Samuel

### **Inquiry concerning: potential breach of greyhound racing rules**

### **DC decision: charge not proved; case dismissed**

### **Registration status: name remains on Register**

On 17 November 2011, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) dismissed a case against Gary Samuel, a Nottinghamshire veterinary surgeon, having found not proven the charge that he had caused, allowed or failed to prevent a potential breach of the Rules of Racing of the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB).

During the re-scheduled three-day hearing, the DC heard that Dr Samuel was on duty on 10 October 2009 as the GBGB licensed track veterinary surgeon at Nottingham Greyhound Stadium. When the trainer came to collect her dog for the race, she discovered a biscuit in his kennel in the paddock area, in potential contravention of the rules of the GBGB, which do not allow greyhounds access to any food, drink or other substance after weighing in, prior to a race. She reported this discovery to the paddock steward. The dog was

withdrawn from the race, so there was no prospect of prize money. The trainer, despite her unblemished record, was put at risk of disciplinary action by the GBGB, which could have resulted in the loss of her training licence and livelihood.

***“The Committee considered that the footage available must be of the best quality to allow it to reach a sure conclusion as to what exactly Dr Samuel may have been doing.”***

Following the events of 10 October, the GBGB held a disciplinary hearing, at which Dr Samuel was disqualified indefinitely from holding a GBGB licence and fined £2,500, and the matter was referred to the College. The DC confirmed that it should not be bound by the GBGB decision, and that the charges laid against Dr Samuel must be resolved on the basis of the evidence before it.

Both Counsel for Dr Samuel and the College urged the DC to have close regard of CCTV footage from 10 October, which showed Kennel 21 where the

dog had been placed and the biscuit found. From evidence given by the paddock steward and the trainer, the DC accepted that the kennel was clean when the dog entered at 5.30pm, so the biscuit must have been introduced between 5.30pm and 9pm, when the trainer collected him for the race.

The footage available to the DC from Nottingham Race Track was only four-and-a-half minutes long. The Committee was concerned that there were almost three-and-a-half hours of footage that it had not been shown and that, in addition, witnesses were not able to state that they had viewed the remainder of the footage. In those circumstances, the Committee considered that the footage available must be of the best quality to allow it to reach a sure conclusion as to what exactly Dr Samuel may have been doing in his position close to Kennel 21. From the quality of the footage available, the Committee was not able to be sure.

Speaking on behalf of the Disciplinary Committee, Vice-Chairman Professor Sheila Crispin said: “The fact remains that the Committee cannot be sure that the Respondent caused the biscuit to enter Kennel 21, [so] finds the charge against the Respondent not proved.”

## Mr Peter Ardle MacMahon

### **Inquiry concerning: failure to provide adequate professional care and insufficient regard for animal welfare**

### **DC decision: guilty of serious professional conduct; reprimanded and warned as to future conduct**

### **Registration status: name remains on Register**

At a resumed hearing that concluded on 18 November 2011, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) reprimanded and warned as to his future conduct Peter MacMahon, a Hampshire veterinary surgeon found guilty of serious professional misconduct for cumulative failures to provide adequate professional care, and insufficient regard for animal welfare whilst treating a dog that had ingested broken glass.

This sanction was decided following a 12-month postponement of a decision ordered at a hearing on 19 November 2010. At the 2011 hearing, the DC was asked to decide what sanction would be appropriate in this case, which concerned Mr MacMahon's treatment of a Cocker Spaniel called Wilfred, while working as a locum in Portsmouth.

In 2010, the DC found that Mr MacMahon had not removed the ingested glass from Wilfred's stomach or adequately checked that he had done so; had inadequately prevented abdominal contamination; and, had failed to communicate this contamination problem to Wilfred's usual veterinary

surgeon. Considering these charges cumulatively, the DC found that the treatment Mr MacMahon provided to Wilfred had fallen far short of the standard to be expected in the profession and amounted to serious professional misconduct.

Shortly prior to treating Wilfred, Mr MacMahon had returned to practice after a ten-year absence and, at last year's hearing, agreed to comply with undertakings regarding his professional development. These included performing at least 70 hours of medical and surgical continuing professional development (CPD); providing the DC Chairman with quarterly CPD reports and two employer reports regarding his competence; observing 24 days of current practice by shadowing another veterinary surgeon; and, providing reports from this veterinary surgeon as to his competence and a case diary.

The DC considered the factual findings from the November 2010 hearing and the concerns then expressed about Mr MacMahon's conduct and capabilities as a veterinary surgeon, as well as his compliance with the agreed undertakings.

As advised by the Legal Assessor, the Committee's considerations of sanction began at the lowest level that would ensure that the welfare of animals was properly protected; that proper standards would be maintained among practitioners in the profession; and, that would be in the interests of the public.

Speaking on behalf of the DC, Chairman Professor Peter Lees said: “The Committee is satisfied that the respondent had complied fully with the spirit of

the requirements of the undertakings he had entered into on 18 November 2010. Indeed, the view is that the respondent has done well to achieve the level of compliance that he has, given that he had suffered a period of significant ill-health during the period since he entered into those undertakings.

***“The treatment Mr MacMahon provided to Wilfred had fallen far short of the standard to be expected in the profession and amounted to serious professional misconduct.”***

“The ultimate decision is that the respondent's conduct [...] warrants the imposition of at least a reprimand,” he continued. “However, it is also the Committee's firm view that the respondent must be warned about his future conduct so that he will know the Committee considers he needs to maintain the level of continuous professional development that he has achieved [over the last] 12 months, and to have constantly in mind the paramount obligation of all veterinary surgeons to ensure the welfare of animals under their care.

“Such a warning as to future conduct should, and the Committee believes that it will, serve as a constant reminder to the respondent that he must undertake only those procedures, and only proffer professional advice, in the areas where he has the requisite up-to-date skills, knowledge and experience.”

## Dr Marc T J Auerbach

### **Inquiry concerning: recording of horse/pony height measurements in JMB certificates**

### **DC decision: not guilty of serious professional misconduct; case dismissed**

### **Registration status: name remains on Register**

On 24 February 2012, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) dismissed a case against Marc Auerbach, an Essex-based veterinary surgeon, having found him not guilty of charges relating to the measurement of horses and ponies.

At the ten-day hearing, Dr Auerbach, of Oak Equine Veterinary Surgery, Ongar, answered charges relating to measuring the height of 29 horses/ponies presented for measurement by two agents in early 2009. Dr Auerbach had undertaken these measurements as an Official Measurer (OM) for the Joint Measuring Board (JMB), which provides a system for independently measuring and certifying the size of competition horses/ponies. An animal's financial value relates to its size, with larger animals being more likely to win in their competitive class.

The case centred on the expected accuracy of such measurements, whether Dr Auerbach was dishonest in colluding with the agents, or whether there had been signs of malpractice which a reasonably competent vet acting as an OM ought to detect.

From evidence submitted, the DC determined a margin for measurement accuracy, and consequently dismissed from its consideration ten animals where the difference between the initial measurement and the re-measurement was 3cm or less. However, the College submitted that the average difference was so great that, either, Dr Auerbach had failed to take sufficient steps to ensure that the correct measurements were recorded, or else he had been dishonest. Dr Auerbach's Counsel accepted the inference that presenting agents were dishonest, but denied that Dr Auerbach was dishonest or had failed to pick up signs of malpractice on the part of the agents.

The DC was of the view that there may be unscrupulous presenters capable of materially interfering with the height of horses. While it was unable to determine with certainty the extent to which it could be done, the DC formed the view that unscrupulous interference (together with intrinsic variables) could have caused the differences between measurement and re-measurement in the 19 horses.

The Committee noted there was no evidence of improper payments being received by anyone. It also accepted evidence that Dr Auerbach was not a dishonest man, taking into account his record of 23 years of honesty and excellence in the profession, unchallenged character references and the lack of any credible motive for him to act dishonestly.

Next, the DC considered whether there had been signs of malpractice during preparation which ought to have been picked up by any reasonably competent veterinary surgeon acting as an OM.

The College submitted that Dr Auerbach had failed to take several steps including the amount of time and attention given to the animals he measured, and whether they might be drugged or sedated.

***“The Committee noted there was no evidence of improper payments being received by anyone. It also accepted evidence that Dr Auerbach was not a dishonest man.”***

The DC concluded from the evidence, including scientific papers, that mildly-sedated animals may not be distinguishable from properly prepared animals; well-behaved horses were not an indication that something was amiss. The Committee accepted that Dr Auerbach took around 15-20 minutes to measure each of the horses presented on 9 January; and, in the absence of guidance from the JMB, it could not conclude this was rushed or unreasonable. Consequently, the DC was unable to be satisfied, so that it was sure, that the allegation of failure to take sufficient steps to ensure the recording of correct measurements was proved.

“Accordingly, the decision of the Committee is that the facts set out in the charge in relation to all the horses and ponies listed have not been proved to the necessary standard of proof,” said DC Chairman Professor Peter Lees, speaking on behalf of the Committee as he directed the charges be dismissed.

## Mr Jaroslaw Slominski

### **Inquiry concerning: drink-driving convictions, failure to inform employer of convictions, driving whilst disqualified**

### **DC decision: guilty of serious professional conduct; remove name from Register**

### **Registration status: name removed from Register on 7 January 2012**

On 7 December 2011, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) directed that Jaroslaw Slominski, a veterinary surgeon formerly working in Lincolnshire, should be removed from the Register, after finding him guilty of serious professional misconduct for drink-driving related convictions, failing to inform his employer of these convictions, and driving whilst disqualified.

Mr Slominski, a former employer of Grants Veterinary Services plc, chose not to attend the three-day hearing. The DC considered whether

to proceed with the case, using criteria identified by the Court of Appeal in *R v Jones (Anthony)* in 2002 and confirmed by the House of Lords. It concluded it was in the interests of justice that the hearing should go ahead.

***“The Committee has concluded that the combination of the conviction and the conduct is incompatible with Mr Slominski practising as a veterinary surgeon.”***

The charges related to two convictions Mr Slominski received on 17 March 2010 at Lincoln Magistrates' Court: failure to provide a specimen of breath for analysis and driving without due care and attention (after his vehicle collided head-on with another car). Mr Slominski failed to inform his employers of these convictions, as he was

contractually obliged to do, and that he was now disqualified from driving.

Having heard evidence from Mr Slominski's line manager, the DC also found that he had driven his employer's vehicle whilst disqualified, although it could not be sure that he had done so on all the occasions alleged. Therefore, the Committee did not go on to consider an alternative part of the charge – that Mr Slominski had dishonestly claimed money from his employer by falsely submitting expenses claims.

“The combination of factors in this case, namely, the serious nature of his conviction in failing to provide a specimen of breath, his subsequent premeditated conduct in not informing his employers and driving whilst disqualified, should be treated by the profession very seriously,” said Disciplinary Committee Chairman Professor Peter Lees, speaking on the Committee's behalf, adding: “The Committee has concluded that the combination of the conviction and the conduct is incompatible with Mr Slominski practising as a veterinary surgeon.”



## Mr William H S Manson

### **Inquiry concerning: convictions for contravention of animal export regulations**

### **DC decision: guilty of serious professional misconduct; suspend for ten months**

### **Registration status: name suspended from Register on 21 February 2012**

On 17 January 2012, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) suspended William Manson from the Register for ten months, having found him guilty of serious professional misconduct relating to three convictions for contravening animal export regulations.

### ***“Mr Manson’s actions amounted to a serious departure from professional standards.”***

Whilst working as an Authorised Veterinary Inspector in Castlederg for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), Mr Manson, a County Tyrone veterinary surgeon, had falsely certified that he had inspected three consignments of sheep presented for assembly

at Plumbridge Export Assembly Centre on 16 and 23 August 2009.

At the two-day hearing, Mr Manson admitted that the convictions he had received at the Strabane Magistrates Court on 26 November 2010 made him unfit to practise veterinary surgery, but said in mitigation that he had examined the sheep nearby at Landahussy, a site he considered more suitable for a large number of animals. The DC was satisfied that Mr Manson believed the Landahussy site to be more suitable for large deliveries, and also that he did carry out a visual inspection of the sheep at the Landahussy site on 16 and 23 August 2009. However, the information Mr Manson provided on the three certificates was false and misleading.

Mr Manson had also been reminded of the importance of complying with government regulations in a disciplinary case in 2004, following convictions for failing to notify DARD about changes in the number of sheep for which he was claiming a premium. The then DC dismissed the case, deeming the convictions a result of his “genuine but regrettable oversight”.

“Mr Manson’s actions in certifying that he had examined the sheep at an approved assembly centre when he had not done so amounted to a serious departure from professional standards,”

said the DC Chairman, Professor Peter Lees, speaking on behalf of the Committee. “If there had been a disease outbreak on either the Plumbridge or Landahussy site, such actions would have rendered contact tracings unreliable and inaccurate.”

In mitigation, the DC accepted medical evidence and Mr Manson’s testimony that he was at that time under exceptional stress. He was working long hours in difficult circumstances without an assistant, and was under considerable personal pressure as a result of his wife’s serious illness. It also took into account his age (66), exceptional testimonials produced on his behalf, and the impact on the community he served.

“The Committee has concluded that the removal of Mr Manson’s name from the Register is neither proportionate nor necessary in the public interest nor to protect the welfare of animals,” said Professor Lees on behalf of the Committee. “A proportionate sanction in this case is to suspend Mr Manson’s name from the Register for a period of ten months.”

**Full details of disciplinary hearings are available at [www.rcvs.org.uk/disciplinary](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/disciplinary).**

## PRIVY COUNCIL APPEAL

## Mr Joseph Lennox Holmes

On 20 December 2011, the Privy Council dismissed the appeal of Lincolnshire veterinary surgeon Joseph Holmes against the RCVS Disciplinary Committee’s decision to strike him off the Register in January 2011 for serious professional misconduct.

At a two-week Disciplinary Committee (DC) hearing in January 2011, Mr Holmes, of Waltham Veterinary Clinic, Grimsby, was found to have advised on and undertaken surgical procedures without sufficient clinical grounds or consideration of alternative treatment options; failed to obtain the informed consent of his clients; undertaken procedures outside his area of competence; failed to refer or discuss the option of referral to a specialist; and, failed to provide his patients with adequate pain relief. These findings related to two separate complaints and a total of 31 charges, of which 28 were found to amount to serious professional misconduct.

The Appeal was heard by Baroness Hale, Lord Wilson and Lord Kerr on 1 November 2011, and their judgment was delivered on 20 December by Lord Wilson.

There were two principal parts to Mr Holmes’s appeal: first, that RCVS procedures for

investigating and determining complaints were biased against him and infringed his human right to a fair hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal; and, second, a number of complaints about the DC’s findings and conclusions.

### ***“Their Lordships supported statutory reform so as to enable members of the disciplinary committees to be chosen from outside the Council.”***

Their Lordships recognised that the College’s regulatory framework was constrained by the existing Veterinary Surgeons Act and “support[ed] statutory reform so as to enable members of the disciplinary committees to be chosen from outside the council”; but, they were satisfied that the College had made “strenuous attempts” to ensure its disciplinary procedures were fair and in accordance with human rights legislation.

They also remarked that the College had made “elaborate efforts” to separate the membership and work of the three RCVS Committees that produce guidance, investigate complaints and

adjudicate on complaints, respectively. Their Lordships considered that “a fair-minded and informed observer [having considered all the facts] would not conclude there was a real possibility that the DC was biased against Mr Holmes”.

Their Lordships also dismissed all of the ‘deficiencies’ that Mr Holmes had sought to identify in the DC’s findings and conclusions. They generally preferred the College’s evidence, witness accounts and expert witness testimony, and felt the DC had correctly considered the multiple charges before it. They also found that the expertise of the DC in assessing the standards of the profession was “entitled to substantial respect” and agreed that the only sanction appropriate to Mr Holmes’ “catalogue of egregious misconduct” was the removal of his name from the Register. “[This sanction] was the only disposal which could properly reflect the primary need to serve both the interests of animal welfare and the reputation of the veterinary profession,” they concluded.

Their Lordships’ decision is now subject to approval by the Crown, following which, Mr Holmes will, on behalf of the Committee, be removed from the Register and no longer entitled to practise as a veterinary surgeon.

# Minute by minute

## The Odiham Society and the Reverend Thomas Burgess

**I**n the latest of our series that looks at historical objects connected to the College, veterinary historian Bruce Vivash-Jones and RCVS Charitable Trust Librarian Clare Boulton consider the minute book of the Odiham Society, and the pioneering work of the Reverend Thomas Burgess.

There is no way to rank the collection of memorabilia held in the College archives, but one item has to come first, at least on the timescale. This is the minute book of the Odiham Agricultural Society, founded on 16 May 1783, with its purpose, "the encouraging of Agriculture and Industry".

The activities of the Society were rooted in enthusiasm for new methods of farming, but also

placing emphasis on the teaching of the Catechism and Scriptures (consumption of wine or spirits was forbidden at the meetings). The Secretary, James Huntingford, was a local solicitor and friend of Raikes, founder of the Sunday School movement. There was a considerable number of clergymen in the membership: this was the heyday of the so-called squarson (the squire-parson), when the younger sons of the gentry gravitated to the clergy, who were a natural part of the landed class.

Among the founder subscribers was Thomas Burgess, one of the sons of the local grocer. He had won scholarships to Winchester and to Corpus Christi College, Oxford. By 1784, aged 28, he was both fellow of the College and an ordained deacon. While pursuing his studies at Oxford he frequently visited Odiham to see his invalid mother and, at this time, his interest in agricultural reform developed.

Burgess was not one of the farming clergy; he was progressive in outlook and fought for the abolition of slavery. He also wrote religious books for children, and supported Sunday Schools and the moral improvement of farm workers, no doubt giving the Society a rather pious tone. His interests were more philanthropic than practical, and it was not surprising that he began to campaign for the humane treatment of animals.

On 19 August 1785 (a date to be remembered), Burgess put a motion to the Society which included the words "...Farriery, as it is commonly practised, is conducted without principle or science and greatly to the injury ... [of] the noblest and most useful of our animals. That the

improvement of Farriery established on a study of the anatomy, diseases and care of cattle particularly Horses, Cows, and Sheep, will be an essential benefit to Agriculture...".

His proposal was accepted in principle but little happened. It was not until 1789 that there was any progress, Granville Penn took over the proposal and, by 1792, the London Veterinary College was established – but that is another story.

**"Burgess was not one of the farming clergy; he was progressive in outlook and fought for the abolition of slavery."**

Burgess dropped out of the picture as his clerical duties took him north to Durham, but he was not forgotten, and was elected a Director of the fledgling College. Subsequently, he became Bishop of Salisbury, and then Bishop of St David's, founding St David's Theological College at Lampeter in Wales – which harnessed his reforming zeal for improved education.

The Odiham Society minute book is safely conserved in the College archives. A framed copy of the initial proposal by the Rev Thomas Burgess, which eventually led to the founding of the RCVS, together with his image (left), now hangs in one of the meeting rooms at Belgravia House.

If you would like to view items from the Historic Collection, please contact Clare Boulton on [c.boulton@rcvstrust.org.uk](mailto:c.boulton@rcvstrust.org.uk).



## For your radar

We're highlighting the updates published to the *Bat Care Guidelines* from the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), as the original version was produced in 2008 with help from the RCVS Charitable Trust.

Written with support from the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation, the updated guidance is available to veterinary practices from Helen Miller ([hmliller@bats.org.uk](mailto:hmliller@bats.org.uk)) at the BCT ([www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)).



Hugh Clark / Bat Conservation Trust



# It all stems from a grant

## Stem cell research supported by the Trust

**W**hether it's undertaking veterinary research, disseminating research findings or training the next generation of researchers, RCVS Charitable Trust grants support a huge range of achievements. Hannah Hodgkiss-Geere, veterinary surgeon and PhD student at Edinburgh University's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, is studying stem cells and their role in canine health and disease, research supported through £250,000 granted to mark the Trust's Golden Jubilee in 2008 (see *RCVS News*, March 2011). We asked what the Trust's funding is helping her achieve.

### Which is your particular area within this project?

I'm researching canine adult stem cells. Unlike embryonic stem cells, which can develop into an enormous range of cell types, adult stem cells can only develop into tissue-specific cell types. This should mean that we can study organ physiology and pathophysiology of disease at a cellular level. Research into adult stem cells complements that already performed in embryonic stem cells, and use of these cells is less controversial and potentially safer in longer-term therapeutic applications.

### Are you getting any other help from the Trust?

The Golden Jubilee grant provided funding to employ a PhD student – me – so I'm very grateful



to the Trust, as this led directly to my training opportunity. Through a £1,000 travel grant awarded by the Trust, I was also able to present my findings at the 2010 World Stem Cell summit in Detroit, USA.

### Why did you want to go to this particular conference?

Stem cell research can become quite specific and compartmentalised, so going to a major conference in the US meant I could learn more

about the diverse research being undertaken internationally, ranging through all the different types of stem cells and their potential applications.

This conference focused on stem cell research in humans, so it was great to have a forum whereby I could discuss the stem cell work being performed in a veterinary school in the UK, undertaking research for the benefit of animals, and how this may also potentially help humans. Conversely, as animal models are always used in research to the benefit of human patients, there is potential for using these research findings to benefit animals also.

### What else did you learn?

I was surprised just how many of the researchers were either independent or working outside academic institutions – people were seeking commercial funding for patents and even recruiting human patients for clinical trials. I also made several contacts which could be used for future collaborations. Patient advocates who might benefit personally from new treatments also made presentations – all of which was very different from my experiences in the UK.

### So... what's next?

Finishing my PhD! And, after that, to apply for more grants to continue my research – I have now started a residency in cardiopulmonary medicine at the Dick Vet, too.

# Open book day

## Trust supports National Libraries Day with an open day

**T**he RCVS Charitable Trust Library celebrated ahead of National Libraries Day (Saturday 4 February), with visitors both 'virtual' and 'in person' attending an open day showcasing what it can offer.

With resources such as online access to the world's largest bibliographic database on veterinary medicine (the Veterinary Science Database), online and paper journals, and over 25,000 books, conference proceedings and reports, you might think it easy to get lost in the 'stacks' – but, fortunately, Library staff were on hand to offer expert help and run literature search workshops.

Gary Kelly, an equine and large animal practitioner at Warren House Veterinary Centre in the West Midlands, took part in one such workshop.

"The tutorial covered exactly what I was looking for – the ability to find and access online journals in my area of interest," says Gary, who was also pleased to pick up some "tips on how to tailor my search terms to search more efficiently for journals [and] scientific papers."

The Library also held a prize-draw for all its members on National Libraries Day, itself with Simon Solomon of Lincvet in Lincoln winning a year's extension to his Library membership.

***"The tutorial covered exactly what I was looking for – the ability to find and access online journals in my area of interest."***

Willows Referral Service, near Solihull, also beat off the competition – aka 108 other people who used the Library's services between 30 January and 10 February – in a separate prize-draw. They won a £50 voucher for Trust Library services, which they have spent on subject alerts for veterinary ophthalmology.

"The open day and prize draws were our way of saying thank you to all our Library users and supporters," says Clare Boulton, Trust Librarian. "We enjoyed the day and hope that our visitors did too!"



To take a closer look at what the Library holds for vets and VNs, or to arrange a literature search workshop or help with your research, visit <http://trust.rcvs.org.uk/library-and-information-services>.

# 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 We've cracked it

New Codes now approved, published in April.

## 2 In the army now...

New VP, Colonel Neil Smith, is RAVC Director Army Veterinary and Remount Services.

## Election time again

Lots of candidates to choose from: place your vote by 27 April.

## 3 Moving forward

Overview of changes in response to Overspend Report, and developments in regulation.

## 4 Up the students

30% increase in student VNs.

## Dangerous game

Fake VN convicted.

## VN legislation push

Working Party continues moves toward protection of VN title.

## 5 Diploma developments

City & Guilds to take on VN Diploma from this autumn.

## Core blimey

New Code says all vets must maintain PSS Core standards.

## 6 Fees are due

Vets, please pay retention fees by 31 March.

## Bristol full approval

We are pleased to reinstate full approval for Bristol vet school.

## 7 Have your say

Legislative reform order on independent statutory committees open for consultation: let Defra have your views.

## No hard lines

Hard copy Registers discontinued.

## Final filing for Diplomas

Last enrolment date for all RCVS Diplomas will be 1 November.

## 8 Going locum?

If you hire student VNs as locums, be wary of the legal limitations.

## Riding high

Advice for Riding Establishment Inspectors.

## Performance notes

Performance Protocol approved..

## 9 Taking the PPE

New PPE certificates are in force – old ones won't be valid after 31 March.

## Healthy news

MoU agreed with Veterinary Surgeons' Health Support Programme.

## Drugs destruction

Enlist the help of your local police force in destroying controlled drugs

## 10 Governance guidance

Clinical governance is required in the new Code – do you know what it entails?

## 11 PDP? Check!

Employers must check PDP compliance when recruiting.

## 12 Notes from the North

The VECTAR team travels to Scandinavia to train VN college staff.

## Special thanks

Thank you to those who responded to our specialisation consultation. Working Party is considering options.

## 13 Record your CPD online

New system launching in April to make life easier.

## 14 Insurance investigation

New police department set up to counter insurance fraud.

## 16 Career on course

Careers adverts flag up our Walks of Life materials.

## Opening the door

We invite stakeholders to an open day in May.

## 17 New date for AMR Seminar

'One health, one problem?' seminar will now take place on 2 October.

## Need a speaker?

Not woofers and tweeters, but RCVS speakers to enliven your meeting.

## 18 Bogus website closed down

PI Committee chairman reports on how we assisted.

## RVN PIC

Five new complaints considered.

## 19 DC hearings

Dr G Samuel, case relating to potential breach of greyhound racing rules – charge not proved; Mr P MacMahon, inquiry into failure to provide adequate professional care and insufficient regard for animal welfare – reprimanded and warned as to future conduct; Dr M Auerbach, case relating to recording of horse height measurements – case dismissed; Mr J Slominski, inquiry concerning drink-driving convictions and driving whilst disqualified – struck off; Mr W Manson, case concerning convictions for contraventions of animal export regulations – suspended from Register; and, Mr J Holmes appeal dismissed by Privy Council.

## 22 Just a minute

Looking at the history of the Odiham Society via its minute book.

## 23 Grant report

We hear from a Trust grant holder working in stem cell research.

## No need for silence

Library opens its doors for National Libraries Day.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### 2012

#### 31 March

Retention fees due

#### 1 April

Premises registration and PSS fees due

#### 7 April

National Pet Month starts

#### 12-15 April

See us at BSAVA Congress

#### 27 April

Your vote must be in by 5pm

#### 2 May

RCVS open day

#### 17 May

Regional Question Time: Northern Ireland

#### 7 June

RCVS Council meeting

#### 3 July

Diploma examinations

#### 6 July

RCVS Day

#### 17 and 18 July

Certificate examinations

#### 1 August

Fellowship application deadline

#### 17 August

Specialist reapplication deadline

#### 7 September

New Specialist application deadline



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